

# GENDER THEMATIC SUCCESS

## STORIES



*With over 5.6 million registered refugees and over six million people displaced inside Syria, the Syrian Crisis remains the biggest cause of largest refugee influx in the world. Turkey alone is currently hosting over 3.6 million registered Syrian refugees. Based on statistics from the Directorate-General for Migration Management (DGMM), 46% of the refugees present in Turkey are female and 54% are male.*

*Globally, women are critical agents of change in the fight against poverty, malnutrition and socio-economic growth; however, in the forced migration situations, a large number of women are the breadwinners or the heads of the single-parent households. Adapting to a new life in a different country after fleeing the trauma of war is incredibly difficult. Syrian refugees and especially the women are facing difficulties in finding employment and education opportunities.*

*Female refugees are particularly vulnerable in terms of personal safety, basic needs and livelihood. Realizing the importance of role of women, Food Security and Agriculture (FSA) Sector partners are put tremendous efforts in supporting the initiatives involving women, and this document reflects some of the success stories of gender-responsive programming of FSA Sector partners in Turkey.*



Inter-Agency  
Coordination  
Turkey



## Food Security and Agriculture Sector Turkey 2019

### Background

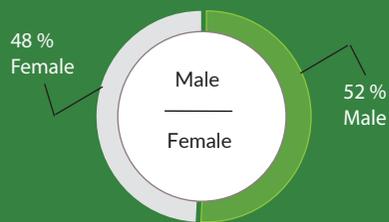
In 2019, Food Security and Agriculture Sector Partners have been effectively implementing gender-responsive programming by targeting affected Syrian women and host communities through skills development, economic empowerment and increased access to agricultural income generation activities under the Regional Refugee & Resilience Plan (3RP). 7,096 Syrians under temporary protection (SuTP) and host community members, nearly the half (47%) of which were women, benefitted from Food Security and Agriculture sector related activities until the end of August 2019.

More than 1,600 women (SuTP and host community members) were supported through productive and financial assets and skills, graduating from short-term interventions into longer-term employment opportunities – with a focus on entrepreneurship and job placement in food and agriculture sector.

Proficiency in Turkish language, low educational and skill levels are among the largest barriers for job placement of Syrian refugee women.

Compared to their home country, Syrian women are more active in Turkey. However, a majority of the women is involved in precarious and seasonal jobs.<sup>1</sup> The issues of childcare and transportation deter Syrian women from contributing economically, and despite being a generally young population, most hold seasonal jobs, which leave little opportunity for career development<sup>2</sup>. It is envisaged, to overcome structural barriers in accessing the labor market, Syrian refugee women need

long-term interventions and training rather than restrictive policies.



<sup>1</sup>Challenges and Obstacles for Syrian Refugee Women in the Turkish Labor Market, HKU

<sup>2</sup>As per Agricultural Livelihoods and Labour Market Assessment, FAO 2018



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations

*The vocational training that is provided through the FAO project empowers women. Syrian refugee women and women in host communities in Turkey play more active roles in society and achieve economic empowerment through participation in business life. These trainings are turning points for women – especially those who have not worked in the past and who have not had income. FAO has trained 300 women in the third phase of the project.*



There wasn't much of a future there for Rasha Kamar and her family during the Syrian conflict, especially after two of her sons were kidnapped. She fled to Turkey with her family, hoping to start again. "I came here for the future of my children," she says. "I moved to İzmir and started looking for jobs when I was out of money." Her husband, a construction worker, can work from time to time, but an injury to his left arm has left him with little movement. Kamar knew she needed to find work. "My neighbours informed me about the culinary courses provided by FAO," she says. "I thank FAO for these trainings, as they help us to stand on our feet. I learned to make Turkish dishes during these trainings, and now I am selling the food that I cook at home to restaurants."

## **JOB TRAINING: TURNING POINTS FOR WOMEN**

"The greenhouse work is difficult, she says, but it's also rewarding. Working in the greenhouse, Baş says, she and her husband are able to meet the needs of many more people than just themselves. In the greenhouses,

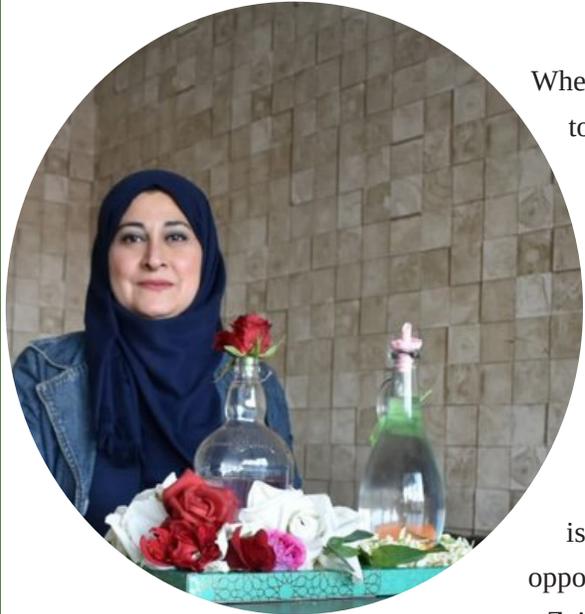
Baş works alongside her husband, and together they are able to cover their daily needs. Baş also works as a tailor during winter months to support the family budget.

The work also puts her in contact with other women farmers, women cooperatives. Perceptions are changing about women in agriculture, she says. The work not only gives her the ability to provide some of the family income, but it also helps her give her two children a great start in life.





*Zeinab,  
 “ Bringing  
 a family legacy  
 from Syria to  
 Turkey ”*



When the war broke out in Syria, Zeinab moved first to Antakya and then to Mersin. Being a fine arts graduate and a teacher in Syria, she was immediately drawn to the vast variety of flowers in Mersin. Her father and uncle were well known Attars.

“After doing some market research, I learned that in Mersin, and Turkey in general, the essence of flowers are not extracted naturally- it is just for commercial use and it is not natural at all.” Realizing that there was an opportunity in the Turkish market for natural flower

ex-tracts, Zeinab coordinated the retrieval of the machine she used in Latakia to extract the essence of plants. With the machine and flowers imported from Syria, she began her business and is doing well, “A month ago, a merchant from Latakia bought all my flower essence bottles to export them to the Netherlands.”

After graduating from the first cohort in Mersin, Zeinab reflected on her experience in the LIFE Project incubation program: “My experience in [the LIFE Project] was very positive. I was introduced to many people and specifically benefited from the training related to the techniques for pitching my business.” As one of the winner’s of the first business competition in Mersin, Zeinab plans to use the seed funding she received to buy two more machines to increase production. She is planning to partner with fellow LIFE members to develop her business and offer them income generating opportunities. “I dream of having my product with my name,” she says.



*The food entrepreneurship training program offers the members the skills required to develop their business ideas and everything needed to start their own successful food business through a comprehensive curriculum.*

**UNION KITCHEN** *ideiia*

  
 WILLIAM DAVIDSON INSTITUTE  
 AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

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*The IOM project targeted the agricultural needs for each area and trained Syrians as well as provided toolkits for beekeeping to empower the Syrians to meet their needs.*

Arife, 24 years old, was a young girl from a village in Aleppo. She could not continue her studies and had to work in a food factory until she got engaged to Ali. He also had a land and he used to take her to the field to watch him while working with vegetables and bee hives. “In the beginning, watching bees flying and trying to attack was a bit strange to me, but later I really liked it”.

She started to assist her fiancé who later became her husband in 2015, then the war reached her area in that year and destroyed their home. They had to flee Syria immediately and arrived to Gaziantep, Turkey.

The beginning was hard since they did not speak the language and her husband was barely able to find a job as he was working in seasonal jobs that provided unsteady income.

In early 2019, Ali heard about the agriculture project supported by IOM. The project targeted the agricultural needs for each area and trained Syrians to work and meet those needs. “my husband encouraged me to sign up for the project, so I did, I was so happy!”.

Arife received a training where she learned how to work with beehives. After the training, she received nine beehives, which she was able to expand to 14 and sell 10 kilos of honey. “I just like the feeling when I wear the bee suit, see how bees are flying and honey dripping into the jars. People are surprised when they see a woman working with bees without being scared, but I don’t care”. Arife is planning further expansion of her business. “it is a kind of work that doesn’t require long hours, so I can take care of my children Mahmoud and Amal and become self-reliant. It feels great!



“ People are surprised when they see a woman working with bees without being scared, but I don’t care” .



Living in Mardin for four years now, 43 years old H.S. is one of many Syrian participants in RET Natural Soap Workshop. Similar to the majority of other participants, she did not have any working experience nor income before the workshop.

“I have gained my economic independence since I became a participant here. More importantly, the income I am having makes me able to share my son’s schooling expenses with my husband, which I am proud to say”.

H.S. is only one of all other participants who are encouraged in discovering new skills, expressing themselves through the products they create. Through generating income, seeing fruits of hard work, taking responsibilities; the workshop makes participants realize what they are capable with once they put their efforts in any task.

For this reason, there is a noticeable improvement regarding women’s self- reliance once RET monitors the day each woman stepped after the workshop .

N.A. says “ I find peace in here. I am in a better place not only financially but mentally too”. The time spent in the workshop contributes not only towards income generation but also towards their mental wellbeing. Especially in families with low socio- economic standards, local and refugee women participate in the public sphere much less than men do in Mardin.”



*The Natural Soap Workshop in Mardin inspires women to be leaders of sustainable development, holistic empowerment and social cohesion*

Eğitim Yoluyla Kalkınma



Rehberlik Eğitim Toplumsal Yardımlaşma ve Kalkınma Derneği

The soaps produced by women, along with other items produced in RET’s vocational workshops, are sold under RET’s brand “Leap Natural” created collectively by women participants of the workshops.

“ My nuclear family members were the only people I knew before coming to workshop. Now, people in here are my family too.”



*‘ It takes me a few minutes to tell you what was happened, but it was so hard to see, live, and be in it, difficult to express my feelings. ’*



“

We lived in Homs, Syria. Our family was economically sound. I was a successful student, and the war broke out when I was in seventh grade. We experienced tremendous fear and anxiety. It happened so fast! My parents, brothers and sisters all left in a hurry. We no longer have a living environment in Syria. They took our two houses, assets and our jobs, everything. We escaped from Homs to the mountainous part of the city for our safety. But there was no safe place. The only solution was to flee to Turkey. We’ve had major trauma, we had to start from scratch.

It’s been six years since we are in Turkey. After arriving here, we first tried to have a roof over our heads. Then we started looking for work. Since my father was the only breadwinner in the family, we had difficulty paying the house, rent and utility bills. My brothers and I went looking for a job. It was during this period that I learned about a gastronomy course in Kabbalah, Mardin. I joined the course. I also learned Turkish language. I made friends. I learned Turkish cuisine and taught Syrian food to my friends. I was able to contribute to the income of my family that made me very happy.

The restaurant was a different experience for us, where we’ve become more intertwined with people. We also had a chance to start-up business in Turkey. I am currently working at KEKİK Restaurant with my five friends who have received vocational training on the course. We prepare special menus every day and offer them to our customers. We are very happy to see them satisfied. On the other hand, I am a business owner, I am in constant communication with people. I am very happy that this opportunity has opened for us.

*“ Support to Life Association has been very supportive of our lives. They offered job opportunities and provided us with a profession; This support, material and spiritual, make significant contributions to our lives. ”*

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When living in Syria, Nufe also worked in the fields. She had to take over responsibility at a very early age for her sick mother and two sisters. Especially after Nufe lost her two brothers in an attack, she had to carry all the burden alone. The ongoing conflict in Syria, worsened the family's financial status enormously. At one point it became too dangerous to work in the fields without shelter and being exposed to the bombs. In 2017, when the situation in Idlib became desperate, Nufe decided to flee to Turkey with one of her

sisters.

When she came to Turkey, Nufe had to cope up with many challenges. Like many other Syrian women who fled to Turkey, it was difficult for her to find a job. Most of them have no sufficient education and Turkish language skills.,therefore are forced to take short-term, low-skilled and low-paid jobs.

But since May 2019, Nufe's situation started to improve. Today she is one of 34 women participating in an agricultural project in the Turkish province of Hatay, only a few kilometres from the Syrian border, promoted by Welthungerhilfe (WHH). Together with other women and their families, Nufe is cultivating her own 3,000 square meters land, provided under the project. In order to support Syrian families in vegetable cultivation and to provide them with a stable income in the long run, WHH not only provides the farm land but also irrigation systems, seeds, fertilisers, pesticides and agricultural tools as well as professional advice.



**“ Being  
Independent  
is awesome! ”**

***“ I feel so contented and I am overjoyed to have a job and my own piece of land. I can go to bed without worrying about tomorrow, because I know I have a job and can support my family. It's a great feeling to be independent. I have my own peppers to take care of and earn my own income! I don't depend on a man's help - it's so amazing! ”***

“ Nothing can be compared before and after attending to the Al Resala Foundation (RF) Center, it transformed my life ”

Marve Koussa is a 24 years old, divorced woman with two children. She was just 15 years old when she got married. She had been forced to flee her country and seek asylum in Turkey, leaving behind her society with its customs and traditions, and stepping into new societies, where Marve faced new problems alien to her culture. These circumstances and emerging financial problems escalated to the point of getting Marve divorced, and prevented her from seeing her children. In this very difficult time, she decided to live with her parents. The financial incapacity of her parents pushed Marve to look for an employment opportunity in order to help her parents. Al Resala Foundation (RF)



helps people especially vulnerable women to find employment opportunities, with various types of support. One such example of this support is Marve who attended the food processing training voluntarily, and enrolled in the Turkish language course along with her friends. She is also selected for CFW project, under Al Resala Foundation in the food sector, besides, she is helping the new trainees during cooking sessions, “ RF Center has changed my life, now I have a job and many friends. Nothing can be compared to before and after attending the center, it transformed my life”.

Al Resala Foundation provides income-generation to the in the AR Center, Kilis with the aim of strengthening and empowering vulnerable families, especially women.



# CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Women play a key role in any society especially in food security and agriculture sector in Turkey; they are the backbone of the rural economy. Empowering women and investing in activities supporting them will lead to significant improvements in livelihoods of Syrians under Temporary protection (SuTPs). It's, therefore, of utmost importance to bridge the gender yield gap as it will boost food and nutrition security at household level, as well as increase agricultural output for SuTPs and host communities, which eventually will have a positive impact of the overall economy of host country. To achieve this goal through FSA sector, the sector partners are thus recommended to promote the following aspects:

- Promote self-reliant food security which will prevent resorting to negative food based coping strategies.
- Provide training on food preparation and nutrition to help improve the nutritional value of food consumed by Syrians under temporary protection by taking into account the specific needs of pregnant and lactating women as well as considering tailored approaches to engage single male-headed houses.
- Strengthen strong linkages between FSA and other sectors to pursue to ensure that information campaigns, social protection schemes, protection services, and Turkish language training opportunities are duly extended to rural areas especially targeting women.
- Further strengthen the established two-way communication and feedback mechanisms; which are tailored to the needs of women, girls, men, and boys and people in marginalized groups, such as the elderly or people with disabilities.
- Continue to collect age and sex disaggregated data from all stakeholders to identify gaps and specific needs; assess the access and needs for food and agriculture livelihoods of both Syrian under temporary protection and vulnerable host community members (women and men).
- Strengthen capacity of national and local partners in order to insure gender sensitive, sustainable and proper implementation of food security and agricultural activities.
- Support home-grown school feeding and school gardens, and links economic empowerment of women smallholders, food security and nutrition of girls in school, and improved education outcomes.
- Provide micro-credits to women to establish small businesses.
- Provide awareness raising sessions on how different roles of women, girls, men and boys can contribute to agricultural production and food security and prevent what has been called "gender blindness".
- Conduct a gender-inclusive market assessment or value chain mapping, engaging men and women and different male and female market actors at different levels to understand the needs of each group.

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