

Awareness-Raising Among Refugee and Migrant Women on How to Access Justice Services

Hatay Field
Report of Good Practices and Lessons Learned
2018





supporttolife

Support to Life is a humanitarian aid organization established with the principle objective of helping communities affected by natural or man-made meet their basic needs and rights. Established in 2005, the Support to Life conducts its activities in the areas of Emergency Assistance, Refugee Support, Child Protection in Seasonal Agriculture and Capacity Building in Civil Society. While supporting life, Support to Life association shapes its work with principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, independence and accountability.

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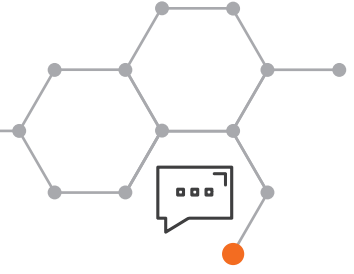
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From The Director Of Support To Life



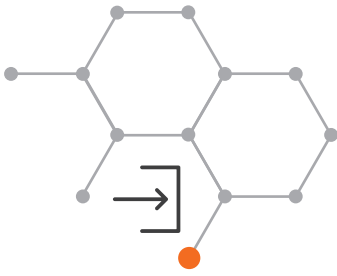
assistance to those fleeing the violence in Syria. As needs changed and we were able to create a relationship of trust with the refugee population, we mobilized and empowered them to create their own solutions – not just for themselves but for their peers and their communities. The number of refugee lives we were able to reach and the scale of the impact we were able to create was considerably higher than what we were able to achieve in the earlier years of the crisis.

This shift is one we always aim to achieve in all our humanitarian programs. I would like to thank the refugee women in this project, who have believed in themselves and who have had the courage to make a difference in their own lives as well as the lives of others.

As a humanitarian organization working with disaster-affected populations in diverse contexts and cultures, we have always experienced the immense impact created when affected people are themselves engaged in solutions to their problems created by displacement and deprivation.

Our work with Syrian refugees has been no different. We started with in-kind and cash

Sema Genel Karaosmanoglu
Director
Support to Life



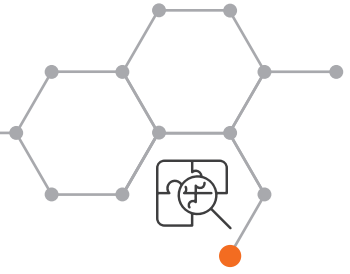
Introduction

The report you are reading is the lessons learned and good practices report of the “Awareness raising among refugee and migrant women on how to access justice” project implemented by Support to Life between 7 February – 31 October 2018 with the financing of The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.

The focus of this report is the concrete impact of information and awareness-raising activities had with regard to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), access to civil rights, and to the lives of refugee women and girls affected by the Syrian crisis. In addition, the report covers

conditions of the country and city where the project was carried out, contents of the project, project activities, the challenges faced and the methods used to deal with them, the advantages and disadvantages of the ‘volunteer-based community work’ management, the stories from the field and recommendations of the project team.

The project was carried out in Hatay between February and October 2018. 16 volunteer women supported the project and a total of 1276 people were reached. The difference and value created by the project in the lives of refugee women is much more important than the numbers we have reached through information activities.



Context and Problem Analysis

The violence against women, which is directly associated with the patriarchal structure, is one of the most important issues in the social agenda of women's movement in Turkey since the early 1990s. Turkey signed the Istanbul Convention in 2012 and demonstrated its efforts to respect the international human rights standards and approaches in addressing the issue of violence against women. However, despite these developments, violence against women continues to be one of the most important challenges in achieving gender equality in Turkey. According to data from the research conducted on domestic violence against women by Hacettepe Research Center for Population Studies in 2014 in Turkey, 36 percent of women in Turkey say that they are exposed to physical violence at some stage in their lives. In other words, almost 4 out of every 10 married women were subjected to physical violence by their spouses, or by men they live with.¹

With the start of the civil war in Syria in 2011, Turkey was faced with another complex problem. In its seventh year, the crisis in Syria is intensifying and the number of refugees settled in Turkey continues to increase. Turkey has become the country that hosts highest number of refugees in the

world. According to the database of Directorate General of Migration Management (GIGM), the total number of refugees registered with the temporary protection regime in Turkey as of October 2018 is 3.587.930. 171.640 of these people live in Temporary Shelter Centers and others live in different provinces, cities or rural areas of Turkey. According to the statistics as of October 2018, 45.6 percent of all Syrian refugees in Turkey are women and more than 50 percent of all refugees are 17 years or younger. The data indicates that the majority of Syrian refugees are women or children. Turkey makes efforts to provide Syrian refugees with access to their basic rights and meet their social service based needs including the health services.²

Although the temporary protection status enables Syrian refugees to access to basic services and rights, it is observed that many refugee families still face difficulties in accessing these services due to language barriers, complicated registration processes, and strict requirements for supporting documents. In addition, the forced migration crisis has created various security gaps and forms of insecurity for refugee women, including differing forms of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).

1. <http://www.hips.hacettepe.edu.tr/KKSA-TRAnaRaporKitap26Mart.pdf>

2. http://www.goc.gov.tr/icerik6/gecici-koruma_363_378_4713_icerik



SGBV is a chronic problem in Turkey, and the problem has been magnified with the influx of refugee women and girls. The lack of knowledge on how SGBV-based support mechanisms work and the language barrier make refugee women extremely vulnerable to sexual assault and exploitation, and make it difficult for them to receive support in such cases.

Some academic studies, which consider women as passive migrants, ignore the fact that the women are exposed to forced migration due to war and discrimination on basis of ethnic characteristics, religious identity or gender. This understanding leads to the negligence of the needs of the female population, which constitutes half of the migrants exposed to forced migration, and causes women to widespread abuse. Studies focusing on migrations demonstrate that sexual identity is as deterministic as socio-economic class, national identity and culture in the migration when shaping decision-making processes such as departure, settlement or return.

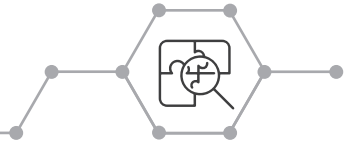
Women, like all asylum seekers, escape because they are in oppression, cruelty and fear. However, unlike men, women may have to leave their countries and take shelter in another country with a view to run away from the gender-based discrimination, pressure and oppression resulting from

social and cultural prejudices, harmful practices associated with traditions that disrupt their physical and mental health, sexual abuse, and oppressions and pressures that are exercised against them just for "being women" such as sexual violence and domestic violence, which are not specifically covered in the 1951 Convention.³ Women require special attention precisely due to these additional risks.

During migration processes, women and children children are especially vulnerable. They are exposed to sexual and gender-based discrimination twice as often during the migration process. They have to combat inhumane treatments such as sexual abuse, violence, forced unskilled labor, and associated humiliation. For this very reason, women deserve special attention in this field.

The results of the need assessment survey conducted in 8 provinces where Support to Life conducted its 2017 operations (İstanbul, Adana, Mersin, Şanlıurfa, Hatay, Diyarbakır, Mardin, Kayseri) show the difficulty of discussing gender-based violence. Only 8% of respondents mentioned their need to learn more about gender-based violence. This ratio suggests that additional measures should be taken to raise the issue of SGBV among the refugee women.

3. cited in Buz, 2007: 41, from Akkaya and Odman.



As part of the Refugee Support Program, the Support to Life works to develop the access of refugees to basic social services by means of information sharing, guidance and counseling. More than 50 percent of the individuals who are supported are women. In 2017, protection teams of the Support to Life made various interventions in a total of 135 cases of SGBV, referring them for protective shelter, psychological support, child protection, women's protection, temporary shelter, and meeting basic needs. However, more efforts are needed to ensure that women and girls who are vulnerable to sexual and gender-based violence are able to express themselves and ask for help.

The first lesson was learned in the project after a problem was experienced in the initial

stage of the project, which was implemented to empower refugee women, raise their awareness of SGBV, facilitate access to the protection services needed and facilitate their access to their peers. Both lack of a women-based perspective and the resulting inadequacy of policies have caused dissemination of negative news about the project in certain media outlets across the country. However, such news has not caused the project workers and women volunteers to lose their motivations. Although the difficulty encountered in the first phase of the project caused the project to be postponed for one month, it has turned out to become an advantage in sharing the scope of the project with stakeholders and inclusion of stakeholders into activities more extensively.



Awareness-Raising Among Refugee and Migrant Women on How To Access Justice Services - Hatay

Prevention of SGBV, service-provision to survivors and access to justice services are more critical at times of crisis when vulnerabilities increase considerably. At this point, it is very important to think that refugee women are not a homogenous group. Special care should be provided to the groups who are more vulnerable, who do not have access to or have less information. Reaching those who are difficult to reach requires special interventions and targeted social assistance. For this reason, creating a social assistance strategy is especially important for extremely sensitive and marginal groups at-risk. In this project, Support to Life has used a social assistance strategy that is based on a community-based approach and that focuses on self-empowerment of refugee women. The core strategy of the project is to hand the responsibility to organize information sessions called “women’s meetings” to refugee women themselves, and preparing women for these sessions through trainings. This project has been designed and implemented as a pilot project that will guide Support to Life’s future projects focusing on interventions to the problem of SGBV.

The general objective of the project is to contribute to the empowerment and access to justice services of refugee women on sexual and gender-based violence. The specific objective of the project is to inform women of their peers who are not easy to reach, to provide them with information on access to protection services needed, and to provide them with access to these services.

This project aimed to achieve the following outcomes:

- 1.** Empowering volunteer refugee women to disseminate information and raise awareness of women and girls in their communities in the areas of temporary protection regime, women’s rights, existing justice services and access to these services.
- 2.** Informing refugee women and girls about current justice services and protection mechanisms and increase their confidence in access to these services.
- 3.** Sharing good practices on community-based interventions to overcome sexual and gender-based violence among civil society organizations, government agencies, lawyers and other relevant stakeholders.



Project Results and Activities

1. Empowering refugee women volunteers in order to enable them to raise awareness on issues of temporary protection regime, women's rights, existing justice services and access to these services.

In the first stage of the project, the project was introduced to the Syrian refugee women community in Hatay with a meeting organized for selection of project volunteers, who would be actively involved in the implementation of project.

The project was first communicated to female beneficiaries who regularly participated in different activities at Narlıca Support to Life House, the community center of Support to Life in Narlıca. Most of the volunteer women who would volunteer as trainers in the project were active in the field and had a high level of motivation for learning new things.

The project team worked closely with the Women's Committee in Reyhanlı during the inclusion of volunteer women in the project. This Women's Committee was founded in 2015 by women who actively served among the Syrian population after the Support to Life's community-based protection efforts in Reyhanlı. Since its foundation, the committee has reached 700 women. The members of the committee had the opportunity to establish good relations with the Syrian community in the region during the work they performed to inform Syrian refugees in Reyhanlı about access to support

and resources they need, as well as their rights and responsibilities. For this reason, the project team received support from the committee members to convey information about the project and to guide women who want to volunteer in the project to the association. In addition, Syrian community centers were visited in regions such as Narlıca, Altınözü and Reyhanlı, and the project was introduced to women, most of whom were living in Hatay for more than 4 years and had a wide network of communication.

The project team received 30 applications for the volunteer positions. After evaluation, the project team initially selected 21 candidates among these candidates. The women who applied to work as volunteers in the project were invited to Narlıca Support to Life House to attend an introductory meeting where the project team explained the project and the role of community volunteers. At this meeting, the project team gave detailed information to the candidates and answered their questions. Project activities were initiated with 21 volunteer women. 5 women left the project due to reasons such as settling in another country, difficulty of childcare and low motivation, and the project was completed with 16 women.



The following criteria were used to select the volunteer candidates:

- Being in the age group of 18-65, and a part of the Syrian female population.
- Being literate enough to read, understand and convey the sources to be used.
- Living in different neighborhoods and villages of Hatay.
- Having good social communication skills.
- Having the motivation to organize meetings with women living in different areas and disseminate the educational content.
- Commitment to fulfill the necessary responsibility from the beginning to the end of the project.

Technical team of Support to Life provided a 2-day training for refugee women and project team that was to carry out the activities. The training focused on the legal

framework of SGBV in Turkey, provision of proper guidance, establishing contact with public service providers, and basic competencies such as protecting the privacy and confidentiality of potential victims. These trainings were prepared on the following topics by their associated experts within the Support to Life.

- Rights associated with temporary protection
- Marriage-related rights
- Rights related to termination of marriage
- Sexual rights
- Violence-related rights

The needs of volunteer women concerning awareness-raising on gender were identified during the trainings. Thus, the monthly meetings, especially the first two, were planned in a manner that would facilitate discussions of notions related to gender.

An additional observers training was delivered to Support to Life's teams under the framework of the project. The purpose of these trainings was to enable the teams to accompany the volunteer women, and supervise when needed. These trainings were delivered not only to the project team but also to other female staff members responsible of other projects, so that they too could offer support when needed.



2. Informing refugee women and girls about current justice services and protection mechanisms and increasing their confidence in accessing these services.



In the second stage of the project, the aim was to raise awareness on sexual and gender-based violence and disseminate information on how to access to justice services. Women from the community volunteers started working to spread the information provided in the training of trainers to their peers in the community by organizing women's meetings. The set-target was that each volunteer woman would reach at least 84 women, and the meetings were organized with the target of reaching 1260 women and girls in total.



Women's meetings were held in different districts of Hatay - including Altınözü, Reyhanlı, Antakya, Narlıca and İskenderun, and if needed in the schools and community centers of the Support to Life.

Cloth banners and brochures were designed to make it easier for volunteer women to understand the content of training and these materials were used in women's meetings. Supervisors of the project team participated in all women's meetings, made observations and gave feedback to volunteer women. The meetings were organized with the participation of groups consisting of minimum 5 and maximum 7 women and a participant-oriented learning process was adopted rather than a trainer oriented process. Feedback about the project content was collected through women participating in the meetings and a voluntary questionnaire.

The women who were understood to be in need of special support concerning SGBV during the women's meetings were referred to Support to Life's protection teams so that they received support in this field.

In the project, a total of 1276 people were reached in 5 districts including Narlıca, Altınözü, Reyhanlı, Antakya and İskenderun.



NUMBER OF CLIENTS REACHED

Gender	Age Group	Number of People
Woman	-18	93
	+18	1183
Total		1276

Number of Persons Reached





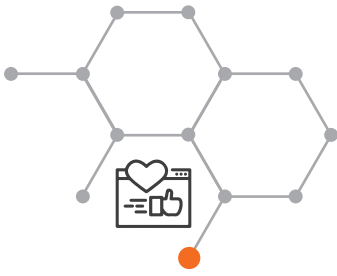
3. Sharing good practices on community-based interventions among civil society organizations, government agencies, lawyers and other relevant stakeholders to overcome sexual and gender-based violence

In order to develop strategies that would maximize the cooperation of project team with refugee women in the field of SGBV, the project aimed to hold networking and coordination meetings with relevant stakeholders. In this context, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and Support to Life reached an agreement in October 2018 to work for a new pilot project in the field of SGBV. In line with the project's sustainability goal, enabling the women who participated as volunteers in the existing project to continue organizing information sessions with their peers in a new pilot project was adopted as a suitable methodology.

In order to create a sustainable impact, an

experience-sharing workshop was organized between the project team and the volunteer women. Local governments, community organizations and international non-governmental organizations were invited to the workshop where the goods practices obtained during the project were presented.





Good Practices In The Project

- The project that Support to Life implemented in Hatay with the support of UN Women was a project of firsts in many ways. In this project, the Support to Life Association centered the project on the method of 'working with volunteers' using the **peer education method** for the first time. The core activities of the project were carried out by the volunteer group. The volunteers of the project who were selected by the Hatay team were provided guidance throughout the project.

- The volunteer refugee women were supported for capacity development through trainings - such as gender trainings and information sessions - including some basic competences on civic rights, SGBV, appropriate referral pathways, contact with public service providers, protection of privacy of victims. During the project, increased awareness of women thanks to the knowledge they received has boosted their confidence as well. **Volunteer-based work** was primarily empowering for the volunteers.

- Brochures and cloth banners were produced. This made it easier for volunteer women to present information in an organized way during the information meetings. The production and use of

different materials is an example of good practice in terms of enabling active participation of beneficiaries, which in turn support the **mutual learning process** rather participants passively receiving information.

- The project had another novel element in terms of working with women only. Volunteer women reached other women in their networks and organized **women's meetings** with them. During these two-hour meetings, discussions were held about the rights they have in Turkey. The project design, which allowed women to communicate with each other, provided a high level of volunteer motivation throughout the project.

- Implementation of peer education model in the project had a significant impact on empowerment of women. It was observed that the rate of access to the services has increased thanks to the information provided to refugee women and girls about current justice services and protection mechanisms. The trainings they received from their peers with similar social backgrounds triggered the desire to learn and facilitated the learning process on both sides besides creating a comfortable space of sharing.



- The peer education model and the volunteer-based work facilitated outreach to those who cannot be identified by the surveys conducted by the Support to Life. Thanks to social networks of the volunteer women, it was possible to reach sensitive cases who were otherwise difficult to reach in awareness sessions, and refer to them to the case team where necessary. Thus, the team was able to provide support for more disadvantaged families.

- The five topics covered in volunteer sessions, **the rights of temporary protection, marriage-related rights, rights related to termination of marriage, sexual rights and violence-related rights** was determined in accord with the needs of local women. This has increased the benefit of project for the women and maximized the impact of the project.

- The volunteers who came together thanks to the project demonstrated a good example of strong **teamwork** in the process. The women shared their experiences with other volunteers and found solutions for many problems. Finding a solution together created a spirit of solidarity and assistance between both volunteer women and the clients attending the meetings.

- The approach and care of Support to Life towards privacy and the relation of trust

established with the Syrian community were effective in having productive and successful project outcomes for volunteers, the project team, and the women who were reached through the meetings. The organization's strong communication with local civic society organizations, and its efforts to improve their capacities have enabled the project to be implemented successfully in a short time by strengthening relations in the field.

- The project also provided **psycho-social support** for volunteer women. Thanks to the project, women had the opportunity to gain a better understanding of Support to Life and its activities. Getting to know an institution working in the field of humanitarian aid, such as the Support to Life, where they can get support made them feel safer in their country of residence. The sense of security in the host country is of great importance for individuals who flee from the war. In this sense, the project also contributed to the socio-psychological development of voluntary women.

- Another advantage of the project was that awareness sessions could be planned and presented based on the information provided by voluntary women so as to be in accord with the needs of the volunteers, rather than being planned on a general subject assigned by the observer in the field.

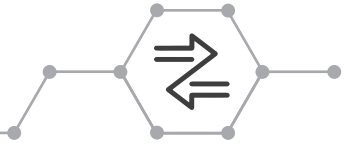


Challenges In The Project

The project was based on the volunteer-based peer education model. Due to the high-level of vulnerability of volunteers (being refugees and women), the project process was mainly focused on the improvement of their capacity in terms of knowledge, approach and attitude. The aim was to create awareness, as these women were to transfer their knowledge to their peers. The project team had to coordinate a multi-factor process to run the project in line with its purpose and ensure coordination of volunteers. In addition, as illustrated by the statistics above, the project was carried out in Turkey, the country that receives the highest level of migration, and in Hatay, one of the provinces with the highest number of migrant population in Turkey. Considering all these factors, the project team had to deal with difficulties in many areas.

- Support to Life worked with the project volunteers for the first time, which caused certain challenges. Considering that the project team consisted of very few people and the number of volunteers was high, Support to Life received assistance from teams from other projects during the observer training, and found a solution to make sure they contributed to the project. This method, which was chosen to eliminate the intensity, also contributed to the development of internal capacity.

- One of the challenges encountered in the project was due to the fact that the refugee and migration policies that Turkey is taking shape as the crisis is still ongoing. Varying practices in the implementation of existing policies, which are still uncertain in some aspects, made it difficult to work in areas of rights and access to these rights. In order to eliminate the challenges that would make it difficult for the project to achieve its objectives, representatives of associated government agencies were invited to meetings focusing on their respective domains. Information about the project was shared regularly through reports in accord with the principles of accountability and transparency.
- The lack or shortcomings of gender awareness in the society was an element that made project implementation difficult. The activities oriented at empowering women were taken with skepticism and attempts were made to block the project. Being subject to skepticism or obstruction in the early months of the project was the biggest difficulty for the project teams, who were above all striving to inform themselves and others of their rights. News reports that discredited the content of information sessions and that argued the project had 'covert' agendas were published on national outlets. This led to the risk of



volunteer women wishing to withdraw from the project due to fears of social isolation and rejection. To prevent this, the news that appeared on national media was discussed and the motivation was kept high. Thanks to the open nature of communication, no women wished to leave and misinformed discourses in the media had a positive impact on the volunteers' solidarity.

- In addition to supporting the development of knowledge, skills and attitudes, the selection and management of volunteer women, methods of keeping volunteer motivation high, increasing level of participation in the project, maintaining the team spirit among the volunteers and working in cooperation were important and challenging aspects of the project. The fact that some women left the project due to reasons such as moving to another country and city or personal problems caused a decrease in motivation in the other part of the team. The project team met with volunteer women regularly to maintain the motivation. The project progress and its positive and negative aspects were discussed during monthly meetings. During the meetings, the aim was to create a social environment that would encourage the transfer of experiences and the team work.
- The volunteer women faced a challenge when they invited their peer female refugees to the awareness sessions. In addition to the difficulties originating from limitations regarding time and social networks, there

was resistance to a new idea and initiative.

- The difficulty that the observers experienced in the project was that the volunteer women were busy with life challenges such as dealing with their daily difficulties and trying to recover from traumatic traces of war. In addition, the challenges were related to provide them with the equipment to hold their own awareness sessions, keep their will to learn and teach fresh and maintain the sustainability. Observers established a relationship of trust with the volunteers so that they gave necessary importance to the trainings.
- The project was short-running and the training of trainers, which was planned to be held for the volunteer women, had to be postponed as the process of content development, preparation and printing materials took longer than the planned. This delayed the commencement of women's meetings. As a result, the project teams became aware that in future activities, the content and material preparation processes should be included in the planning.
- Conducting a project with two field workers even though the project entailed intense and comprehensive fieldwork challenged the project team and project process. These two field workers observed the women's meetings and performed the data collection and documentation activities at the same time, which led to excessive workload.



Lessons Learned

While the good practices in the project have demonstrated which aspects of the project went well, the lessons learned have allowed to handle the needs of refugee women in informing them about the SGBV and civil rights and achieving an awareness. This section covers new project ideas, recommendations and new methods to develop based on the lessons learned.

- While working with volunteers is very motivating in itself, it cannot be said that the work of volunteers is a clear equivalent of professional work. The **creativity, care and commitment** of volunteers in the solutions they find keep alive the energy of the professional team working with them and their commitment to the work they do. Therefore, volunteer-based work was educating for the volunteers, the professional team and of course the organization. For this reason, it is important to create areas that allow volunteers and professionals to work together in similar projects.
- It was observed that working with the volunteers was mainly very empowering for the volunteers. Thanks to this project, people who have never done a voluntary work before have been empowered after voluntary work and created an obvious change in voluntary

coordination and motivation regardless of the size of the team. The key to achieving positive outcomes in projects involving volunteers is proper coordination of volunteers. For this reason, it is necessary to involve professionals who are responsible for the coordination of volunteers in similar projects.

- It is important to take into account the trainings that voluntary women will need when planning the project. When providing gender training for volunteers, it should be considered that they may need time to **change their knowledge, experience and attitudes**. In this project, which was conducted specifically in Hatay, the training of trainers lasted longer than planned and trainings were held more than planned, before the voluntary women started information activities in the field.
- It was ensured that the women who came together on the occasion of this project to work together and find solutions to the difficulties and problems encountered after the project. Local institutional contacts of the Support to Life have served as an effective facilitator at this point. Reyhanlı Women's Committee, which worked together in the project in Hatay, is an example of this facilitation process. The relations

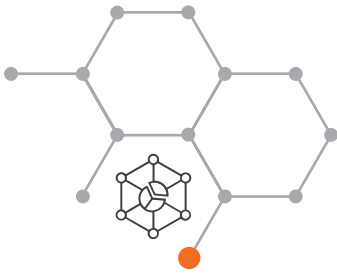


established in the project also contributed to the dissemination of experiences. Reyhanlı Women's Committee set an example in the activities carried out in Narlıca, İskenderun, Antakya and Altınözü. It was one of the long-term outcomes of the project that women in Narlıca managed to complete their own organization processes and form a **women's committee in Narlıca**. The projects that will support the local organization in the areas where the volunteers are working or the additional support for this purpose will be effective.

- In order to ensure the sustainability of the project and the impact created, peer education models should be developed. For the materials to be used in these trainings, more time should be allocated in the work plan and creative ideas should be put into practice. In similar projects, the tools (box games, etc.) can be used to facilitate for women to talk about their rights and to listen to each other's opinions through the cases.
- Thanks to the project, the areas in which refugee women need information and support were identified. Sexual health and reproductive health trainings and issues such as early marriage are worth mentioning. If the project will continue or a similar project will be carried out, it will be useful to develop and disseminate content on these topics that were observed in Hatay. Information trainings can be conducted based on the needs of local and refugee

people by creating separate pool of volunteer trainers on sexual and gender-based violence, civil rights, sexual and reproductive health and early marriage.

- The project aimed to reach women and girls. However, the portion of female child age group was low compared to women over 18 years of age. Considering the experience that the needs of women would differ, specific training modules can be designed for certain age groups and especially young people in future projects.
- It should not be overlooked that conducting projects aimed at empowering women is much more difficult in regions that lack gender perspective and where women are not at the center of decision-making processes. It would be a reasonable strategy to consider the security measures that could be taken against any kind of risk or restriction by means of the state channel or media.
- The project can progress by getting more support from local public institutions. Local public institutions and Provincial Migration Management, Provincial Directorate of National Education, Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Services and Ministry of Health can be contacted to make cooperation.



Monitoring and Evaluation

As part of the measurement and evaluation activities of the project, focus group interviews were held with volunteer women and telephone surveys were made with the participants. In the surveys, 130 randomly selected women were interviewed. The results of these evaluations were analyzed. According to the analysis, 71.8% of the respondents stated that they have gained a better awareness of women's rights and a better knowledge and competence about access to justice services specific to the SGBV.

Therefore, we conclude that the specific objective of the project, which was to ***"inform women of their peers who are not easy to reach, to provide them with information on access to protection services needed, and to provide them with access to these services"***, was achieved with a success rate of 71.8% in the indicator that "70% of the women who were focused say that they have gained a better awareness of women's rights and a healthier knowledge and competence about access to justice services specific to the sexual and gender-based violence".

Some of the findings obtained from the surveys (especially the fact that women do not have any knowledge about marriage and divorce) support the findings obtained by

volunteers in focus group discussions.

According to the data obtained from the questionnaire, the percentage of correct answers for 'divorce' and 'temporary protection right' was below average. In subsequent trainings, these two modules should be presented to the volunteers and participants in advance and feedback should be obtained to make the modules more efficient.

According to data from focus group interviews, the participants were particularly unfamiliar with the information they received in the areas of 'divorce' and 'violence'. The main reason for this was the different legal arrangements and dominant approaches in their countries. Legal arrangements can be better explained through real events, so that information can be transferred to the participants in a more realistic and efficient manner.

It is believed that the most important factor in encouraging women to become competent is to make women economically competent and this is a key factor for them to exercise their legal rights. Accordingly, revenue generating skills and business development should be the focus of future programs.



Real Stories From the Perspective of Volunteer Women

NASİBA

It's important for all of us to get the right information at the right time - especially if it's about our basic rights. This is exactly the story of Syrian English teacher Nasiba, whose paths were crossed with the Support to Life and then who became a volunteer instructor at women's meetings. Having great difficulties because she did not know her rights, Nasiba is now working with the Support to Life to prevent others from being in the same situation.



Nasiba is 34-year-old and a mother of three children. As the war broke out in Syrian and approached their house in Hama, she came to Gaziantep with her husband and children five years ago and her third child was born in Turkey. After living in Gaziantep for a while, the family migrated to Hatay for economic reasons and then settled in İskenderun. In

the meantime, Nasiba started teaching at a private school in Hatay. Nasiba started to experience problems with her husband and decided to divorce.

But the biggest problem was that there was no formal marriage between them. Since religious marriage is not officially valid in Turkey, she did not know what to do and had to waive her many rights to get divorced. The most difficult one was to give the custody of the children to her husband. To be able to get divorced, she waived all rights granted to her by the civil law in the presence of a religious officer and two witnesses:

“ I did not acquire any rights because of the divorce. Including my children. I was completely unaware of these rights. Because I signed that I waived my rights. I gave custody of my children to my husband.”

After all these difficulties, Nasiba managed to establish a new life, started to live with her siblings and volunteering in different NGOs. At that time, she learned about empowerment sessions of the Support to Life and received a two-day training on the topics of "Marriage-related Rights, Rights Related to Termination of Marriage, Rights of Sexual Assault Victims, Violence-related Rights and



Temporary Protection Rights". Nasiba describes the social rights she became aware of after that training as follows:

“ I was very excited to do something for women when I heard about this project. After the training, I learned that I have right on my children and they cannot be taken away from me. I would never give up my kids if I knew about this before. I was unaware of this process until I got this training. I learned a lot in the trainings. But I'm also very sad. I confronted the rights I waived and realized what I lost. There's nothing I could do about my kids anymore. If I knew about my rights, I would have a lot to do. Now I can see my children three days a month.”

Nasiba says that her biggest motivation for the project is to ensure that women in a similar situation are learning their rights before it is late:

“ I became a volunteer because there could be women out there who are in a more difficult situation. My situation may be solved in the future, but their problems could reach a point that cannot be solved. I'm teaching with the awareness that I can prevent this. I try to refer them to the right places. 18-year-old girls are now refusing marriage proposals without a formal marriage. I did these sessions in a hairdresser a few times, because it is a place to talk for Syrian women. As time goes by, our population increases with the suggestions we receive.”

HALIME

Halima is 37-year-old and mother of 4 children. She was forced to marry in Syria at the age of 16. Before the marriage, she was told that her husband is a lawyer but after the marriage, she learned that her husband did not graduate from the faculty and that he is not a lawyer. Halime's story of empowerment dates back to many years ago.



“ I started to work as a tailor when I was young. I used to sew and design clothes for my siblings and neighbors. When I was 24, I borrowed money from my friend and bought a sewing machine. I



participate in the events called 'day' with the women in the village, collected money and paid my debt to my friend. I was still working as tailor and with the money I collected from this profession, I started to take private design lessons when I was 26. I was progressing in this field and when I was 27, we opened a small tailor shop with the women in the village. I allocated one of the rooms in my house to tailoring works and 4 of my female friends started to work with me. Our jobs were getting better day after day. I started to save money and bought a nice house with the money I saved, but my husband did not accept this situation and registered the house in his name. When the war broke out, the works stopped, I ended my business, my equipment in the shop was stolen."

This is Halime's story of struggle for life until she migrated to Turkey. Halime and her family came to Turkey five years ago, her husband was not working in Turkey, just like he was not working in Syria, but they needed to earn a living. She started from scratch in Turkey. She had many difficulties. With the guidance of her neighbor, Halime found out about the Support to Life Association. She came to the house of Support to Life and applied for a sewing machine assistance. Then she started to visit the association more frequently. In the meantime, she borrowed money from a friend, bought two second-hand sewing machines and started to work better. When the things went well, she

paid her debt and started to pay for her living expenses.

When she is asked why she became a volunteer, she answers as follows:

“ I was always helpless; I suffered from my family, my husband. Now I want that no woman will experience the same things. What I want is that women express their opinions, feel strong, not to feel alone”

Halime describes the UN Women Project as follows:

“ I had no knowledge of the law, but thanks to this project, I have learned my rights especially about sexual offenses and violence. In Syria, I was taught to not talk when being exposed to violence, that's how my family taught me. In particular I was surprised when I learned the verbal abuse, as it was very normal in Syria. In addition to the verbal abuse, I learned that violence against children is a crime. I learned about our temporary protection rights, I told these to participating women in the sessions, then I felt empowered and empowering. After the project, I started to make my own decisions and express my ideas freely. I started to not care about what others say, what others do. I have goals for the future, and I will make them come true. For example, I've never studied in the university, now I'm studying academic Arabic.”



FATİMA

The story of Fatima is the story of a woman who preferred to fight alone for the things she believe in, who is happy and getting more powerful with it. She is 50-year-old, a civil engineer, never got married and works as a volunteer. 3 years ago, she travelled alone legally to Turkey by sea from Mersin. She shouldered the burden of a traumatic situation like war without anyone's help, she took her own decisions and she now keeps living with the same power. She is currently the manager of a center in Reyhanlı, giving assistance to Syrian refugees. Fatima says that she is happy for being a volunteer of the Support to Life Association, she has embraced the UN Women Project, and she will keep informing women about their rights despite the fact that awareness-raising sessions are over. Fatima describes her feelings during the sessions as follows:

“ I was feeling happy during the awareness-raising sessions. Also, thanks to the UN Women Project, I started to feel more powerful.” Thanks to what I learned in the project, I inform people about temporary protection rights at the center where I work as the manager. I feel more useful. I told the girls at the center not to marry before the age of 18, I talked to about 12 girls. Also, I tell other women at the center that if someone abuses their feelings and tries to convince them for religious marriage as a second women, they should not believe that. I talked to about 40 women on this issue.”

she expresses her opinions.





From the Perspective of Participants

- During the "Rights in Sexual Offenses" session, participating women told us about a man who verbally abused women in Narlica. Women were seriously disturbed by this situation and they did not know how to complain. After the session they were surprised by the information they learned, they said that they did not know that they have such rights and that they will complain if he repeats such abuse. They were pleased with the awareness-raising session.

- During the "Marriage-related Rights" session, one of the participating woman told that she forced her 14-year-old daughter to marry through religious marriage and her daughter got divorced when she was 15. After the awareness-raising session, the participant said the following: ***"I did not know that I and my daughter had such legal rights about the marriage. I wouldn't have forced my daughter to marry if I knew these things."***

- During one of the sessions on "Marriage-related Rights", one of the

participant women said that her husband intimidates her with second marriage, she was troubled about this issue before the awareness-raising session, but she's very happy and relaxed and she overcame her fears after attending the session.

- During the session on "Temporary Protection Rights", one of the participant women said that she and her son do not have temporary protection identity and thus she cannot enroll her child in the school. In these awareness-raising sessions, the participant learned her rights and when we contacted her again she said that her son was enrolled in the school and is now in the third grade.

- During one of the sessions on "Rights related to termination of marriage", a participant woman expressed her opinions as follows: ***"My husband left me three years ago but I couldn't get divorced because I was not aware of my rights. After this session I learned my rights and now I want to open a divorce case against my husband."***



Conclusion

Many studies in the literature emphasize that the immigration experience of women is different from that of men; the male-dominated laws and social order increase the gender-based violence against women and double their disadvantaged position in the immigration process; although the stories, thoughts and needs of refugee women may differ, the violence and problems they face with is similar; and it is required to create an awareness on access to basic human rights and to take actions in favor of women.

In line with the result of field survey conducted by the Support to Life Association and the needs in the field, a project was conducted in Hatay with the support of UN Women's Fund to empower refugee women, raise their awareness on sexual and

gender-based violence and contact their peers to facilitate their access to the protection services. In this project, 16 volunteer women organized information sessions for their peers, gave trainings on five topics and tried to raise awareness in these areas. The project was implemented in the districts of Hatay, including Narlıca, Reyhanlı and Altınözü, and reached 1231 people.

This project has been the first time Support to Life based its activities on volunteerism and implemented a peer-learning model. Thanks to the project, Support to Life has been able to demonstrate that community-based protection activities can create substantial impact and that empowering volunteers within the community can be a strategy to achieve sustainability.

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1. Buz, S., "Women in Migration: A Study in the Framework of Feminist Approach": Society and Social Service, Volume 18, Issue 2, October 2007
<http://www.acarindex.com/dosyalar/makale/acarindex-1423931329.pdf>
2. Ministry of Interior, Directorate General of Migration Management
http://www.goc.gov.tr/icerik6/gecici-koruma_363_378_4713_icerik



A pre-evaluation of the impact of project activities

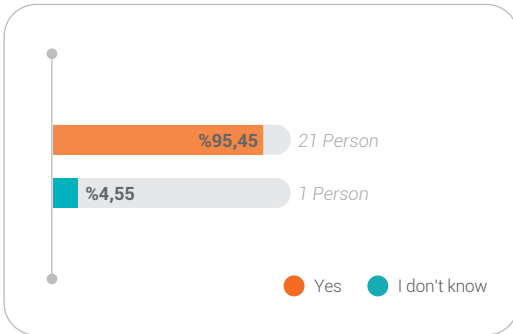
Knowledge and awareness measuring - evaluation survey

- A knowledge survey was developed to measure the knowledge level of participant women at the end of the project
- The survey was prepared in Turkish and Arabic and was conducted through the phone
- 157 women were reached via phone calls on October 10, 11 and 12, 2018.
- Three questions were asked for each session topic they took part in.

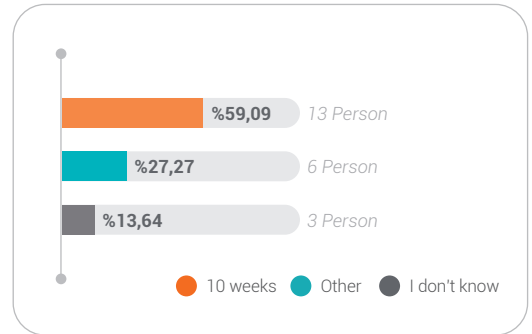


Rights in sexual crimes

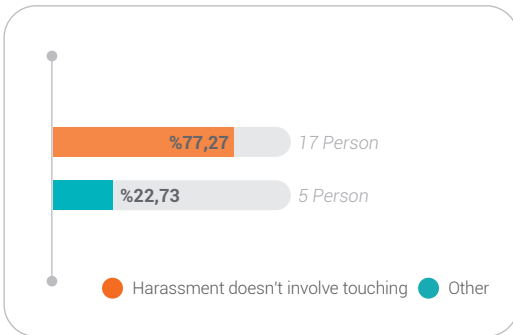
A.1. Is marital rape subject to punishment under the Turkish law?



A.3. For how many weeks of pregnancy is abortion legal in Turkey?



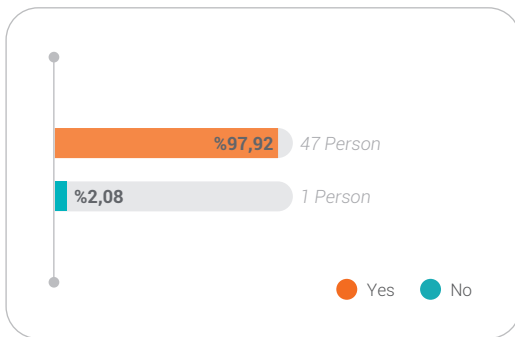
A.2. What's the difference between sexual harassment and sexual assault (rape)?



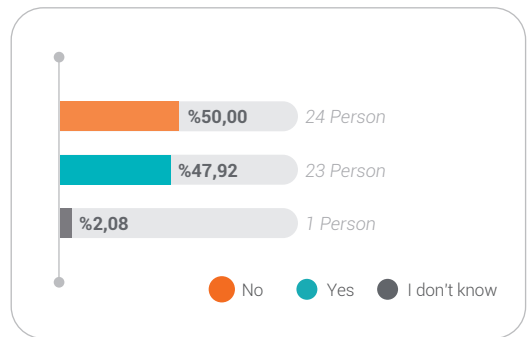


Marriage

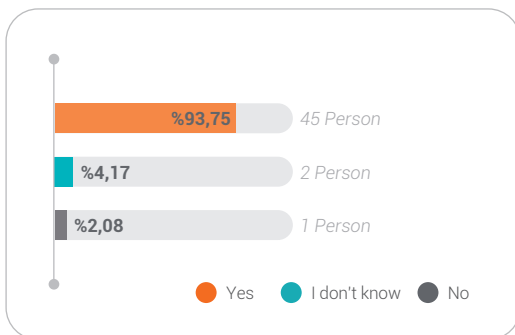
B.1. Is the couple to marry in Turkey (both persons) required to attend the wedding?



B.3. "The penalty for forced marriage in Turkey is smaller if the parents are responsible for it." Is this sentence correct?



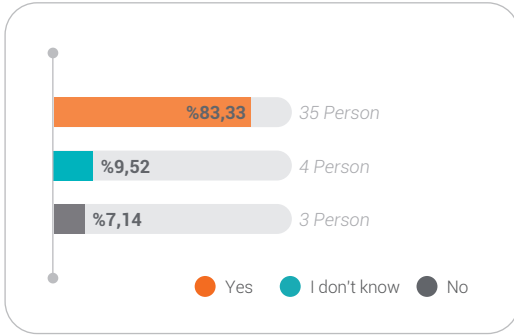
B.2. "If it is revealed that one of the spouses is married, the other party may request cancelation of marriage -no matter how many years it had been-." Is this sentence correct?



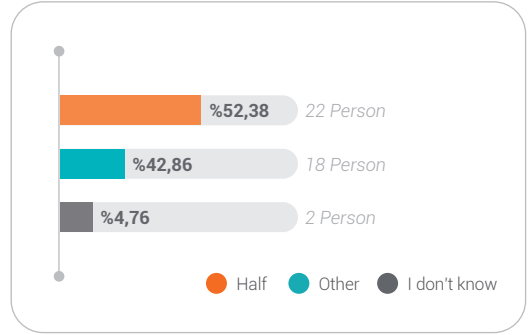


Termination of marriage

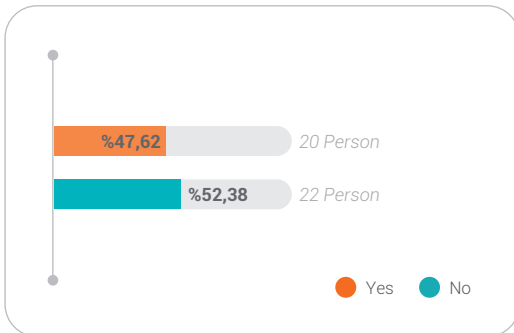
C.1. "It is possible to divorce in Turkey even if the marriage took place outside of Turkey." Is this sentence correct?



C.3. If the title deed for all the property acquired during marriage is registered in the husband's name, how much of this property does the wife deserve in case of divorce?



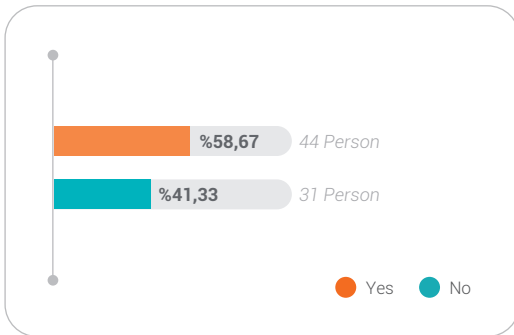
C.2. If one of the spouses left the household, can the other spouse file a lawsuit of divorce for this reason?



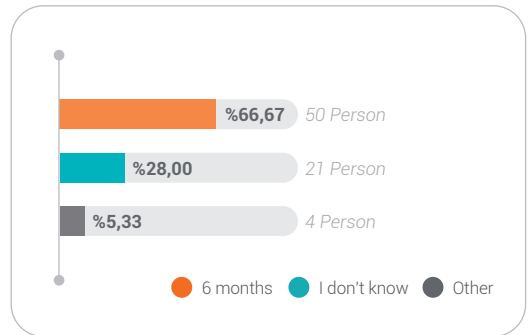


Rights in temporary protection

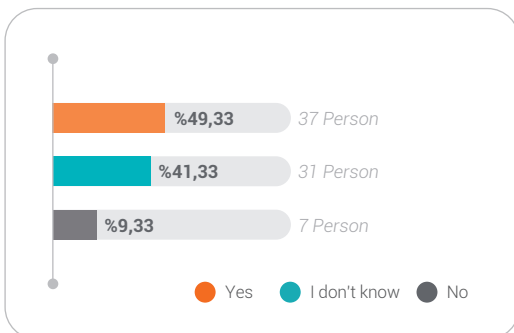
D.1. Can those under temporary protection use healthcare services for free apart from emergency and mandatory situations?



D.3. For how many months should one have been registered under temporary protection in order to obtain work permit?



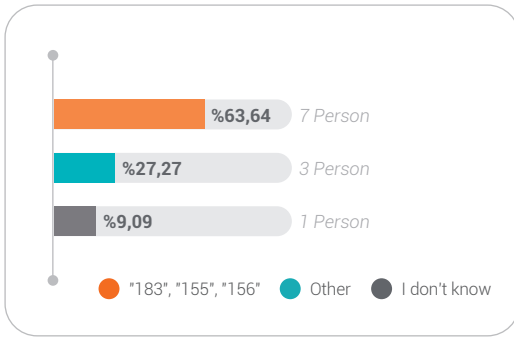
D.2. Can children go to school without Id registration?



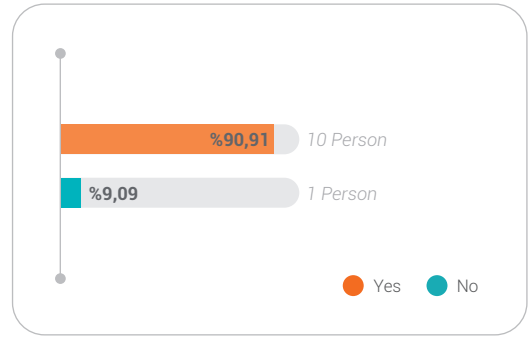


Rights regarding violence

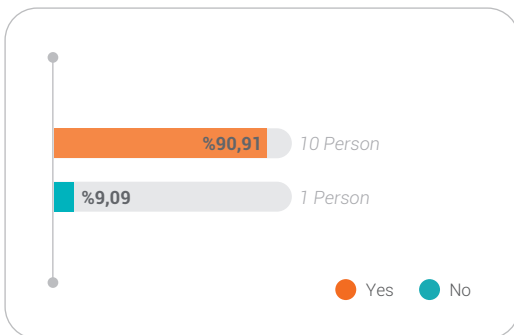
E.1. What is the hotline that a person who is subject to violence can call for support?



E.3. If a person who is subject to violence wants to have an injunction issued and if she can't do it herself, can someone else do it for her?

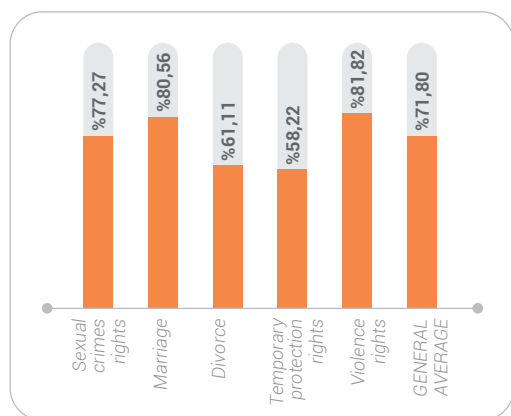


E.2. Can Syrian women use the Violence Prevention and Monitoring Centers called ŞÖNİM?





Percentage of answering correctly



Especially with regard to these two modules, the aim should be to receive feedback from the beneficiaries and ensure information is communicated more effectively.

Also, the fact that most people still think their penalty would be lower in forced marriage if the parents are responsible for it reveals that we need to spend more efforts for a strong communication of information so that established practices are questioned.

Areas that need improvement

The answers given under "termination of marriage" and "rights in temporary protection" are below the average correct answer percentages (71.80%).

Focus group meetings with volunteers were initiated with a definition of "focus group meeting." These meetings were planned under the supervision of a facilitator whose native tongue is Arabic. The meetings were planned in 60-90 minute sessions.

One meeting attended by six volunteers lasted 80 minutes, and another meeting attended by 4 women lasted 60 minutes.

	Correct answer percentages			
	1st	2nd	3rd	Average
Rights in sexual crimes	%95,45	%77,27	%59,09	%77,27
Marriage	%97,92	%93,75	%50,00	%80,56
Divorce	%83,33	%47,62	%52,38	%61,11
Rights in temporary protection	%58,67	%49,33	%66,67	%58,22
Rights regarding violence	%63,64	%90,91	%90,91	%81,82



Preliminary findings

Subject	Answers
Ways of being aware of the project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Our visits to the community center - Visit by the project officer
Motivation for volunteering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conveying useful information to people, offering support - Making an impression (as it was when we were doing our profession in the past) - Ensuring women's voice is heard - Sense of being someone who provides information, is respected and is strong - Feeling useful - Encouragement from the project officer - Considering it to be a duty
Reactions of families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - My spouse and my family is used to me working; they were proud of me and they supported (weighted answer) - Financial burden can be a challenge - They were worried about me - My brothers and my spouse didn't want it
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - They learned that they have rights on divorce and violence other than the rights they are familiar with; we told them these are not our own opinion but are the law; it was very difficult for them to accept that (Reasons: In Syria, 4 marriages are in line with the shariah. There is no requirement for civil marriage. It is easy for men to divorce. Women were never informed on these matters before) - Being perceived as a Support to Life employee; we were therefore subject to criticism regarding the practices of STL; we did our best to answer (weighted answer) - That the drinks weren't cold, shortage of brochures, paper and pencil - Very few of those who were invited attended the meetings - We were worried about the possibility of women getting angry owing to sense of injustice and building tension with their husbands - Participants expect financial aid - Some men forbid their wives to take part in STL events (on the grounds that it encourages them to revolt)



Subject	Answers
Information and support they obtained from the instructor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Printed banners made sessions easier - Over time, we began to convey information more conveniently - Tools and equipment were provided late - The laws should have been explained in more detail, some explanations weren't clear
Suggestions for the rest of the program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It shouldn't consist merely of informing; women need to have financial means in order to act in case of violation of rights. Vocational classes to generate financial income and financial support are necessary. (weighted answer) - Knowledge of A1 grammar shouldn't be a requirement to attend vocational classes at Public Education Centers (HEM) - We can't have laws and rules practiced just by explaining them. We need to present case studies proving that these laws serve us.
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Only women should be offered house or dorm - Even though having a knowledge of the law is useful, we cannot oppose to illegal practices in daily life. For example, if you oppose to your employer who doesn't implement the law, you risk being fired. Therefore, learning one's profession and practicing it might be better.
Some observations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Volunteers had hopes to be employed by STL



Some notes...

□ Especially in terms of divorce and violence, participants were reserved towards new information they obtained owing to prevalent ideas in their environment and the practices in their country.

□ Reservations toward new information may explain the low level of knowledge concerning “termination of knowledge” observed in the survey

□ Activities allowing participants to

discuss deeper on the lectured Turkish laws and practices through case studies and to gain information might be more efficient.

□ Providing income to women for their autonomy is considered to be the key priority in order to empower them to use their acquired knowledge when needed.

□ Programs for the access of women to income generating skills and works are needed.



Project Materials (Cloth Banners)

MEDENİ HAKLARIMIZ: BOŞANMA
الحقوق المدنية: الطلاق

MEDENİ HAKLARIMIZ: CİNSEL SUÇLARDA HAKLAR
حقوقنا المدنية: الحقوق في الجناية الجنسية

MEDENİ HAKLARIMIZ: EVLİLİK
حقوقنا المدنية: الزواج

MEDENİ HAKLARIMIZ: GEÇİCİ KORUMADA HAKLAR
حقوقنا المدنية: الحقوق في الحماية المؤقتة

MEDENİ HAKLARIMIZ: ŞİDDETLE İLGİLİ HAKLAR
حقوقنا المدنية: الحقوق المتعلقة بال العنف



Project Materials (Brochures)





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