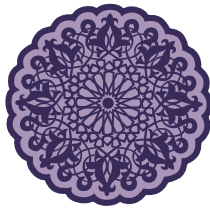




CTDC  
Centre for Transnational  
Development and Collaboration



## Syrian Refugees in Turkey: Gender Analysis



CTDC  
Centre for Transnational  
Development and Collaboration

## Commitment, Transparency, Diversity, and Credibility.

The views expressed in this publication are based on a qualitative situational assessment addressing the Syrian refugees in Turkey from a gendered perspective, focusing on refugee women, gender based violence, gender roles and gender performances among the refugee population. The report is based on secondary data, as well as primary data reflecting the views of refugees interviewed and practitioners working in refugee supporting organisations.

Photo Credit: Svetlana Kosenko, Bayt al-Amal for Education  
Muhammed Muheisen

© 2015 Centre for Transnational Development and Collaboration (CTDC). All rights reserved.

Centre for Transnational Development and Collaboration  
83-80 Long Lane, London  
EC1A 9ET, United Kingdom  
00 44 20 70960948  
[info@ctdc.org](mailto:info@ctdc.org)  
[www.ctdc.org](http://www.ctdc.org)

# Table of Contents

Acronyms & Abbreviations	1
Executive Summary	2
Introduction	4
Methodology	6
Interviews And Meetings	6
Ethnographic Data	6
Social Media And Secondary Research	7
Research Process	7
Ethical Considerations	7
Living Conditions: Gender Analysis	8
Legal Status And Employment	8
Employment: Gendered And Child Labour	9
Housing And Integration	11
Community Relations And Women's Isolation	12
Breaking Gender Binaries	13
Sexual And Gender Based Violence	14
Marriage And Sex Work	14
Imposed Radicalism	15
Sexual Minorities	16
Conclusions And Recommendations	17
References	19

## Acronyms & Abbreviations

3RP	Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan 16-2015 in Response to the Syria Crisis
AFAD	Turkish Disaster & Emergency Management Authority
AI	Amnesty International
AKP	Turkey's Justice and Development Party
CI	CARE International
CTDC	Centre for Transnational Development and Collaboration
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
GBV	Gender Based Violence
IHH	The Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IRC	International Rescue Committee
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and Levant
LGBTQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual and Transgender and Queer
SGBV	Sexual and Gender Based Violence
UN	United Nations
UNDEF	The United Nations Democracy Fund
UNHCR	United Nations Higher Commissioner for Refugees



## Executive Summary

Turkey has been labelled, for a long time, as the most welcoming country to Syrian refugees, taking in the largest number of refugees in the region. Due to this misconception, in addition to other political factors, little research has been carried out about the situation of Syrian refugees in Turkey, and even less research has been conducted to address the differential experiences of Syrian refugee women and sexual minorities in Turkey. Building on, and complementing, the UN's 3RP (Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan 2015-16 in Response to the Syria Crisis), this report focuses on the needs and situation of both Syrian refugee women and LGBTQ individuals through a gender analysis of Syrian refugees situation in Turkey. Between March and October 2015, CTDC carried out an extensive literature review, social media analysis, and collected primary data in Turkey, including in-depth interviews, ethnographic data and meetings. This research aims to assess the ways through which issues related to gender and sexuality have been addressed and ignored when dealing with the Syrian refugee population in Turkey. The research also aims to provide an overall comprehensive picture of the situation, through reviewing the main issues facing Syrian refugee women, men and LGBTQ groups through a gender analysis of their situation. The analysis highlighted the following main problems:

- **Living Conditions and Poverty:** Non-camp Syrian refugees live under very harsh conditions, and many of them live under the line of poverty. The lack of humanitarian aid distributed to non-camp refugees is pushing many of them into overcrowded and over expensive housing, and makes them prone to exploitation as cheap labourers and women become more vulnerable to sexual exploitation. Additionally, women are experiencing different forms of violence, exploitation and harassment.
- **Legal Status:** The legal status of the Syrian refugees as 'guests' in Turkey, awaiting either repatriation or resettlement in a third country, causes them feelings of unsettlement and insecurity. Syrians also feel that the Turkish government's policy towards them is unclear and inconsistent. Recent law prohibiting their travel between Turkish cities would have a grave impact on their livelihoods and wellbeing.

- **Language Barrier:** Unlike refugees in Jordan and Lebanon, Syrians in Turkey struggle with the language barrier between them and the Turkish speaking local community. Language barrier also impedes Syrians access to both employment and education. However, Syrian participants mostly perceived their lives in Turkey as temporary, and mostly felt that learning Turkish language is not necessary for their future.
- **Lack of Opportunities:** Due to their legal status, there are very few higher education and employment opportunities available to them in Turkey. This lack of opportunities worsens their living conditions and financial situation, and also causes most of them to feelings of despair and lack of motivation and depression. Lack of opportunities for men particularly influences women as men start taking out their frustration on women and girls through violence and verbal abuse.
- **Isolation:** Non-camp Syrian refugees, and particularly women, suffer from isolation, as some of them feel insecure and unsafe in Turkey. This sense of isolation is imposed on women more than anyone, as women are perceived as carriers of their families' honour. Lack of social cohesion and integration within the Turkish society also adds to this isolation, as refugees' movement and socialisation remains restricted to the refugee community. Isolation also affects LGBTQ folk, especially that a large number of them is not out to their families, or to the community.
- **Unregistered Marriages:** Due to poverty and bad living conditions, Syrian women find themselves in situations where they and their families think that marriage is the best way for them to improve their livelihoods. Syrian women who are taken as second wives end up worse off, either during or once the marriage ends. In Turkey, second marriages are not recognised by law, and therefore, women who become second wives have no legal rights at all, in relation to custody and financial support. Unregistered marriages have also become part of a sex industry, with some marriage contracts being created for short-term marriages, or in other words to legitimise sex.

Some women are also forced into these marriages by families, who, due to poverty, exchange their daughters in marriage based on promises of financial support. Very little is being done to end this phenomenon, which places women in very vulnerable positions.

- **Child Marriage:** Similar to Jordan, young girls are being married off to older men, also on the premise of better future and end to poverty. Not only do those marriages influence girls' experiences and put an end to their childhoods but also impact their psychological and emotional wellbeing. Young girls, with little hope, aspirations and access to education, who are being taken on as second wives and child brides; also suffer from sexual abuse. Whereas some efforts to raise awareness of the complications of child marriage and the impact it has on young girls well being, there also needs to be legal mechanisms that can put an end to this phenomenon.
- **Child Labour:** Poverty, little access to education, and lack of aspirations push many young boys and girls to pursue income-generating activities to provide for themselves and their families. In the case of Syrians in Turkey many families have lost the main breadwinner, and with little aid and support, the only option for them is for young children to work. Child labour is unregulated, and in many cases children face abuse, bullying and harassment by their employers, who use them as cheap labourers due to their extreme financial needs.
- **Radicalism:** Women and young children are particularly prone to waves of radicalisation taking place among the refugee population. Not based on an ideological position, Syrian women find themselves in situations where they have to cover their bodies in order to receive aid. The fact that southern Turkish cities are attractive to ISIL foreign fighters, en route to Syria, tourism marriage is also a phenomenon taking place, with fighters taking on wives and leaving them behind. Poverty and the fact that Turkish communities are conservative in areas where refugees are located are providing fertile soil for the exploitation of women and children by radical groups offering them financial aid and support.

- **LGBTQ Sensitivity:** The challenges Syrian refugee LGBTQ folk face in Turkey are different from their heterosexual counterparts. Due to poverty and lack of access to resources, LGBTQs and especially gay men are resorting to sex work to make a living particularly in Istanbul. The lack of organisations dealing with LGBTQ refugees is leading many of them to feelings of isolation and fear of reporting harassment. On the other hand, the Syrian community's rejection of LGBTQ individuals pushes many of them to live on their own, or lead closeted life styles in fear of persecution and discrimination. Moreover, the locations of 'satellite cities' within conservative areas in Turkey causes fear and a sense of isolation among those who end up in such locations.

This report will shed light on the different experiences of the Syrian refugee population in Turkey, and will also review the main challenges facing refugees from a gendered perspective. The report is divided into eight main finding sections, looking at living conditions in Turkey in general, employment and child labour, community relations and women's isolation, GBV, breaking the gender binaries within the context of refuge, the phenomena of child marriage, sex work and co-wives, violent extremism and radicalisation processes with regards to women, and sexual minorities.



# Introduction

Since the eruption of the crisis in Syria, Turkey has had an open-door policy to Syrian refugees, making the country the largest host of Syrian refugees in the whole world. Currently, and according to UNHCR data (2015), there are 1,938,999 Syrian refugees in Turkey, and according to the ILO (2015) 1.5 million of those refugees reside outside the camps, particularly in Gaziantep, Şanlıurfa, Kilis, Hatay, Adana (ORSAM, 2015), and Mardin, as well as, but to a smaller extent, Istanbul (Cagaptay, 2014). The camps in Turkey are state-run in coordination with UNHCR, by AFAD. AFAD is responsible for providing camp refugees with their basic needs. Very few humanitarian agencies are allowed to enter the camps to provide further support for the refugees, IHH is considered the main one with the most visible presence inside the camps. It has been observed by several researchers that the situation in the camps in Turkey is superior to other refugee hosting countries (ORSAM, 2014). However, the majority of Syrians in Turkey are non-camp refugees, who do not receive humanitarian support. The legal status of camp and non-camp Syrian refugees in Turkey is ambiguous, and Syrians are treated legally as 'guests' with temporary residence permits. Despite the fact that Turkey is signatory to the 1951 Geneva Convention, it is signatory with reservation pertaining to 'geographic limitations'. This reservation means that Turkey is willing to settle European refugees, however non-Europeans fleeing a humanitarian situation are only to be provided with temporary shelters. For Syrian refugees, this means that their status in the country is temporary, and awaiting either resettlement in a third country, or repatriation once the crisis comes to an end. The legal status imposes restrictions on refugees' livelihoods, and particularly those who live outside the camps. With some refugees having been in Turkey for over four years, this means that their living conditions are difficult, as access to regular employment, social integration, education, and state-run services is inconsistent and leaves them in a state of prolonged limbo. According to AFAD (2013 and 2014), non-camp refugees oftentimes find themselves living in ruins and makeshift arrangements, and those who can afford rent are often exploited by landlords, and many live in overcrowded overpriced houses.

Similar to many refugee situations, hostility towards the Syrian refugees has increased over the past years, with some claiming that Syrians are stealing their jobs, causing economic inflation, and creating political instability in Turkey. However, from a macro-economic perspective, Syrian refugee flows have not negatively impacted Turkey's consistently growing economy, and in some cases it contributed to growth in some sectors (Ximena, et. al, 2015). On the micro level the host community has been affected. The country overall was affected also by the decrease of formal trade between Syria and Turkey, but the most vulnerable have been the small farming communities, and small or family businesses (FAO, 2013). In many of the refugee hosting areas, the local agricultural community is poor, and could be considered 'eligible' for financial support. Thus, the most affected communities within Turkey have been those working in agriculture. Small farmers in the south of Turkey used to depend on Syria to bring in cheap goods to subsidize their agricultural production. This has been disrupted due to the crisis, and that is the main reason behind their affected situation, more than the presence of refugees per se. The loss of cross-border trade with Syria has affected Kilis massively for instance as many depend on small-scale farming. The World Bank Analysis of the impact of refugees on the Turkish economy released in August 2015, suggests that the refugee influxes did not negatively affect the labour market in Turkey, and it mainly impacted those who had been exploited prior to the arrival of refugees, such as informal, seasonal and unregulated labourers, including farmers, construction and factory workers. On the other hand, large business firms have been benefiting massively from the crisis, as aid and humanitarian assistance distributed to the refugees is often procured from Turkish businesses, which created an opportunity for them to increase their sales.



On the social level, little efforts have been made to socially integrate the Syrian refugees. Based on DRC assessment, which included 2100 Syrian families in the south of Turkey in 2014, published in the 48th Edition of Field Exchange Reports, 60 per cent of the sample reported discrimination from the host community (Seferis, 2014). However, gender analysis of data gathered about the livelihoods of Syrian refugees in Turkey has been missing, despite the importance of such analysis for the design and implementation of programs addressing the needs of refugees depending on their social positioning. According to UNHCR (2015) around 75 percent of the Syrian refugees in Turkey are women and children, and there is no data available about Syrian LGBTQ groups in the country. Before the Syrian refugees crisis, women and LGBTQ activists in Turkey called for equal rights and better political representation, particularly under AKP-led governments. Child marriage, arranged marriages, unofficial polygamy, and persecution of LGBTQ individuals were issues that had already existed in some Turkish cities and particularly in conservative and rural areas. Domestic violence, physical and sexual violence against women were also high in Turkey prior to the arrival of refugees. However, the refugee crisis has contributed to an intensification of violence against women and LGBTQ groups. On the one hand, Syrian refugee women and LGBTQ groups in Turkey became subject to these inequalities, and on the other hand, Syrian refugee women and LGBTQ groups have also brought with them a history of marginalization and inequality. The situation of women and LGBTQs are different from those of men and non-minority sexual groups. Before presenting the findings, the following section provides an overview of the methodology used for this research paper, and sheds light on the methods that were deemed most appropriate to address this topic.



# Methodology

The methodology for this report was designed and implemented by the Centre for Transnational Development and Collaboration, through both mainstreaming research activity into project implementation and stand-alone research activity including in-depth interviews, ethnographic data, and meetings and observations. The methodology has been designed by an expert methodologist in the field of Sociology in the Middle East. Due to the limitations of carrying out comprehensive surveys that are representative of the refugee population, the data collection methods were mainly qualitative, with the aim of giving voice to research participants, particularly the refugees. Fieldwork took place between March and October 2015, by a team of researchers and trainers deployed for missions in Turkey. For this report, CTDC has also utilized interview data collected for previous reports assessing the development, education and humanitarian sectors targeting Syrians in 2014.

## Interviews and Meetings

Fieldwork mainly took place in the south of Turkey, in Kilis, Gaziantep, Reyhanli and Antakya. Interviews and meetings were conducted with around 350 persons, refugees and practitioners in the field. Whereas the majority of the data collected took place face to face, a number of interviews took place over Skype particularly with practitioners, who did not have the time to meet in person.

The interviews were in-depth and semi-structured, which were designed in the form of a conversation that is based on creating a shared coequal status between the interviewer and the interviewee (Fontana and Frey, 2005). Some open-ended questions were also used because they are more flexible and allow respondents to supply more depth (Cargan, 2007). Interview notes were taken, and the interviews were not tape-recorded, as recording can sometimes push participants to censor their speech (Gobo, 2008). All interviews and conversations with refugees took place in Arabic, however, some non-Syrian practitioners working for international organisations preferred to speak in English.

Some of the interviews with the refugees were in the form of an informal focus group, with a number of refugees participating in a discussion that was led during the delivery of a training course, or workshop. Moreover, interviewees were guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality to ensure their safety. Therefore, throughout the report, we will be using the terms participant and interviewees when quoting a research participant.

## Ethnographic Data

During site visits and project implementation, observations were documented in the form of field notes. This method has been used to account for 'unplanned elements of... field experience' (Bradburd, 1998: xiii). This unplanned, or flexible, type of ethnography is often based on a 'series of unplanned ethnographic encounters which simply happen en route to the focal encounters intended to take place' during fieldwork (Tomaselli, 2005: 8). This ethnography focused on dialogue and conversational exchanges between the researcher and the target group, rather than mere observations of conditions and events. CTDC has chosen this method of ethnography as it gives voice to research participants (Sanger, 2003). Moreover, some interaction has been observed particularly in the context of mixed-sex workshops and training courses, and some of the data has been used for this report.

## Social Media and Secondary Research

Secondary research or literature reviews took place throughout the research process, consulting and remaining updated on all reports relevant to Syrian refugees in Turkey. Moreover, social media analysis has also been used to identify trends and developments related to Syrian refugees in general, and women and LGBTQ groups in particular. Social media analysis has been carried out to identify inter-community dynamics, and public opinion on refugees' livelihoods in Turkey, the ways through which refugees make use of social media, and the host community's perception of refugees. These resources were also used to define some of the interview questions, as the interviews were at times used for verification of information and data available through secondary sources.

## Research Process

1. Define Parameters
  - 1.1 Syrian Refugees in Turkey,
  - 1.2 Differential Experiences of Refugees, by Gender and Sexuality,
  - 1.3 SGBV,
  - 1.4 Social Impact on Host Community.
2. Research Design
  - 2.1 Set Time-Frame,
  - 2.2 Decide Data Collection Methods,
  - 2.3 Brainstorming Sessions.
3. Data Collection Methods
  - 3.1 Secondary Sources,
  - 3.2 Interviews,
  - 3.3 Project Activities,
  - 3.4 Ethnographic Data
  - 3.5 Already available Data,
  - 3.6 Social Media Analysis.
4. Data Analysis
  - 4.1 Thematic Analysis,
  - 4.2 Content Analysis.
5. Reporting Results
  - 5.1 Comprehensive Report.

## Ethical Considerations

In all of its research activities, CTDC adopts and adheres to the British Sociological Association's (BSA) Statement of Ethical Practice, which takes into consideration the following main points:

- Participants safety,
- Research integrity,
- Researchers' safety,
- Participants' Informed consent,
- Anonymity, privacy and confidentiality.

Due to ethical concerns, children have not been included in the research as participants, and to ensure the inclusion of their needs in this research, parents were interviewed about their children's needs in general.





## Living Conditions: Gender Analysis

Based on 'Engaged Theory' to measure the quality of life through assessing ecology, economics, politics and culture (Liam, et. al, 2012), all research participants expressed their lack of satisfaction with the quality of their lives in Turkey. In this section, we will review the living conditions through looking at the economic conditions of refugees and their positioning politically through employment and legal status, the ecology and culture through housing and environment and social integration from the perspective of the refugees. This section will also address this from a gendered perspective, through looking at women's experiences of employment and integration.

## Legal Status and Employment

Over the past few months, global attention has been given to the phenomenon of Syrians leaving Turkey using life-threatening routes by sea to flee to Europe. It comes at no surprise that the living conditions of Syrians in Turkey, and especially non-camp refugees, are very harsh, and they are becoming increasingly harsher with Turkish authorities imposing restrictions on their freedom of movement within the country. Syrians in Turkey do not have the right to work in regular employment unless they obtain a work permit, granted for foreign nationals but is difficult to obtain, and requires the person to have (1) a valid passport, (2) a residence permit, and (3) a job offer (Amnesty International, 2014). One of the major issues facing refugees is the fact that many of those who fled to the south of Turkey come from rural and marginalised areas in Syria, which meant that many of them did not have valid passports at the time of their flight.

On the other hand, applying for a residence permit in Turkey is also difficult, as due to their financial situation a large number of Syrians cannot even afford to pay for residence permits. As it is difficult to estimate the number of Syrian refugees who managed to obtain work permits, AI claims that they have not been able to identify any Syrians with work permits throughout their research in 2014, CTDC has not been able to identify any Syrians with work permits either throughout the period of research.

Syrians are issued with a document called a kimlik, which grants them the right to reside as 'guests' in Turkey, with no employment rights. A male interviewee in Gaziantep said: 'you can work for a Turkish employer if you show them the kimlik, but your employment will be considered seasonal, I mean whenever you are needed, he will ask you to come to work, and they would not pay a Syrian what they would pay a Turk'. Another interviewee in Gaziantep said: 'I am educated, and I have a degree, and all I can do here is construction work or factory work. It does not pay much and it is usually very bad working conditions, and the Turks here do not like us'. According to ORSAM (2015) Syrian refugees who are engaged in income generating activities are working in areas that the locals are not willing to work, thus filling a gap in the unskilled labour market. During an interview with a Syrian doctor, she said: 'many Syrian refugees have to work, as they do not have access to aid, and they do work especially those who do not live in refugee camps, in the south of Turkey you find a Syrian working in almost every shop. They work in restaurants, clothing boutiques, etc. you will find them in all sectors that need informal labour'. When asked how they are allowed to work, the doctor answered: 'the Turkish authorities are adopting the 'turning a blind eye' policy and that is why Syrian refugees are involved in informal activities'. To add to that, small and medium sized Turkish businesses benefit from the cheap labour Syrians provide to their businesses, making Syrians a desired and easy target for low wages and exploitation as cheap labourers.

Legally, Syrian refugees have no political rights in Turkey at all, and this is also due to their legal status as 'guests' within the country. In September 2015, the Turkish authorities have also made it illegal for Syrians to travel between Turkish states without prior state-issued permits. In October 2015, a female research participant in Kilis stated: 'I know two people who were stopped by authorities today trying to travel between Gaziantep and Istanbul, and they informed them that from now on they will need permits to travel between Turkish provinces. And people wonder why Syrians want to leave Turkey, in some cases they would let you travel if you have a residence permit but many people do not'. Another research participant said: 'to obtain a residence permit you need to show a bank statement with 12,000 TL (equivalent to 4,100 USD) in your account, house contract and health insurance.' In addition to that, many refugees expressed that they always feel in a state of limbo with regards to Turkey's policy towards the refugees, and many reported that they do not know their legal rights within Turkey and whether they have any.

Research showed that there are issues relating to refugees access to education as well. Five years into the conflict and access to education is still problematic for non-camp Syrian refugees. While in theory, Syrians should have access to state-run Turkish schools, this access is conditioned upon them obtaining a kimlik. The kimlik is given to Syrians for free, and they do not need to show documents, except for a paper from the mayor confirming their identity. Requirements however differ between Turkish states, and the requirements can vary and are generally inconsistent. This has led many children to stop schooling and pursue income-generating activities to support themselves and their families. For young girls, in addition to the obstacle of obtaining a permit, many families are not allowing their daughters to go to schools to 'protect' them from harassment on the streets. In Reyhanli, one female interviewee said: 'my brother accompanies me whenever I leave the house. He takes me to shops or to visit friends and he waits for me outside. He does not let anyone walk on the street on their own, not even my mother. I am here talking to you, and he is waiting for me outside the centre. He feels that it is not safe for women to walk on the streets here on their own, he says he fears kidnapping and harassment.'

Social, legal and language challenges restrict the non-camp Syrian refugees' ability to access employment, education and in some cases medical services. These challenges also create dependence on humanitarian aid organisations, and prohibit the refugees from improving their livelihoods or becoming socially and economically integrated. Participants, unanimously, felt that Turkey is not a long-term station for them, and they all had an overwhelming desire to either go back to Syria or seek refuge in a European country. For more than four years now, Turkey has been treating the Syrian refugees as 'guests', and with no end in sight for the Syria crisis, some measures need to be taken to improve refugee livelihoods, on the political and the economic levels.

## Employment: Gendered and Child Labour

Women and children constitute 75 per cent of the whole refugee population in Turkey. According to AFAD (2013), female-headed Syrian refugee households constitute 22 per cent of the non-camp Syrian refugee population. Women heads of households oftentimes care for a large number of people, predominantly children, but can also include other family members, such as their siblings, parents, or in-laws. This places them in a position of responsibility and adds to the burden of their refugee flight (Tibbs and Mubarak, 2015). With restrictions on Syrian refugees' employment in Turkey, as previously explained, the burden is even heavier for women heads of households trying to secure a living for themselves and their household members. The Turkish position on granting Syrians work permits seems like one that perceives the refugee situation as temporary and rejects the economic integration of Syrians. In a statement by the Minister of Work and Security (Afanasieva, 2015), he said: 'there cannot be a general measure to provide them with work permits because we already have our workforce... we are trying to educate and train our unemployed so they can get jobs in Turkey'.

For women, by law access to work is similar to that of men, however, women often find themselves engaging in income generating activities such as petty trading, seasonal agricultural work and cleaning. The challenges women reported in relation to work and employment in Turkey were based on fears of harassment, lack of child day care, bad working conditions and discrimination by Turkish employers. A female interviewee from Reyhanli said: 'I am cleaning offices these days. I refuse to clean houses because one of my friends here, a Syrian from Aleppo, went to clean a house once, and the man in the house sexually harassed her'. She added that her friend could not report the harassment to anyone in fear of Turkish authorities' reaction, as she said: 'they will probably take the Turkish man's side'.

Despite such legal challenges, social difficulties, and fear of exploitation and harassment, many women have been pushed to seek informal economic activities in Turkey. The majority of women refugees interviewed explained that they would prefer not to work, and stay home to take care of their children, but circumstances pushed them to seek work. One women interviewee in Reyhanli said: 'I do not want to work; I do not work because I enjoy it, but I have to work. All of the women I know feel the same. Some work because they lost their husbands, others because of their husbands' disabilities, and others because their parents cannot provide for the households'. Some women have also explained that due to desperation and bad living conditions, women have become sex workers. Interestingly, an aid worker explained that women, especially previous regime detainees, have been estranged by their families, who feel that they brought them 'shame'. She stated: 'In Turkey, you would not find the same family and social connections you would find in Jordan, for example. In Turkey there are so many Syrian families who have abandoned their daughters because they were detained in Syria and they don't want to be associated with them to avoid bringing shame to the family, so this leaves the women very vulnerable'. Syrian refugee women, and particularly non-camp refugees, become more prone to exploitation once they lose their social and community networks, which leads many to end up as sex workers or in unwanted marriage situations. Sex work and unwanted marriage will be explored in another section.

Due to the lack of assistance, many refugee families find themselves in need for more than one earner in the household, which pushes women and children alike to seek informal work to provide for their families. Children have been particularly affected by this situation, as the lack of opportunities for adults meant that children had to provide. Many Syrian families, on the other hand, have lost their main breadwinner, who is oftentimes the father. This has also contributed to child labour in Turkey. During an interview with a practitioner who runs an educational centre in Kilis, she explained that the majority of the beneficiaries in her centre are women, and that young boys do not participate in activities, as the majority of them work to provide for their families. Moreover, the expensive housing prices and living expenses for Syrians in Turkey have also been a factor contributing to child labour. The majority of Syrian refugees live in poverty and have accumulated debts, which pushed children to seek income-generating activities. Estimates indicate that around 70 per cent of non-camp refugee children, totalling 900,000 children, were out of schools and engaged in labour in 2014 (Letsch, 2014). It is important to note here that child labour among the Syrian refugee population includes both young boys and girls; however, young boys are more visible due to the types of informal economic activities they engage in. For instance, girls are more likely to embark on domestic and agricultural activities along with other family members. According to Save the Children (2015) Syrian refugee girls as young as eight years are working, and girls and boys earn as little as 3 USD collecting waste paper for recycling. Legal and economic status can serve as indicators for understanding the living conditions of Syrian refugees, and as we have demonstrated throughout this section, there are differential experiences among the refugee population. Men, women, and children do not share the same experiences and as a result of that failure to address their specific needs can lead to failure in the implementation of projects. Integration and housing can also serve as indicators, and the following section will highlight that aspect of Syrian refugees lives in Turkey.

## Housing and Integration

Assessing the quality of life for Syrian refugees ecologically and culturally can be done in this case through looking at their housing conditions and social integration to understand the interaction between the refugees and Turkish populations, as well as their environment. As noted by AFAD (2013 and 2014) refugees oftentimes find themselves living in ruins and makeshift arrangements, and others find uninhabitable private housing with shared amenities, and some families end up sharing small flats. Refugees expressed that one of their first interactions with the Turkish community has been through looking for housing. They have also reported that homeowners exploit and overcharge them for houses that are inhabitable, as 'they know that they are desperate for a roof on top of their heads,' as one male interviewee in Gaziantep stated. Describing her housing situation, one female participant in Reyhanli said: 'I live with my husband and four children in one room in a flat shared by two other families. We all share the kitchen and the bathroom. I feel suffocated all of the time because I cannot take off my hijab in front of the other families, I can only take it off in the one room we have.' Another refugee woman in Antakya said: 'the house we live in now is very small, but the size is fine. The problem is with the dampness and unhealthy living conditions in the house, if you visit us you will see, there is mold all over the ceiling and the walls. I have become asthmatic and I cannot afford to buy an inhaler'.

The issue of housing conditions made many participants discuss the discrimination they face in Turkey generally, and particularly being overcharged by homeowners. Some have even reported incidents of harassment and bullying on the streets, being called names and physical violence. Despite the fact that some national campaigns welcoming the refugees have been launched, tensions between Syrian refugees and Turkish citizens have been increasing particularly throughout this year. Syrian refugees have been accused by Turkish citizens of stealing their jobs, causing instability in the country, causing economic inflation and changing the demographic of cities in the south. At least 140 interviewees mentioned facing discrimination, bullying and harassment in Turkey.

One female interviewee from Kilis said: 'I was sitting in an agricultural field, and I heard a young boy of 13 or 14 years shouting and laughing. I could recognize him saying 'Suriya', and then he started throwing stones at me. I just moved away and went home'. Interestingly, men interviewees were unlikely to report this form of harassment and bullying. However, many mothers interviewed explained that their children, particularly young boys in employment, suffer a lot from bullying by peers. One mother interviewee in Gaziantep said: 'my son works in a shop, he always comes back home either beaten or feeling downhearted and he says: mother, when are we going back to Syria? When is God going to make things better?' I embrace him and cry deep inside'. In addition to that, one of the main difficulties for the integration of Syrian refugees into Turkish society is the language barrier. Research participants also expressed that the language barrier makes them unable to communicate with their Turkish neighbours, and many have cited language as a reason for their inability to integrate socially and economically. One male interviewee from Gaziantep said: 'to apply for skilled jobs, you need to speak Turkish. The reason many of us settle for low skilled jobs is because we are not qualified to take office jobs for example'. When asked about their ability to access language courses, almost all refugees heard of Turkish language learning opportunities, but also many of them expressed hesitance, as they perceive their situation as temporary. In fact, our data shows that Syrian refugees are more interested in learning English rather than Turkish due to their perception of Turkish language being unnecessary for the future, and due to their conception that English would enable them to work for non-governmental international organisations. This perception of their situation being temporary, in addition to discrimination by Turkish citizens, has contributed to Syrian refugees feelings of isolation and their lack of integration. Women have been particularly affected by isolation, due to cultural restrictions as well as their status within Turkey.



## Community Relations and Women's Isolation

Isolation has become a huge problem for Syrian refugee women and girls, and it has also become part of their lives, causing some of them fear of being in public spaces. Living in an unfamiliar environment, where they do not speak the language, in addition to control from male and female relatives under the excuse of protection, have been major impediments in the face of Syrian refugee women's integration. Within the refugee context many Syrian women find themselves restricted to stay at home because of the social and cultural pressure placed on them by their communities in exile. In some cases, restrictions over women's movement are also linked to controlling their sexuality to preserve the families' honour, as families' honour is linked to women's sexual conduct and behaviour. Therefore, mingling with others and leaving the house is not problematic for men and boys as it is for women and girls. Interestingly, the majority of women interviewees did not problematize 'honour', and to describe the lives they would like to have, they used the honour discourse in a different way. For example, a woman interviewee from Rehaynli said: 'Honour is very important, and women should protect their honour, but we should not judge every woman that leaves her house. She might be running an errand, it does not mean that she is doing wrong'. The 'wrong doing' here is mainly to refer to sexual conduct. Arab women and girls, and not just Syrian women, carry the burden of preserving the families' honour and men and boys have the responsibility of protecting this honour by, for example, controlling women's mobility and movement, or accompanying women when they leave the household.

Pressure on women is also practised from the hosting community. It has been reported that Syrian refugee women face harassment and exploitation, as they are perceived as 'guests' and strangers in the country of exile. Women are exposed to sexual and verbal harassment and exploitation because of their gender and their inferior position, especially women, who live on their own. 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'. One female interviewee, who lives on her own in Hatay, said: 'I do not have a man to back me, I feel exposed. I need to be extra tough with people, so they know that they cannot trespass my boundaries. The owner of a house I used to live in asked me for sex, in an imposing forceful way. I fought back and I left the house'.

Financial need places Syrian women refugees in particularly vulnerable and subordinate positions. Some interviewees reported harassment of other women at the hands of employers, aid workers, government officials and strangers on the street. It is important to note that very few interviewees described sexual harassment that they experienced, and this could be due to the fact that women are oftentimes blamed by society for their sexual harassment. Through this culture of 'victim blaming' the attention and questioning therefore shifts toward the women rather than to men's violence. Thus, an environment of victim blaming and normalization of violence is created in which women feel unable to report crimes of violence against them' (Thapar-Björkert & Morgan, 2010, p. 38). Women victims to male violence cannot 'break the silence' because societies stereotype those women as being 'fallen women who have failed in the 'feminine' role' (Hooks, 1997, p. 283). Some women described vivid situations of when others they knew were sexually harassed by Turkish employers, who would offer them more money in return of sex. These incidents have grave effects on women's livelihoods and wellbeing socially, psychologically, physically and economically. For instance, many women expressed feeling reluctant to leave the house because they feel insecure and unsafe outside the walls of their houses, which adds to their feeling of isolation. However, many refugee women find themselves in situations where they have to leave the house, break the isolation, and provide a living for the family. This often happens in the absence of a male provider in the family, but this phenomenon in many ways can be empowering to women, as it breaks the boundaries of the male-breadwinner/female-carer.



## Breaking Gender Binaries

'Normalised' gender roles exist in all societies, and through those roles males and females are ascribed certain performances necessary for the creation of the categories of 'men' and 'women'. These gender structures create heteronormative gender binaries, which reinforce socially constructed symbolic meanings to roles that are given to men and women. 'Gender roles can be described as social norms, or rules and standards that dictate different interests, responsibilities, opportunities, limitations, and behaviours for men and women' (Johnson and Repta, 23 :2012). Since these gender structures and the gender binaries within it are socially constructed, there is room for disturbance and interruption under certain circumstances. In the case of Syrian refugees gender roles have been disturbed because of unrest in the country. Many refugees left their homes to flee the conflict, causing a disturbance and unrest in their practise of their 'normalised' roles. Within the Syrian refugee context, many Syrian women have become the sole providers for their households, in addition to being caretakers because their husbands are absent, wounded or disabled, or have passed away.

As female-heads of households, Syrian women have become under so much pressure, performing their required roles at home, and pursuing economic activity in the public sphere. Some women expressed that they wished they could stay at home and not work, because having to generate income has added to their responsibilities inside the house, and has led them to spend less time with their families and children. Before the eruption of the crisis, men were the sole providers for the families and women's role was confined to the private sphere. In many cases, women felt uncomfortable performing new roles, which are deemed 'masculine' and not suitable for women. One interviewee from Gaziantep said: 'I work now, but I do not think it is a woman's duty to work. It is the responsibility of the man. I do not feel fulfilled working outside the house, and running errands is not even suitable for women who are vulnerable and weak'. Other women felt empowered by their new roles as providers for their household, and felt that work has given them new opportunities in life, and gave them a sense of independence.

Nevertheless, the dramatic change in gender roles has influenced men differently. It is worth mentioning that within the refugee context women proved to be agents of change either in the absence of men or in their presence. Women have 'to navigate an unfamiliar and often unnerving new environment. Most faced a daily struggle to find enough money to pay the rent, buy food and basic items, or access services such as health care' (UNHCR, 10 :2014). Despite women's efforts to provide for their households, married women particularly have faced challenges in relation to negotiating with their husbands. The social construction of Syrian men's role in society had always been to provide for their families prior to the conflict, and as they became refugees with little access to formal employment, men have expressed frustration and anger oftentimes taking it out on their wives. Similar to the case of Iraqi refugees (See Nasser-Ed-din, 2014), Syrian men have become much more isolated and reluctant to leave the house because they feel 'ashamed' that they are not being able to perform their roles. This has pushed women to become much more proactive in seeking help and assistance. Based on a study done by IRC (2014), it was noted that domestic violence has increased since Syrians have fled their country, and due to frustration men have become more violent towards women and girls, as a coping mechanism to relieve stress and anxiety (IRC, 2014). Women also revealed that men get frustrated because of the lack of private spaces for intimacy with their wives, as many families are living in one room. An interviewee in Kilis said: 'I wish he would just leave the room, he is home all the time, and he is becoming angrier as time goes by. I feel awful, I work outside and I come back home to his abuse. I know he is not a violent man, and it is the situation that affected his behaviours'. Gender and sexual based violence against Syrian refugee women and LGBTQ groups is common in Turkey. Unfortunately, victims have little access to support and feel unsafe reporting such incidents. The following section looks at SGBV among the Syrian refugee population in Turkey.



## Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

In light of absence of comprehensive data on sexual and gender based violence among the refugee population in Syria, this section looks at SGBV through three main aspects: (1) marriage and sex work, (2) sexual minorities, and (3) imposed radicalism on women. It is important here to set the main definition for SGBV used throughout the section. Gender based violence (GBV) refers to physical, mental, emotional, psychological, social, economic and sexual violence that is based on gender. It is carried out without the consent of the victim, whether forcefully or not. Gender based violence can include cases of forced marriage, child marriage, sexual harassment, and denial of freedom, food, education and money, yelling, name-calling, trafficking, and isolating the person. SGBV, on the other hand, includes using sexual violence against the victim. It can take place anywhere, workplace, home, schools, streets, and war times, and without the consent of the victim. Examples include rape, marital rape, sexual harassment, female genital mutilation, forced sex work and penetration by objects such as sharp items, bottles, guns and knives.

As previously mentioned, women are most of the times reluctant to report cases of violence, and particularly sexual violence, practised against them. People feel 'ashamed' of talking about gender and sexual based violence, as it is believed to bring shame to the community and the family. In Turkey it has been stated that incidents of violence against women committed either by Turks or Syrians go unreported. For instance, women who are beaten by their families that say: 'we're not going to complain because [these] are our brothers and husbands...their intention is not to harm us, it's to protect us from whatever we were doing'(Cited in a report by Parker, 2015).It is important to add here that 'women are socialized to associate their self-worth with the satisfaction of the needs and desires of others and thus are encouraged to blame themselves as inadequate or bad if men beat them'(Bunch & Carrillo, 1992, p. 18). To provide a specific picture of how gender based violence particularly against women takes place on mass scale in Turkey, we will be looking at the most common ways violence occurs, and this is particularly through arranged and fixed marriages, second wife marriages, child marriage and sex work. On the other hand, we will also provide a brief review of the situation of LGBTQ Syrians in Turkey.

## Marriage and Sex Work

The issue of child marriage, among the Syrian refugee population, has gained wide global attention; however, despite the attention little work has been made in this field, and little has been made to address the causes of this phenomenon. The report has already established that the living conditions of the Syrian refugees are very harsh and difficult, and families are living under poverty line, particularly influencing women and girls. Child marriage can be unequivocally deemed a form of SGBV, however, from the perspective of those supporting the phenomenon it is a necessity and a means to protect the family's honour, and save child brides from poverty and homelessness in some cases (CARE International, 2015). The phenomenon is not new to either Turkey or Syria, child marriages have been reported prior to the crisis, and particularly in rural areas in both countries. Despite the fact that there are legal restrictions on child marriage, it is mostly done, unofficially and remains unregistered, by religious figures within the community. Moreover, it has become clear that after the eruption of the crisis, child marriage has become more organised through fixers, who find young brides to older men looking for wives, or in some cases just for sex. During an interview with a Syrian woman in Reyhanli, she said: 'my neighbour married his daughter off to a Turkish man, she was 14 and he was 40. The man took her for two months, and then returned her to her family. What does she have now? Nothing at all! She lost her virginity and is going to be called a divorced woman now. She has no rights at all, because the marriage was not even registered with the authorities'. The same woman explained that there are Turkish fixers, who in most cases speak little Arabic and who arrange such marriages. She hesitated, while speaking, and decided not to give details about fixers.

In addition to child marriages, fixers also arrange adult marriages mostly for men interested in taking on second and sometimes third wives. There have been cases of these marriages not lasting for more than a month. However, the main issue in these incidents is women's legal rights as second or third wives in Turkey. Polygamy is not recognised by the state in Turkey, and men are not allowed by law to take on more than one wife. Therefore, marriages between Syrian women and already married Turkish men are not officially registered and the woman's rights as a wife are neither guaranteed nor recognised. In cases when these marriages last, and the couple have children, the children are not registered under their biological mother's name, but under the name of the first wife.

## Imposed Radicalism

This also places women's custody rights in danger, as legally she would not be able to prove that they are her children in the first place. Whereas marriages between the host community and the refugee population could serve for the integration of refugees, they have the opposite impact. The director of a Syrian women's organisation in Antakya explained that her organisation receives Turkish women, who have been the first wives of men who took on second Syrian wives. She said: 'these women come to us to complain, and to ask us about ways to stop their husbands from marrying Syrian women, but what can we do. Some of these women come to us to tell us that we are stealing their husbands and they use abusive and discriminatory language towards us, but we try to understand their position too'. It has also been reported that Turkish women are facing more violence from their husbands, and are putting up with it in fear of them deciding to take on second wives (Letsch, 2014).

In some cases, marriage has been used to cover for sex-work, through the use of short-term marriage contracts. A female research participant from Kilis said: 'I know some families now let their daughters enter into temporary marriage contracts. A fixer would be involved. A man would come and take the girl, under the guise of marriage, pay her family money as if it was her dowry, have sex with her and then return her to her parents'. At least six women interviewees reported that when families fail to pay rent, homeowners request to have sex with one of the women in the household in return of letting them off one-month rent. In the case of Syrian refugee women, marriages, whether as child brides or adults, as well as sex for exchange of money and favours is a result of absolute necessity, prompted by poverty. Marriages, as well as sex work, can be considered as part of what is becoming organised sex industry serving Turkish men, who are more in power and control and who exploit and take advantage of the vulnerable position of these women. It has also become apparent that poverty and need is causing a form of religious radicalism among the refugee population, and women in particular, whose bodies are policed, by aid and humanitarian workers.

Due to poverty and harsh living conditions, Syrian refugee women are prone to sexual and ideological exploitation by several actors, including those who are supposed to provide them with aid and support. Women interviewees have told several first and second hand stories about how aid workers affiliates to some local organisations, and charity givers from the Arab Gulf countries, including Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, distribute aid in a way that mobilises around a radical Islamic ideology, and that also involves marriage to radical Islamists. Women have explained that some distributors of aid would not give them any aid if they were not fully covered. One interviewee in Reyhanli said: 'I wear the hijab, but I do not cover my face. I was told about a Saudi aid distributor and I got in contact. When we met he gave me some money, little money actually, and he said that he would only give me more if I cover more'. Another interviewee in Antakya said: 'I know of a young girl, not more than 14 years old, she was married off to a Kuwaiti man, probably above the age of 35. She was his second wife, and he promised to improve the situation for her and her family and others in the community by renting a block of apartments for them. He did it, and then he decided to leave her, he also decided to give up the apartment, and some people ended up on the street, not having any source of income'. She also added that the same man had a wife in Kuwait.

Women, in many cases, feel compelled to get married, as a way out of poverty for themselves and their families. Interestingly, in Reyhanli it was reported that the city is very conservative, and that it is difficult for women to walk on the streets without covering. One of our researchers observed that on the flight from Hatay to Istanbul a number of women had headscarves before departure, and that they had taken it off in Istanbul. Another observation from Reyhanli was that, besides the feel of conservatism in the town, there are people from Egypt, Tunisia and Saudi, who seemed to be en route to Syria with their wives.

## Sexual Minorities

Five interviewees from Reyhanli highlighted that some Syrian women have married ISIL fighters, and that this has caused them many problems. One of them said: 'the women did not know the name of the husband; they knew a nickname, like Abu Mu'awiya. These men pass by Turkish cities, get married on the way to Syria, leave their wives in many cases pregnant behind, without any official papers showing their identity, and the children cannot then be registered to have a father'. Some of these men disappear and never come back, leaving the women in very vulnerable positions within their communities, and within Turkey.

The issue of imposed radicalism and mobilisation through aid must be monitored in some towns in the south of Turkey. Poverty pushes many women to accommodate the demands and requests by radical groups. On the short run, this places women in weak positions not capable of saying no, due to their need for food and shelter, and, on the long run, this could pave the way for the creation of fertile ground for the radicalisation of younger generations of Syrian refugees, who are also vulnerable. The lack of awareness and education was very noticeable among the refugees interviewed during this research. Data shows that many of the refugees lean towards conservatism, yet at the same time, their ideological standing can be manipulated into more radical forms of conservatism. On the other hand, the need for awareness raising programs, specifically with regards to SGBV, reporting SGBV, and the impact of child marriage and the legal consequences of second wife marriages are essential, particularly in Kilis, Reyhanli, and Antakya. During a UNDEF funded, CTDC led training course in Reyhanli, which included more than 40 women, all participants agreed that they need more information about their legal rights, and information about support mechanisms for SGBV and other issues facing them in their daily lives. Despite the fact that they were mostly from conservative religious backgrounds, participants also felt that they know very little about LGBTQ issues, and that more information needs to be made available for them to understand LGBTQ identities, and to know how to deal with them. LGBTQ issues have always been marginalised and side-lined for long in the Middle East, however, over the past year it has been gaining prominence particularly following the ISIL executions of LGBTQ individuals.

In an interview with the daily Hürriyet's newspaper in 2010, State Minister S. Aliye Kavaf said: 'I believe homosexuality is a biological disorder, a disease, I believe [homosexuality] is something that needs to be treated. Therefore I do not have a positive opinion of gay marriage'. The law does not criminalise homosexuality or LGBTQ practices in Turkey. However, this does not mean that LGBTQ folk are protected from hate-crimes carried out on the level of society and culture. This has a significant impact on LGBTQ refugees and asylum seekers who are considered to be the most vulnerable group among refugees and asylum seekers. Turkey has been a 'transit' destination for many LGBTQ individuals, particularly from Iran, waiting to hear back on their asylum claims from UNHCR. In Turkey, LGBTQ asylum seekers and refugees need to be registered with UNHCR and wait for a decision regarding their asylum case. While waiting, LGBTQ asylum seekers are sent to 'satellite cities' often located in very conservative towns, which makes it difficult for them (HCA & ORAM, 2011). During the wait, they are not protected by law, most of them choose not to leave their houses, and have very limited access to resources and support, leaving them isolated and vulnerable. In cases of violence, LGBTQ asylum seekers find it difficult to report incidents to the police, in fear of harassment and assault.

The challenges Syrian LGBTQ individuals face are multiple, in addition to the difficult process of 'coming out' to seek asylum, LGBTQ people often find themselves questioned about their sexuality. Some of those questions can be intrusive and violating to the privacy of asylum seekers, and they can include: but you do not really look gay? How do you have sex? How many same-sex sexual partners did you have? For Syrians, it is particularly difficult as in addition to being Syrian they can face discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, if they do not match the heteronormative ideal. The belief that heterosexuality is the only sexual orientation that exists and that it is the norm makes any other form of love, expression and desire 'wrong', 'abnormal', and an 'anomaly'.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

Homosexuality is a taboo topic that is not often discussed and either condemned or silenced within Syrian communities. Therefore, many Syrian LGBTQs find themselves concealing their identities from their communities, families, and even friends in fear of persecution and lack of acceptance or understanding for their non-heterosexual identity. The majority of Syrian LGBTQs interviewed for this research were based in Istanbul, rather than the south of Turkey, and many of them expressed their satisfaction with 'gay life' in Istanbul in comparison to Syria and the south of Turkey. None of those interviewed in Istanbul were living with family members, but are seeking refuge on their own, and many of them said they feel discriminated against, but in less danger than in Syria. However, they also explained they would feel more threatened and more in danger if 'outed' to their community or families. Preliminary research into Syrians' attitude towards homosexuality has shown that the majority of those, who criminalise it, derive legitimacy for the opinions they uphold from religious texts, and one male interviewee in Gaziantep said: 'they are criminals if they do not seek help and if they keep practising this disorder, it is just against the natural order of relationships and love'.

One of the main problems affecting Syrian LGBTQs in Turkey is the lack of organisations focusing their work on gender identity and sexual orientation, which can be exceptionally useful for their wellbeing. Many LGBTQ refugees in Turkey live in a state of limbo for years awaiting a decision. Poverty is also a significant issue facing Syrian LGBTQs, and many; especially gay men in Istanbul, turn to sex work to make a living. By law their access to employment is the same as other Syrians. However, and interestingly, Syrian LGBTQs in Turkey are more likely to seek integration within the society through learning the language. Syrian LGBTQ participants in their research expressed their desire to learn Turkish, unlike the majority of the non-LGBTQ participants. It remains difficult for them to pursue higher education and employment given their legal status, and their gender and sexual identity makes them more prone to harassment, attacks and hate crimes on the streets in Turkey. The needs of LGBTQs in the Middle East must be given more attention by the International Community, especially since they have been gaining more visibility within Arab society in comparison to a few years back.

Years into the Syrian crisis, and the refugee situation is still being treated as temporary in Turkey. No efforts have been made to integrate the refugees into Turkish society and instead further restrictions are being imposed on Syrians in the country. Understanding refugees' livelihoods, living conditions and the challenges they face, makes their pursuit of better lives in Europe, via life-threatening routes, less surprising and less of a puzzle to observers. Research into Syrian refugees' lives revealed that the majority of them have no aspirations in Turkey, and have no hope in becoming integrated into Turkish society. Despite the fact that the conflict had its toll on all Syrian refugees, the challenges facing women, young girls and sexual minorities are particular and their burden is multiplied due to their gender and sexual identities. The urgency to address refugees' needs in more sustainable ways to create livelihoods for refugees in Turkey has become apparent, especially that those groups are vulnerable to manipulation, exploitation and political mobilisation by various extremist groups. This report attempted to highlight the main issues facing Syrian refugees in Turkey, and also aimed to bring the differential experiences of women, young girls and sexual minorities to the forefront in conversations about refugees' wellbeing. Based on the findings of this research, we have identified main areas where intervention is needed, and devised recommendations to best tackle those issues. The following points are recommendations based on our research:

- There is a general need to address the refugee needs through long-term more sustainable solutions. With no solution in sight for the Syrian crisis, the implementation of programs aiming to improve the quality of life of Syrians in Turkey is of particular importance to reduce their mobilisation by radical groups. This would also contribute to curbing SGBV and the phenomena of child as well as second wife marriages.
- Capacity building programs for the refugee population is very much needed particularly in the south of Turkey, as the majority of the refugees come from rural disadvantaged areas in Syria. The provision of technical trainings could for instance enhance their employability, and so could the provision of certified vocational trainings. These programs should also be made available to all segments of the refugee population, including men, women, young girls and boys.



- There is a need for advocacy and lobbying to pressure the Turkish government into making access to residence and work permits easier especially for the Syrian refugees. The state of limbo in terms of their legal standing in the country leaves refugees feeling unsettled, unsafe and vulnerable to exploitation as cheap labourers, and to sexual exploitation as well.

- There is a great need for awareness raising programs addressing SGBV and women's rights, including sexual and reproductive health rights, among the refugee population in Turkey. Educational programs, awareness campaigns and workshops could be made available to both men and women to increase their gender sensitivity and understanding of their legal rights in Turkey. The implications and impact of child and second wife marriages on women could also be included in such campaigns.

- Engaging community leaders, particularly religious figures Turkish and Syrian, who perform the unregistered marriage ceremonies, is of particular importance to reduce this phenomenon and to ensure that they understand the risks and disadvantages of such arrangements.

- There is a need to work towards the integration of refugees into Turkish society, and to improve their access to rule of law institutions. Organizing community events for refugees and Turkish nationals can improve social cohesion and reduce tensions. These community events can also include police personnel, which could help in reducing Syrians' fears of resorting to rule of law institutions in cases of sexual harassment, bullying and abuse.

- To address SGBV, the creation of mechanisms of support to SGBV victims is very important, and this can include the provision of psychological support, shelters and referral systems to facilitate the provision of adequate services to victims and to ensure their safety and wellbeing.

- Awareness campaigns must be launched to end child labour, and the exploitation of children in the workplace. However, assistance to families with children must be prioritised to resolve the root causes of child labour.

- Encouraging Turkish language learning among the Syrian refugees is very important for their integration and their access to opportunities. For example, organizing and providing venues and resources for language exchange between Syrians and Turks can be of great value to refugees' livelihoods and wellbeing. It can provide room for refugees to start establishing relationships with the host communities, and at the same time improve their Turkish language skills. This, however, will need to be preceded by awareness campaigns addressing the importance of learning the language.

- Support for LGBTQ organisations is important for the wellbeing and to end the isolation of Syrian LGBTQ refugees. The government of Turkey must be pressured into granting more LGBTQ rights generally, and into improving the conditions of 'satellite cities' hosting LGBTQ refugees.

- Further research, especially quantitative research, into the living conditions of Syrian refugees in Turkey is very important. Research also needs to be carried out looking at the skill sets available among the refugee population, and should look into ways to integrate refugees in the labour market in Turkey.

Based on these recommendations, CTDC has developed a number of concept notes addressing the needs of Syrian refugees in Turkey, in particular the needs of women, sexual minorities and children. The concept notes can be made available upon request.

## References

- AFAD Communiqué, 18 January 1/2013 ,2013 No. 374 And AFAD Communiqué, 9 September 8/2013 ,2013 No. 12816.
- Afanasieva, D. (2015) Turkey Will Not Give Syrian Refugees Right To Work- Labour Minister. In Reuters August 2015 ,7: <http://goo.gl/mOUo1P>. Accessed on October 2015 ,4.
- Amnesty International (2014) *Struggling to Survive: Refugees from Syria in Turkey*. Al: London.
- Bradburd, D. 1998. *Being There: The Necessity Of Fieldwork*, Washington, Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Bunch, C., & Carrillo, R. (1992). *Gender Violence: A Development And Human Rights Issue*. Dublin, Ireland: Attic Press.
- Cagaptay, S. (2014) *The Impact Of Syria's Refugees On Southern Turkey*. The Washington Institute For Near East Policy: Washington.
- CARE International (2015) "TO PROTECT HER HONOUR"- Child Marriage In Emergencies – The Fatal Confusion Between Protecting Girls And Sexual Violence. CARE Gender and Protection in Humanitarian Contexts: Critical Issues Series 1, May 2015.
- CARGAN, L. 2007. *Doing Social Research*, Plymouth, Rowman And Littlefield.
- Daily Hürriyet (2010) 'Homosexuality Is A Disease' Says Turkish Minister. July 2010 ,3: <http://goo.gl/V1U4jT>. Accessed: October 2015 ,4.
- FAO (2013) *Agricultural Livelihoods And Food Security Impact Assessment And Response Plan For The Syria Crisis In The Neighbouring Countries Of Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon And Turkey*. Food And Agriculture Organization Of The United Nations.
- Fontana, A. & Frey, J. H. 2005. *The Interview: From Neutral Science To Political Involvement*. In: Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.) *The Sage Handbook Of Qualitative Research*. 3rd Ed. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Gobo, G. 2008. *Doing Ethnography*, London, Sage Publications.
- Hooks, b. (1997). *Violence in intimate relationships: A feminist perspective*.
- ILO Department Of Partnerships And Field Support (PARDEV) (2015), *The ILO Response To The Syrian Refugee Crisis: The ILO Regional Office For Arab States, ILO Ankara And ILO-Cairo*.
- IRC (2014) *Are We Listening? Acting on Our Commitments to Women and Girls Affected by the Syrian Conflict*. International Rescue Committee, September 2014.
- Johnson, J. and Repta, R. 2012. *Sex and Gender: Beyond the Binaries*. In: Oliffe, J. & Greaves, L. (eds.) *Designing and Conducting Gender, Sex, and Health Research*.UK: Sage Publications.
- Letsch, C. (2014) *Syria's Refugees: Fears Of Abuse Grow As Turkish Men Snap Up Wives*. In the Guardian September ,8 2014: <http://goo.gl/35REQn>. Accessed October 2015 ,4.
- Letsch, C. (2014) *Syrian Refugees Trigger Child Labour Boom In Turkey*. In the Guardian September 2014 ,2: <http://goo.gl/imiSLA>. Accessed on October 2015 ,4.



Magee, Liam; James, Paul; Scerri, Andy (2012). "Measuring Social Sustainability: A Community-Centred Approach". *Applied Research in the Quality of Life* 7 (3): 239–61.

Nasser Eddin N. (November, 2014), "Negotiated Masculinities: The Case of Iraqi Refugees in Jordan", Vol. III, Issue 11, pp.11-26, Centre for Policy and Research on Turkey (ResearchTurkey), London, ResearchTurkey. (<http://researchturkey.org/?p=7143>).

ORAM & HCA 2011. *Unsafe Haven: The Security Challenges Facing Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Turkey*.

ORSAM (2014) *The Situation Of Syrian Refugees In Neighbouring Countries: Findings, Conclusions And Recommendations*, ORSAM Report No: 189, Centre For Middle Eastern Strategic Studies.

ORSAM (2015) *Effects Of The Syrian Refugees On Turkey*, ORSAM Report No: 195, Centre For Middle Eastern Strategic Studies.

Parker, S. 2015. Hidden crisis: violence against Syrian female refugees, *World Report the Lancet*. Vol. 385.

Sanger, P. M. 2003. *Living And Writing Feminist Ethnographies: Threads In A Quilt Stitched From The Heart*. In: CLAIR, R. P. (Ed.) *Expressions Of Ethnography: Novel Approaches To Qualitative Methods*. Albany: State University Of New York Press.

Save the Children (2015) *Small Hands, Heavy Burdens: How The Syria Conflict Is Driving More Children Into The Workforce*. Report by Save the Children and UNICEF.

Seferis, L. (2014) *DRC Experiences Of Cash Assistance To Non-Camp Refugees In Turkey And Lebanon* In 48th Edition Field Exchange Reports November 2014.

Thapar-Björkert, S., & Morgan, K. J. (2010). But Sometimes I Think They Put Themselves in the Situation: Exploring Blame and Responsibility in Interpersonal Violence. *Violence Against Women*, 16, 32-59.

Tibbs, M. and Mubarak, N. (2015) *Employment Programs Are Helping Syrian Women Take Back Control Over Their Lives*, in Muftah, July 3, 2015: <http://goo.gl/V6U1d7>. Accessed on October 4, 2015.

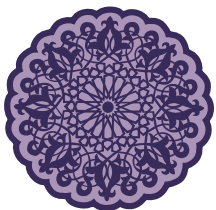
Tomaselli, K. G. 2005. *Where Global Contradictions Are Sharpest*, Amsterdam, Rozenberg Publishers.

UNHCR (2014) *Woman Alone: The Fight for Survival by Syria's Refugee Women*. <http://goo.gl/YxBMZK>. Accessed October 4, 2015.

UNHCR (2015) *Culture, Context and the Mental Health and Psychosocial Wellbeing of Syrians*. <http://goo.gl/UME7qW>. Accessed on October 4, 2015.

UNHCR (2015) *Syria Regional Refugee Response Inter-Agency Information Sharing Portal*, <Http://Goo.Gl/E3anpg> (Accessed On September 2015).

Ximena V. Del Carpio, X.V. And Wagner, M. (2015) *The Impact Of Syrians Refugees On The Turkish Labour Market*. Policy Research Working Paper 7402: World Bank Group, Social Protection And Labour Global Practice Group August 2015.



**CTDC**  
Centre for Transnational  
Development and Collaboration

83-80 Long Lane, London  
EC1A 9ET, United Kingdom  
00 44 20 70960948  
[info@ctdc.org](mailto:info@ctdc.org)  
[www.ctdc.org](http://www.ctdc.org)