

Norwegian Refugee Council

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Needs Assessment of Syrian Refugees Living in Altındağ, Ankara



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Final Report: January 2017

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Overview

Context Background

Non camp refugees represent about 90% of the total 2.75 million Syrian refugees in Turkey. It is estimated that between 50,000 and 60,000 refugees are living in Ankara (according to Turkish Ministry of Development needs assessment carried out in March 2016) and that the majority live in the capital due to job opportunities, presence of relatives and friends and relatively cheaper housing.

The persistence of the conflict in Syria and the huge number of refugees have created several challenges for Turkey, that has responded quickly and with good standards to the emergency. Out of camp Syrians are often concentrated in residential neighbourhoods where different groups of immigrants and Turkish citizens share public space and services that are mostly provided by the government. Assisting urban refugees who are “often invisible and dispersed among local people in poor communities”¹ rather than concentrated in well-maintained camps is more complex: the identification of the target population, and the most vulnerable among them, is harder and it involves different governmental agencies. Finally, the presence of growing numbers of Syrians in Turkey has a severe impact on host communities economically and socially as well as politically². All the above has serious implications for the refugees themselves, as well as for the social, economic and spatial transformation of recipient cities across the country.

NRC established its country office in Ankara in January 2016. NRC is engaged in working with urban Syrian refugees in Ankara in close collaboration with the Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundation (Sosyal Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışma Vakfı-SYDV or SASF using the English acronym) of Altındağ. NRC plans to increase and replicate its programming in key sectors as part of a two-year plan and to strategically engage in multi-sectoral programming for refugee and host populations focusing on ICLA (Information Counselling and Legal Assistance), education and livelihoods. Towards this, NRC decided to pilot a multi-sectoral assessment starting end of May 2016 to profile and assess the needs of the refugee (both with Temporary Protection ID card and without) and host communities. This is the first assessment of its kind carried out by an INGO in Turkey outside of the Southeast of Turkey where most of the Syrian refugees live and where the humanitarian response is concentrated.

Assessment objectives

The primary objective of this assessment was to build a profile of Syrian refugees in Ankara (Altındağ district), focusing on their locations, documentation status, living conditions and other information that would help NRC and the humanitarian community to decide what is required to cover their basic needs for cash support and then give recommendations for a long-term holistic approach to refugees’ assistance. In addition, the aim was to use a quantitative and qualitative approach and seek to describe the current status and needs of populations that have fled the Syrian conflict and sought refuge in Ankara.

¹ “State’s Richard at Senate Hearing on Syrian Refugee Crisis”, 7 January, 2014.

² K. Kirişci (2014): Syrian refugees and Turkey’s challenges: going beyond hospitality <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Syrian-Refugees-and-Turkeys-Challenges-May-14-2014.pdf>

Assessment population

The target population for the assessment was primary Syrians (and the final sample was made up of 154 Syrian HHs displaced to Ankara), however NRC interviewed 14 Turkish families of similar profile to Syrian families to compare the profile of host community with the responses of Syrian families' experiences (see methodology for further details).

Geographical coverage

Three neighbourhoods (*mahalleler*) in the Altındağ district (Önder, Ulubey and Doğu), Ankara, Turkey. These areas were identified as poor and disadvantaged by the Foundation. According to local *muhtars* (elected neighbourhood mayors) 90% of the Syrians are living in the district of Altındağ (the second biggest district of Ankara, with 365,687 residents in 2015³) and namely in the neighbourhoods of Önder, Hacılar, Hüseyin Gazi, Baraj, Ulubey, Solfasol, Doğu, Doğantepe, Karapürçek, Aktaş, Ali Ersoy, Atıfbey, Battal Gazi, Başpınar, and Örnek. The rest of refugees, according to key informant interviews with Syrian and Turkish responders (especially public service providers), are located in the districts of Pursaklar, Güdül (Yeşilöz neighbourhood mainly), Sincan and Mamak (known for being a settlement of Iraqi citizens). Smaller numbers of refugees are in Yenimahalle and Keçiören districts.

The statistics of Altındağ Municipality do not provide the breakdown of the population by nationality but the number of inhabitants has been growing in the last five years and this is perhaps due to the arrival of Syrians and other nationalities. Syrian seasonal agricultural workers are located in the outskirts of Ankara city in the districts of Beypazarı and Ayaş for example.

³ <http://www.altindag.gov.tr/nufus>

Methodology

Data collection methods and sample

Household survey

The sample was selected considering a number of 49,500 individuals (90% of the estimated number of Syrians living in Ankara according to the last available Government of Turkey Assessment-March 2016), equal to 8250 families⁴. 154 as sample guarantees us 95% of confidence level with a margin of error of 7,82% and thus that the data may provide indication of trends within the larger population of Altındağ district and rest of Ankara too.

The household survey started with a mapping exercise using key informants, both Turkish and Syrians identifying the main neighborhoods of Altındağ where conflict-affected Syrian refugees tended to live. As no valid and complete database for Syrian refugees living in Altındağ could be used as a sample frame, three neighborhoods (*mahalleler*) were considered as locations to be surveyed by 8 Syrian enumerators (4 men and 4 women). Önder, Ulubey and Doğu mahallesi were chosen as survey sites for the above-mentioned reasons (see geographical coverage section).

The target was to survey 50 Syrian households (HHs) in each of the 3 locations due to available NRC resources at the time. The final sample for data analysis comprised of 168 households in total (56 in Doğu, 57 in Ulubey and 55 in Önder) representing 154 Syrian families and 14 Turkish families.

As the sampling methodology, due to limitations in accessing all refugee name and information at the initial stage, a “snowball” technique is used. This methodology initially reached a group of HHs, to refer other Syrian families. By asking each HH interviewed to refer other HHs, the target number of 154 Syrian families achieved. Some of the population interviewed in each location were about the most vulnerable people in the neighborhood in terms of socio-economic conditions, including female headed households and persons with disabilities. . In order to identify the vulnerable Turkish households, NRC team asked the SYDV to provide it with lists of 15 vulnerable Turkish families receiving the Foundation’s support (5 per neighborhood). The interviews with the Turkish HHs were done to compare their conditions of living with those of the Syrian refugees living in the same locations. Within the 50 Syrian HHs, NRC also planned to survey 15 HHs without refugee documents (Temporary Protection ID) in each of the three locations. However, as it was not possible to find this number, many of them were replaced by registered HHs.

Key informant interviews

Twenty-three key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted with both host community representatives and Syrians in the 3 target neighborhoods with community representatives, traders, private sector service providers (landlords), public service providers (Sosyal Yardımlaşma

⁴ “First stage needs assessment covering 2016-2018 period for Syrians with Temporary Protection in Turkey”, March 2016. As per the table at page 62, the Syrians living in Ankara province are 57055 although the maps at page 6 estimate the number of Syrians under TP to be between 2% and 5% of the total of Syrian registered (2688686 as per the 19th of February 2016). From interviews with the Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundation and Key Informants and considering the NAR report published by the NGO IMPR in October 2015 (which stated the number of Syrians in Ankara to be 100000 units), we learnt that around 90% of Syrians are living in Altındağ district so we calculated the 90% on the basis of a rounded total of 55000 individuals equal to 8250 families, considering that each families contains in average 6 members as per the Post Distribution Monitoring report that NRC did for its winterization program in March 2016 and per the WFP report on off camp Syrian refugees (“Off camp Syrian refugees in Turkey: a food security report, April 2016, page 2).

ve Dayanışma Vakfı – Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundation), local government representatives (muhtars) and Syrian community leaders.

Focus Group Discussions

Eighteen Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted, so that further explanatory, contextual and narrative information about few critical issues could be collected. 6 FGDs were conducted per locations: 4 FGDs with Syrian refugees (adult men, adult women, female youth, male youth respectively) and 2 FGDs with the host community (men, women respectively). The objective of the FGDs was to have more qualitative insights on issues part of topics already contained in the HHs survey but which needed a deeper understanding such as disputes between the refugee and the host community, what categories of people were perceived as the most vulnerable and most at risk in terms of protection, possible additional services to provide in exchange of accommodation (ex. Bribes, transactional sex), involvement of women in the decision making within the community, working arrangements, greatest problems to address, type of assistance to receive. The FGDs organized with respectively male and female aged 12 to 24 explored the same issues asked in the FGDs with the adults but from the perspective of young people, particularly concerning youth-specific exclusions and aspirations.

Market assessment

In addition to the quantitative and qualitative fieldwork, NRC collected information about the costs of the ‘Minimum Expenditure Basket’ (MEB) in Altındağ shops (Turkish and Syrian). The MEB is a tool designed by the World Food Programme (WFP) for the Syrian refugees’ response and was adapted for the Turkish context.

Limitations

There is a risk of sampling bias with the snowball effect (for the stage 2 sampling with the quantitative survey), as the initial respondents tend to nominate people who they know well and that may be similar to them for that reason. For this reason, there is a risk that many households who have relatives/ friends have been included. The enumerators, after clarifying that they were not registering people, asked to the families to indicate poor Syrian families living in the neighbourhood so very rarely NRC team ended up interviewing the relatives and friends.

The sample of the Turkish households was also not randomly selected and had a response bias because they had all been identified by the SYDV (they were aid recipients). They have the same profile: at least one family member is a person with disability, another suffers of chronic diseases and they do not have stable jobs if they work at all. This turned to be very useful since it gave the profile of the vulnerable Turkish household, benefiting from governmental social aid and living in a dimension of both social and special vulnerability, comparable to the one of the Syrians. We can describe this population as urban poor.

Assessment Findings

Syrian family demographics

Majority of the Syrian respondents were female spouses in the 35-60 years' age range (53%), followed by the male of the household (21%). The rest 26% constituted male and female HH members from different age groups.

The average family size is approximately 6 members in total (18%), closely followed by 5 and 7 individuals in the family (all three options account for half of the sample). This is with an average of 2 adults, with a few families having 3 adults and only a small number having 4 adults in their family unit. Very small proportion of these adults were elderly (8% - from 60 years old and above). Almost all families spoken to had at least one child (except 5 families) and 3 or 4 children was the norm (representing 43% of the sample). 65% of the respondents said that they had families in Altındağ before arriving. The second largest proportion of families/respondents of the survey indicated having “no other families or relatives” (23%). Small proportion knew someone, not a relative before arriving (10%).

The dependency ratio⁵ in Doğu is 1.63, Önder is 1.61 and Ulubey 1.523. This is on par with other agencies finding also for Altındağ.

46% of families have been in Altındağ for 2 years, followed by a year (19%), then between 7-11 months and 4-6 months. See below further for further details.

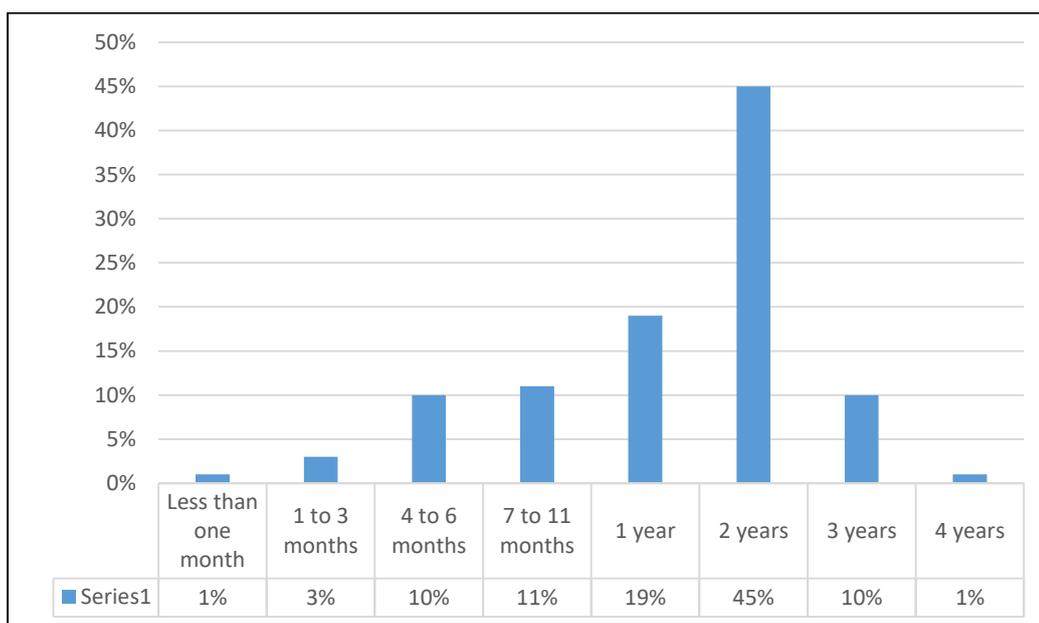


Figure 1: Length of time living in current location

It is worth mentioning that Altındağ was one of the favourite destinations of rural migrants who started coming to Ankara from the late 1940s looking for better opportunities. The proximity to city center, to workplaces, and to transportation were the main reasons why migrants choose to settle in this location. Because of the lack of available and/or affordable accommodation, those new

⁵ Number of dependents (aged 0-17 and 60+) and (number of family members with a disability level of at least 40%) / able bodied family members aged 18-59 gives the ratio of dependents to non-dependents

comers started building their own houses, the so-called *gecekondu*⁶ (literally, overnight buildings) generating illegal settlements. These types of housing, simple standing-alone houses lacking elementary comfort conditions, with usually a small garden, is still the predominant type of dwelling in Altındağ and it is where most of the Syrian and all the Turkish interviewees lived. The municipality of Altındağ is currently implementing the Urban Transformation Plan, in order to demolish these houses and build modern multi storey buildings. The demolition is on hold at the moment because of the unavailability of houses for the existing population but the eviction caused by the plan (houses marked by a “X” are meant to be destroyed) is posing a threat both for the Syrian and the Turkish inhabitants.

91% of the families have the “kimlik”⁷ with the remaining 8% planning on applying for it shortly. A very small proportion, only 1% of the families do not have or plan to apply for “kimlik”. Some refugees chose informal/unregistered dwellings because they prefer to remain anonymous, but this seems not to be the norm in Turkey. The high percentage can be explained by the March 2016 EU-Turkey deal which stipulates that Turkey has to keep Syrian and other refugees within its border with the financial support of the EU.

The majority of respondents cited the presence of friends or family as one of the reasons that drew them to their current location (43%). Neither the availability of services nor safety were cited as reasons for stay in Altındağ. Access to jobs was cited at 20% and access to assistance was cited as reason 7%.

Livelihoods Opportunities

Income and Expenditure

Forty-eight percent (48%) of the respondents’ income as a family is between 101 and 300 TL per week (see below graph for further breakdown). This equates to 404 to 1,200 TL per month. 30% of respondents reported that in their family, the adults (cumulatively) worked between 20 and 30 days in a month to earn this.

⁶ A. Sottimano, S. Buzzoni, “Urban landscapes, new comers and fragmented society: the case of the Altındağ district of Ankara”: paper presented at the first INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON MIGRATION AND SECURITY (2016) organized by the Turkish National Police Academy/GÖÇMER on November 11-13, 2016 in Antalya.

⁷ In Turkish, it means literally “ID card”, in general, but Syrians use this word for the Temporary Protection ID card they receive from DGMM

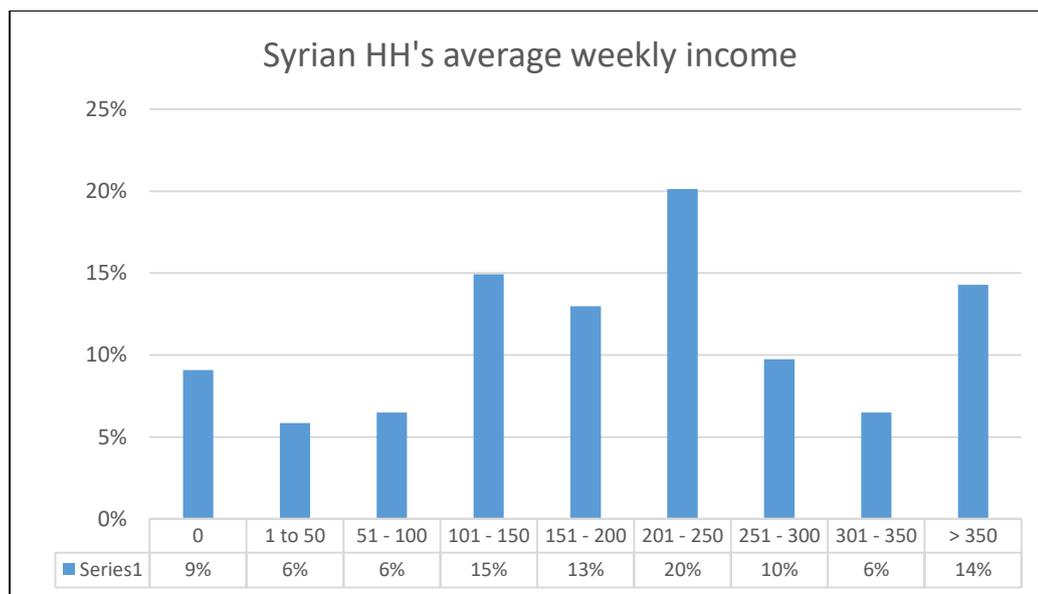


Figure 2: Syrian household's average weekly income

According to our assessment, the average expenditure per person in a Syrian household per month⁸ is between 50 and 125 Turkish Lira (TL), representing majority of families at 53%. This calculation accounts for food, water, fuel for cooking, communication, transport, heating⁹ - rent is not included in this calculation.

An additional, 24% of families are spending between 125-175 TL per person in the household, per month. Without accounting for rent and calculating the total cost of other living expenses for an average family (6 individuals) this cost is somewhere between 300¹⁰ to 1,050¹¹ TL size per month.

This means that 48% of our sample are on par to meet majority of their major expenses with the remaining 52% experiencing a gap of approximately 200 to 300 TL for the family of 6 (not accounting for rent, transport or anything extra). It is worth to mentioning again that these are rough estimates based on averages and it's very likely that all earnings given in ranges are actually on the lower side of the range.

Comparing rent with the other expenses however, 90% of the Syrian household indicate spending most on rent however, followed by food while most of the money in a Turkish household is spent on food (see figure below for additional information). Through our interviews with the refugees, it was informally highlighted that rent is approximately 250-300 TL for a family of 6 (42-50 TL per person average).

⁸ Accounting for number of people in HH when this was calculated

⁹ Asked in summer (June) though.

¹⁰ 50 TL as the lower end of spending x 6 ppl in average family

¹¹ 175 TL as the upper end of spending x 6 ppl in average family

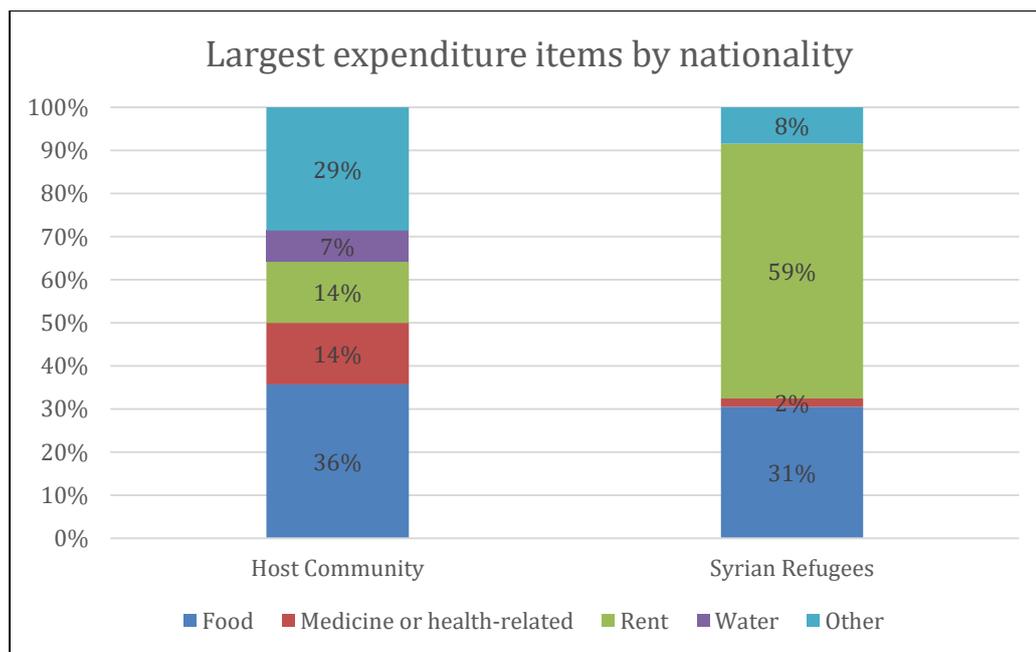


Figure 3: Largest weekly expenditure items per nationality

According to the Turkish Confederation of the Trade Unions, which estimates prices of goods every month, the poverty line for a family of 4 in Turkey is 4,515 TL as of September 2016¹². The poverty line includes expenses for food, clothing, accommodation (rent, electricity, water and heating), transportation, education and health. The poverty has increased over the past two years as a result of the increased influx of Syrians into Turkey. According to this calculation, the surveyed population is well below the poverty line.

Accommodation and rent

Syrians who participated in FGDs reported that Turkish tenants usually have documented rent contract while Syrians do not. Syrians pay rent in advance and sometimes for many months while Turkish pay rent at the end of the month for the following month. Additionally, in some cases, Syrians pay commission on finding accommodation.

In some cases, when a Syrian family leaves a house and is replaced by another Syrian family, the leaving family asks for money, approximately TL 1,500-3,000, to be paid once. This is because the demand for accommodation is high in this area given the low monthly rental rate. FGD respondents indicated that accommodation fees are higher for Syrians than Turks, the latter also being able to find accommodation in a shorter time.

The houses where Syrians live are in poor conditions and in most instances a Turkish family would not live in accommodation that a Syrian family has occupied. Sharing accommodation with other families is a coping strategy that Syrians adopt even if it is culturally unacceptable “but there is no choice” especially for newcomers. Regarding housing and tenancy, women residing in Doğu who participated in a FGD added that most Syrian families have permanent fear of eviction. According to them, this could happen if they are late in payment, or “if their children make noise, which is not accepted by the Turkish community”.

¹² (<http://www.turkis.org.tr/AGUSTOS-2016-ACLIK-ve-YOKSULLUK-SINIRI-d1174> and <http://www.turkis.org.tr/dosya/501ur0V2X5tZ.pdf>)

Work and education levels of adults

47% of the men in the households interviewed performed manual work prior to coming to Turkey: building (14%), carpentry (7%), petty trading (8%), construction (8%), driver (6%), and mechanic (5%). These percentages are loosely associated with the work that the men are doing now (and receive income for): salaried work from private sector (23% could be any of the items above), carpentry (22%) and construction (11%).

83% of Syrian women surveyed have no prior formal education or working experience and 94% of women are currently not working. Of the 6% Syrian women that are working (typically the female breadwinner), largely doing seamstress work, 89% of them have had no work in the last 30 days. Of the 7 women residing in Doğu that took part in a FGDs, only one had finished secondary school. The others only managed to finish the primary school.

This is compared with: 40% of the Turkish women have had no jobs and 20% of the Turkish women getting aid from charities.

Debt and assistance

To cover expenses and meet basic needs, 54% of the refugees indicated looking for humanitarian assistance and borrowing money. 7% of families reported that their children do indeed perform work that generates income – this was reported to be salaried work from the private sector largely.

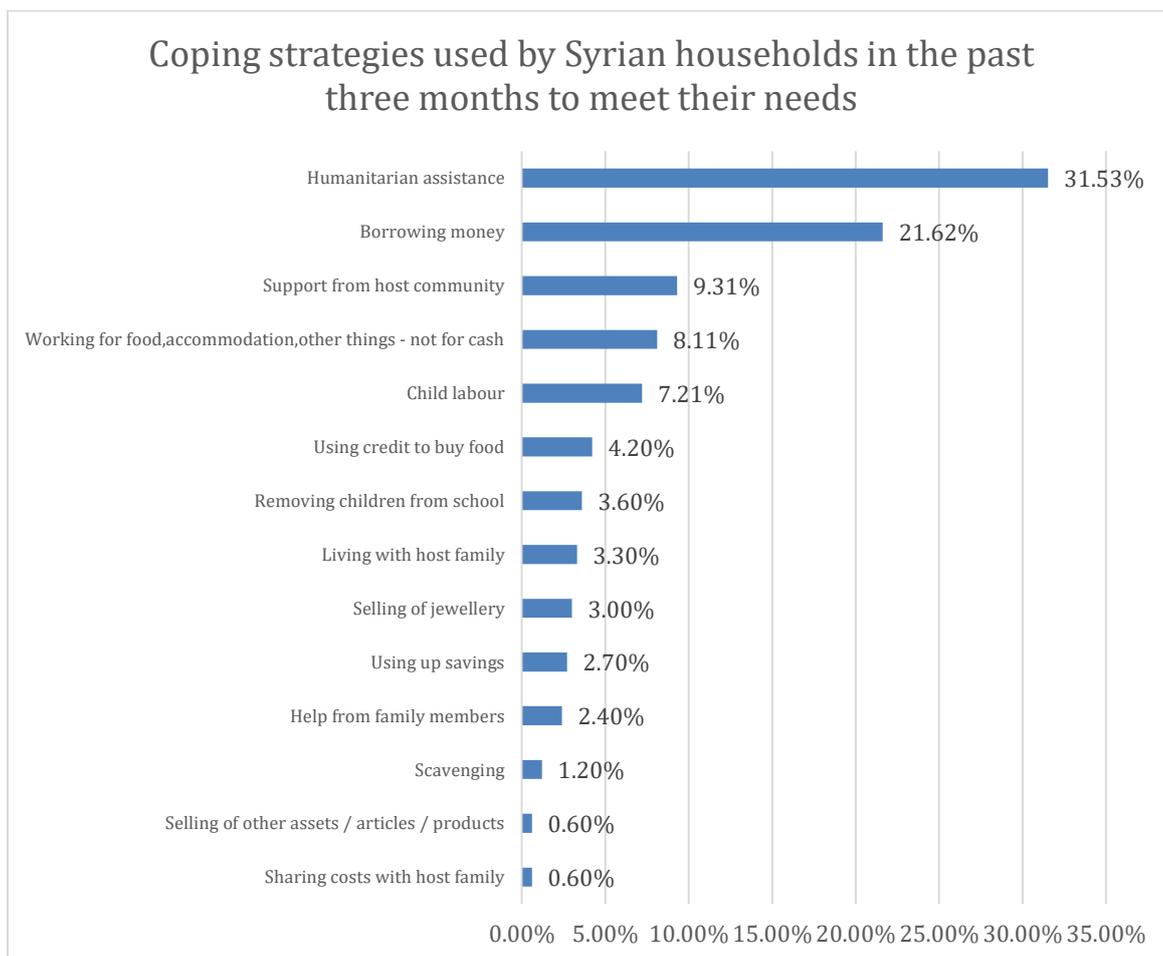


Figure 4: Coping strategies of Syrian families used in past three months

Adult men participating in FGDs confirmed the quantitative findings: when they do not find work they borrow money from others and they look for humanitarian aid. “However, as there is no coordination between the different people and agencies that distribute aid, some people get too much aid and other do not get at all” according to one informant.

With respect to covering food costs for the family specifically: 69% of Syrian families interviewed were in debt and of these 70% owe money to relatives and shop owners. Also, almost all families (90%) relied on food assistance, in some proportion, to cover their meals.

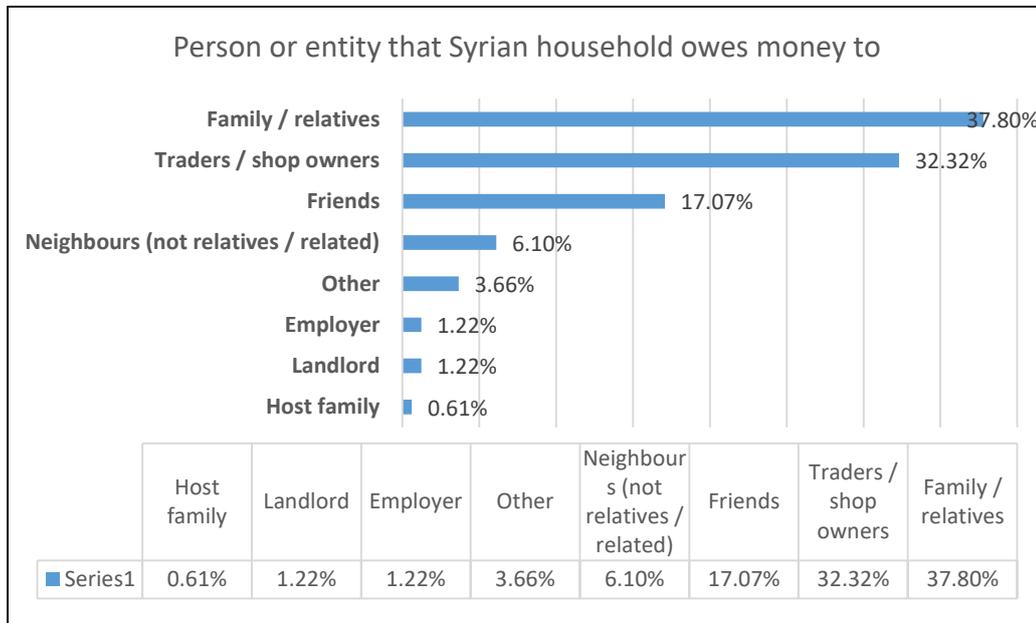


Figure 5: Person or entity that Syrian household owes money to

Livelihoods opportunities and working conditions

Health problems and lack of childcare are among the top reasons behind the difficulties faced in accessing livelihoods opportunities in the host community. Health problems are also ranked as one of the top reasons among Syrian refugees in addition to the low wages and the nonpayment of wages.

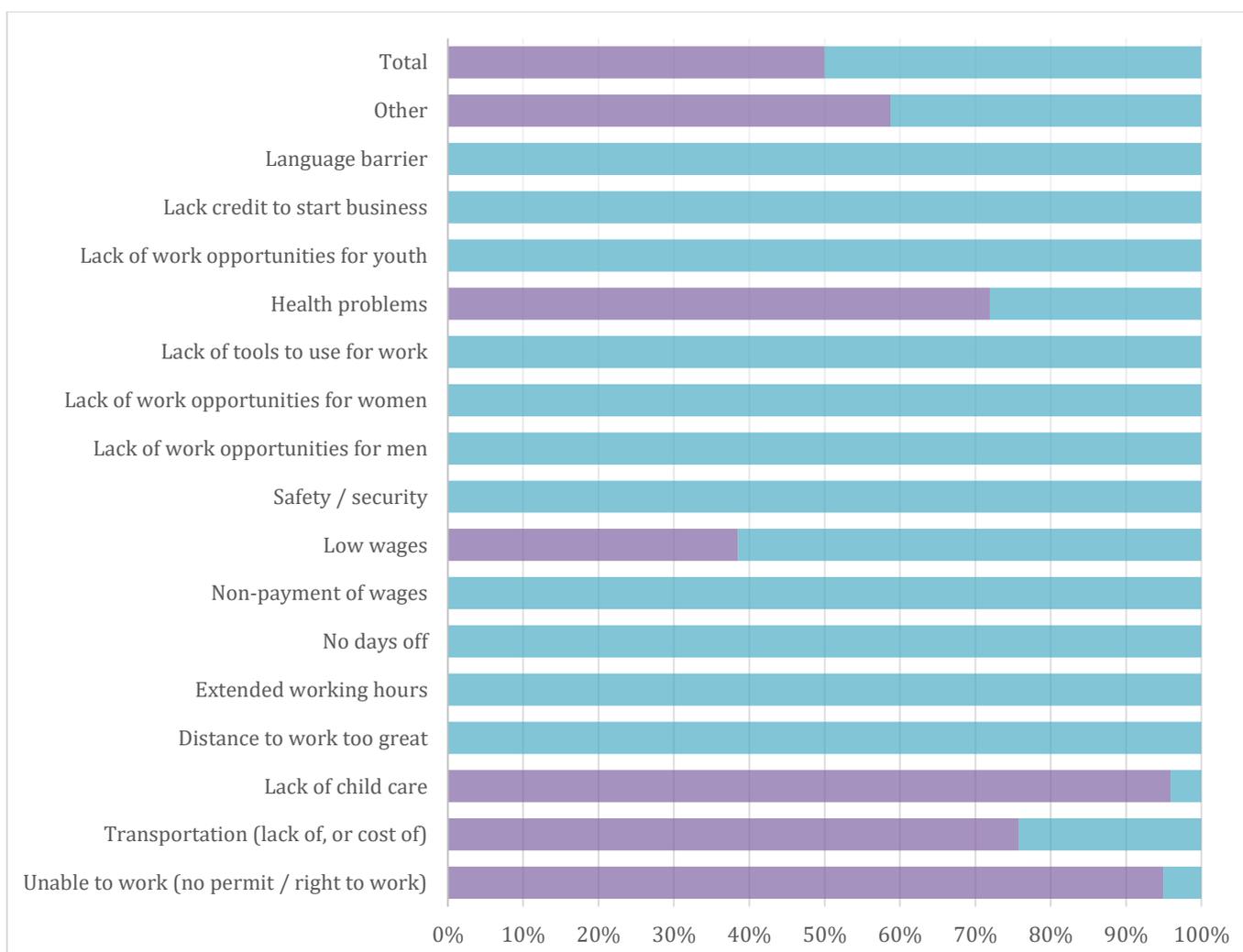


Figure 6: Barriers to accessing livelihoods opportunities (Purple is for the host community and turquoise is for the Syrian refugees)

FGDs conducted with young males aged from 12 to 24 and active in the informal economy, confirmed what Syrian community representatives said: relations between Turkish employers and Syrian workers is generally not good and sometimes Syrians are not paid for the work they have done. “Whenever the Turkish employer does not need the services of the Syrian worker, he does not pay the wages of the last period which could be a week or month”.

Adults who participated in a separate FGDs, reported the same challenges regarding the payment of wages: “it took 45 days to find a job, and after I worked, the Turkish employer did not pay me; he deprived me from TL 2,000 wage” one respondent stated. Another responded added that: “there is no protection at work; I worked as a carpenter for a Turkish employer, I was injured while I was working. The employer did not compensate me and when I complained, the Turkish employer forced me to sign papers in Turkish, I did not know about these papers but I knew later that this signature prevented me from complaining to the Turkish authorities”.

For adult male respondents it is difficult to find job, if a job exists. When asked about their future, a Syrian man over 40 stated: “we do not think about the future at all; we live day by day. When a person shift form a productive person to a consumer person and rely on aid he/she does not think of the future; thinking is only of the current moment”. All respondents said there is no future for them in Turkey: they see their future only in Syria. Only one respondent plan to immigrate to Europe legally; he does not want to put his family at risk.

There are many engineers and university degree holders who work as workers with low wages. One of the respondent, mathematics BA holder, works as a daily worker. There is a street in Önder, where Syrian and Iraqi men stand, every morning, waiting to be called by Turkish employers as daily labourers: some of the ones approached one day by NRC staff had a university degree or where university students who couldn't finish their studies.

According to Syrian respondents, work opportunities for Turkish are available and at higher wages, 2-3 times higher than the Syrian workers' wages. However Turkish employers prefer Syrian workers as they are cheaper (no official contract, no insurance, no rights).

Broader economic participation

The results of the assessment show the ability of Syrian refugees to devise creative coping strategies by which, despite social exclusion and limited access to rights and services, they advance their livelihoods by moving between the legal and informal status. Besides receiving humanitarian support and occasional charity aid, and in addition to child labour, refugee families resort to a number of other coping strategies and participate in an active economic networks – with shops, borrowing, unpaid work in exchange of assistance which are largely or totally outside legal requirements (work permit, shop licence etc.) and therefore not reached by tax imposition¹³. Syrian ethnic neighbourhoods have bustling shops - grocery stores, restaurants and barber shops – all of which have bilingual signboards in Turkish and Arabic, employ almost only Syrian (with the exception of few Turkish waiters) and serve mostly Syrian food and products.

In order to meet the financial needs of the Syrians who experience difficulties in opening a bank account (banks requires a passport), their more well off compatriots have opened also *hawala* offices which allow people to send money without any documents (“only a mobile number is needed” according to the owner of one of this agencies) within Turkey and to their relatives in Syria. A worker in this office, interviewed by NRC, stated that *hawala* is used by Syrians only and the majority of the customers are men. Most Syrian shop keepers also use the *hawala* in order to pay their suppliers in other cities in Turkey. This agency is also used to receive remittances. The employee stated that he and the owner are afraid that their business will stop in few months because of the Urban Transformation Plan carried out by Altındağ municipality, which, with the houses demolition, will push customers to move away. In addition to this challenge, he added that also to abide to the Turkish regulations is not easy, also because of the language barrier, and added that “It is not possible for this centre to comply to any sector or any governmental entity, because it is a Syrian centre without any permit and we do not have any rights”.

It is clear the potential for clashes with Turkish residents, who comply with the law and see the refugees as unfair competitors and exploiters of economic opportunities and legal gaps. Turkish participants to FGDs stressed several time how Syrians and Turkish traders are treated differently by the authorities: Syrians do not pay taxes thus keeping their prices lower. This feeling of inequality and discrimination had already caused tensions and attacks against Syrian shops.

Many Syrian refugees interviewed in Altındağ through FGD and KIIs have expressed the desire to have their own independent businesses, mainly because of the negative experiences they had while working for Turkish employers. The difficulty in setting up self-employed income generating activities also depends on lack of information on how to do so according to the new Labour Law, passed in 2016, which focuses on individuals under TPL. Only a minority (36%) of Syrians said to have enough information on how to get the Work Permit according to the new Labour Law. Surveyed men have skills and experience in construction and building, plumber, carpentry, driving,

¹³ FGD and KII in June 2016

mechanics, and retail work. Most working Syrian males work in these sectors/ professions for Turkish employers. Women have skills in homemade works such as tailoring, plastic chairs decoration and coiffure, and are willing to work from home, especially if this could generate an income that could enable to stop their children from working (Interview with one mother, Ulubey, June 2016).

Coping Strategy Index (CSI)

The Coping Strategy Index (CSI) split up into intervals of 10 demonstrates that more than half of the Syrian refugee households included in the sample have a CSI score of 20 or less. This means that they likely use milder coping strategies on a regular or infrequent basis to deal with food shortages, such as eating food they prefer less, reducing the numbers of meals eaten per day, and reducing the amount eaten per meal.

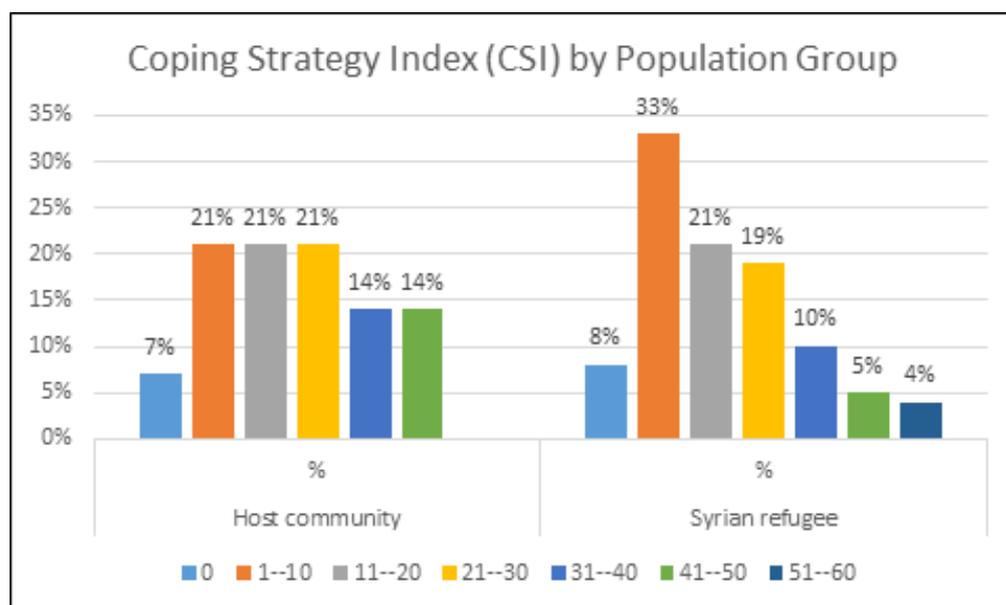


Figure 7: Coping strategy index score for Syrian & Turkish families

By comparison, the roughly 40% of Syrian households included in the sample with higher CSI scores (greater than 20) either use mild coping strategies more often or they use more severe coping strategies but only in acute moments, such as borrowing food and money for food from friends and relatives and limiting the intake of food for adults in the household.

53% of Syrian refugee households included in the sample preferred to cope with food shortages by limiting adults' intake of food at least one day of the past week. This is compared with 71% of the Turkish households included in the sample, who do the same.

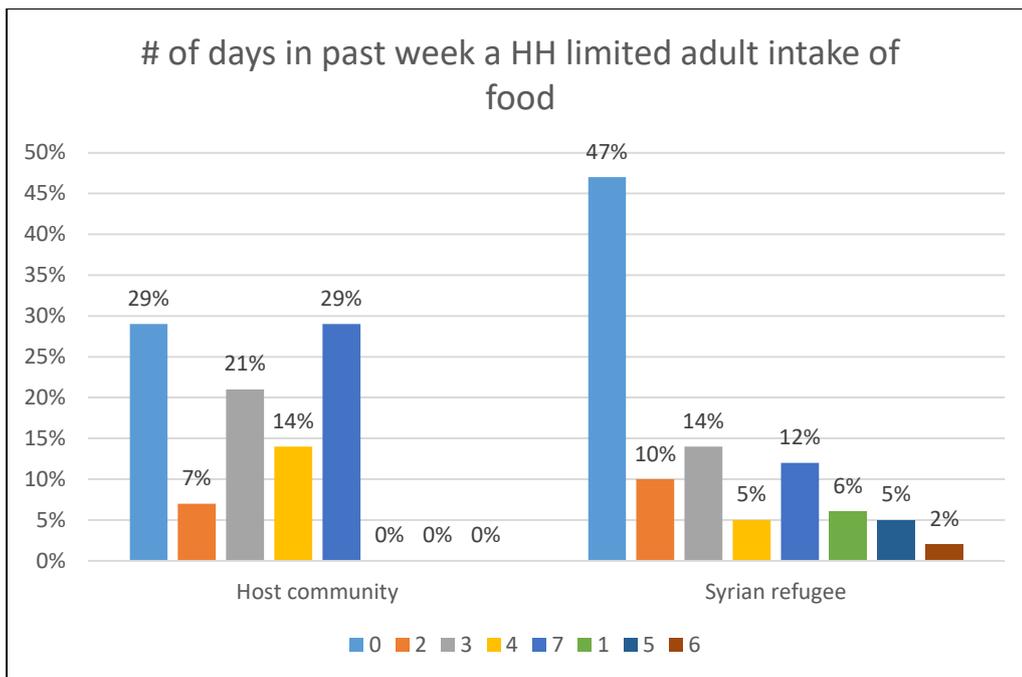


Figure 8: Number of days in the past week a HH limited adult intake of food

86% of Syrian refugee households included in the sample preferred to cope with food shortages by eating less at least one day of the past week. This is compared with 71% of the Turkish households included in the sample, who do that same.

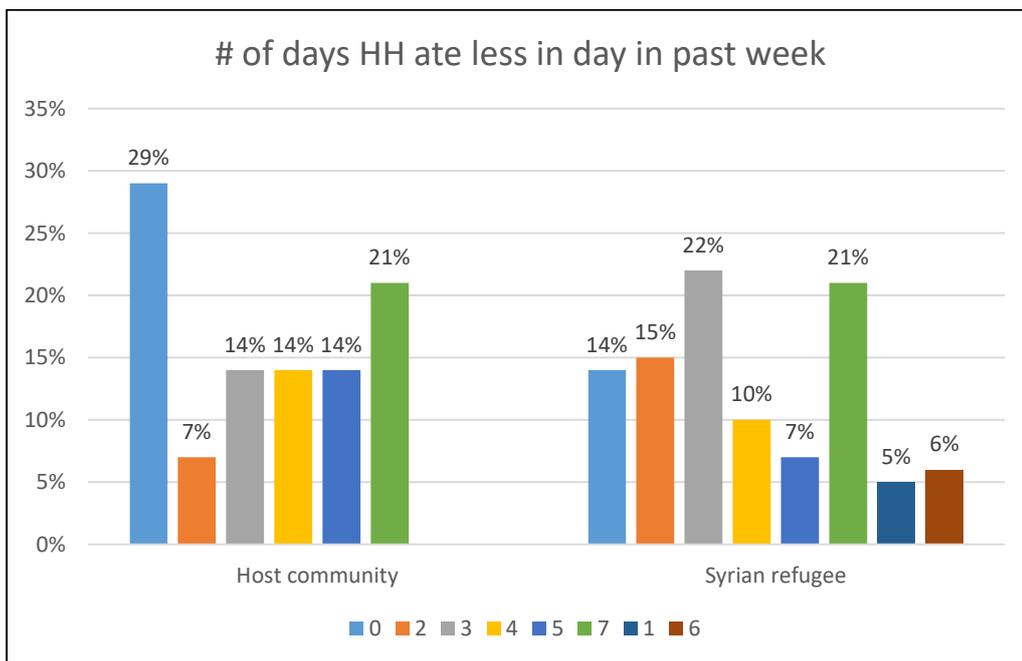


Figure 9: Number of days in the past week that a household generally ate less in day

Documentation and Legal Assistance

Accessing necessary documents

71% of the Syrian refugees interviewed indicated it is hard to access necessary documentation they need. Process taking a long time (39% of respondents) constitutes the main reason why individuals have not accessed necessary documentation, followed by ‘other’ (inadequate information as to what this is) and the process being confusing or unclear (21%). Cost associated with obtaining the documentation was cited less often than expected (6%) however this could be due to the relative non-attempt at getting required documentation.

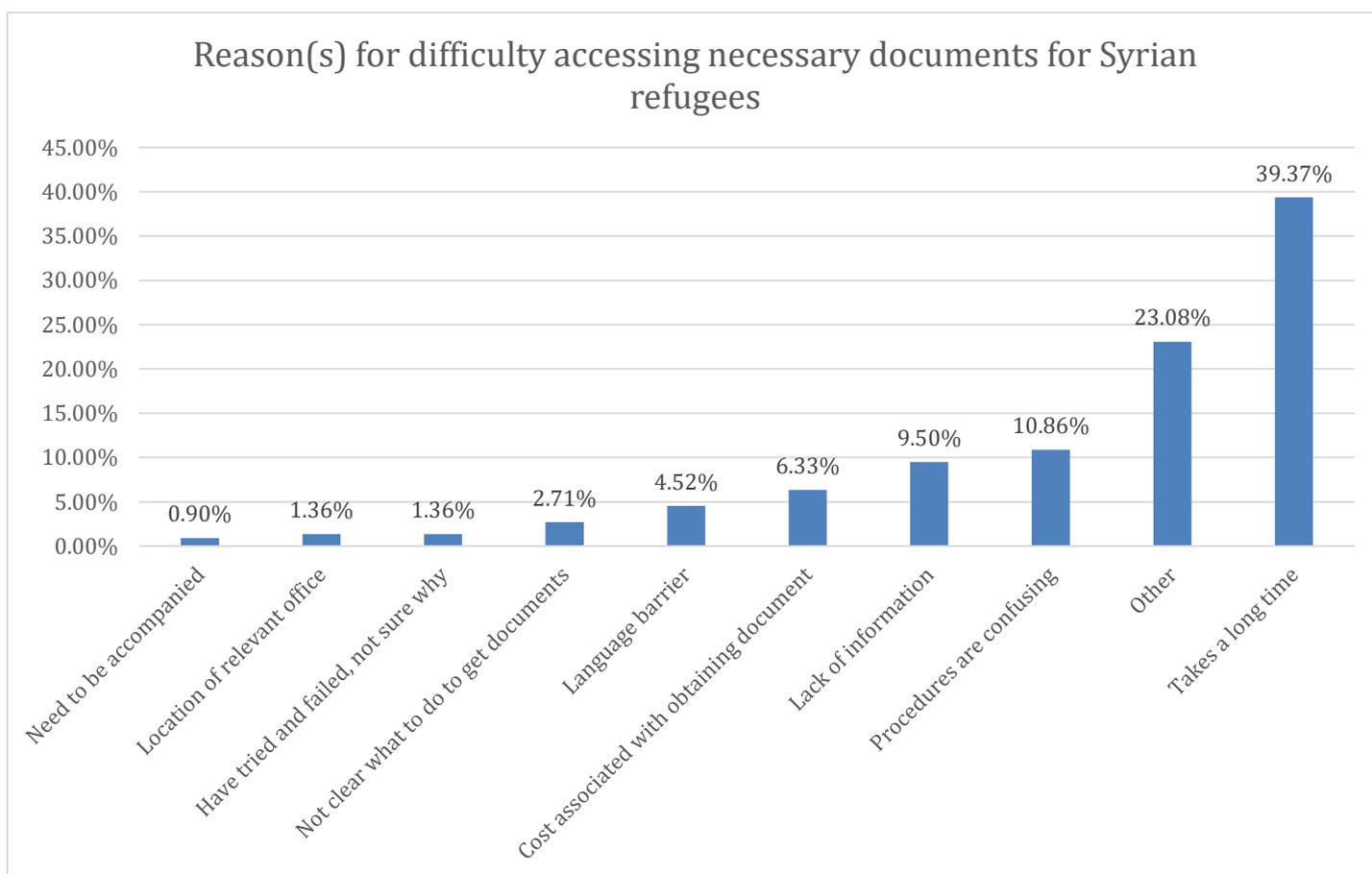


Figure 10: Reasons for difficulty in accessing necessary documents

According to one Syrian key informant interviewed, “all the public and most private services are available in the area and they are accessible constantly. All the groups in the community have equal access to the services, but there are some exceptions related to Syrians who did not enter Turkey legally, who cannot open a bank account even if they have the *kimlik*”. According to her, who works as secretary in a private Syrian office providing information and translation, “the lack of information dissemination, services cost, and in some cases, the lack of related documents, are the only reasons the prevent Syrians from reaching the available services”.

In general, according to the key informant, there is lack of information dissemination in the area. Most Syrians hear about available services as word of mouth, and they ask each other or Syrian

shop owners about information or services which they require. Private Syrian service providers have recently come into existence to address the documentation issue for Syrians, but not all the families can afford these costs. Some Syrian refugees lack valid and official passport, Syrian ID card, and/or family book which prevents them from accessing further documents. Few of them still don't have the Turkish ID card (kimlik), "which is considered the key document to have an access to most of available services".

According to male adults who participated in FGDs, "All basic services are available. However, they are expensive for Syrian people". Both men and women have access to these services. Only widows have some difficulties to get these services. There are no legal assistance offices or protection related services. They need someone to take care of children, and disabled people and people with chronic diseases as they cannot afford the cost. Adult women who participated in one of the FGDs, also confirmed that services are accessible for both genders but added that for women it is easier because they are considered as more in need of support because of their gender.

Disabled people, people with chronic diseases, female heads of households are, according to male respondents, the ones having more difficulties in accessing services. Nevertheless, "if you have money, you have access to all services" one respondent stated. So those who are with no money, are highly vulnerable and deprived from access to services. All the respondents had a kimlik so they could access all services.

Findings show that a large number of refugees are not aware of how and where to access documentation and legal assistance: 84% do not know where to get legal assistance, 64% do not know they can apply for a work permit and 97% do not know how to apply for a work permit.

Accessing Judicial Institution

60% of Syrian refugees interviewed indicated that it is hard to access judicial institutions. The language barrier constitutes 32% of the reasons behind the difficulty accessing institutions when required (see figure below).

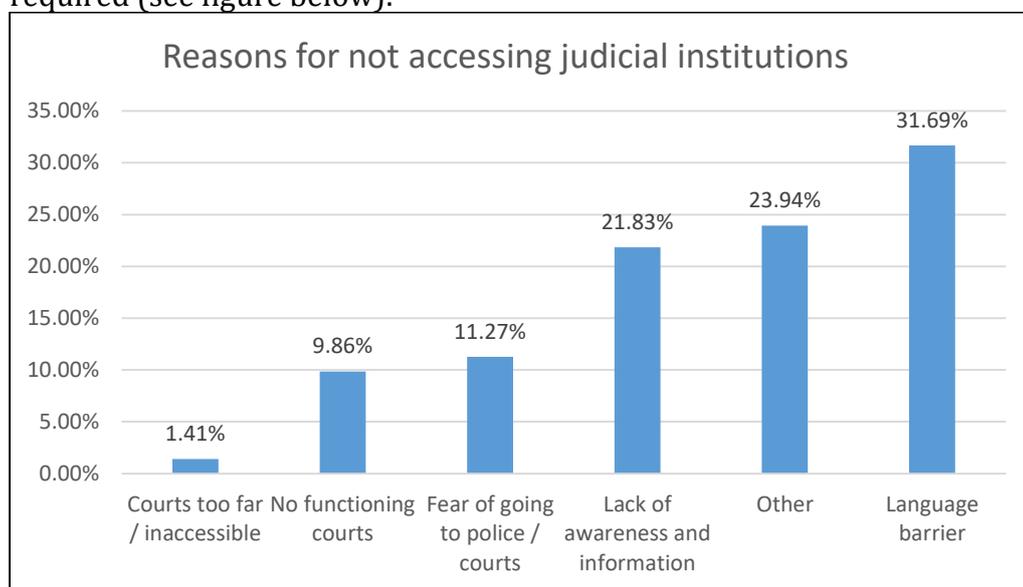


Figure 11: Reasons for difficulty in accessing judicial institutions

In terms of conflict resolutions specifically, elderly people, both Turkish and Syrians are reported to help in instances where this is required. According to respondents, conflicts happen mainly within the Syrian community and among young single males sharing the same accommodation. Disputes between Syrian families and Turkish families are rare; Syrian families are very cautious when they deal with Turkish families and "they deprive themselves from many rights" as a way to

avoid potential disputes with the Turkish families. When conflicts and disputes become more serious, muhtars and policemen are involved, “however, Turkish people are always favored”. It is worth mentioning that according to Turkish FGD’s respondents, when disputes occur between the two communities, Syrians tend to stop it quickly: they are afraid of the police. Nevertheless, according to the Turkish respondents, the police “doesn’t do much to Syrians but only to Turks: Syrians disappear quickly because they are afraid of being sent back to the camps”. Turkish men from Doğu added that the police does not want to be involved in disputes between the communities and anyway “[they] just give warnings to us but say nothing to the Syrians”.

Education

Children of Syrian refugee families have experienced multiple displacements first inside Syria and then in Turkey, thus missing up to three years of schooling beside experiencing various traumas.

Syrian children attend Turkish primary schools if there is availability (infrastructures or staff to access education); most children in Altındağ attend the TECs (Temporary Education Centers) where they are taught an Arabic curriculum and receive Turkish language classes. After four-years of primary schooling, many boys start working while girls enter the second four-year education stage. If classes are available, girls stay in TECs until the 12th grade, otherwise Syrian children who speak sufficient Turkish enroll into Turkish schools. Refugees interviewed by NRC complained that this happen at the discretion of the school principal even if, according to the law on Temporary Protection, it is their right.

Girls who do not go to school, stay home since there are no places where people can socialize apart from supermarkets, where they do not go alone. Families also afraid of safety for daughters or small children in public spaces, including during the journey between the house and the school. Children and families reported of being harassed by Turkish older boys around the schools. In principle, girls are educated longer but this does not mean higher possibilities of employment as long as their families decide not to expose them to the perceived dangers of the public and work space.

In Altındağ there are only five TECs (Temporary Education Centres), which, according to interviewed Syrians do not cover the secondary school period¹⁴ and are not big enough for the children population residing there. Moreover, many Syrian children who have missed school for years need special learning programs and catch up classes to be able to integrate into the formal education system: such activities do not exist in Altındağ.

In general, Syrian parents interviewed by NRC do not see the TECs as a valuable and enriching experience. They are convinced that Turkish schools offer a higher quality educational service than the TECs but that the language barrier makes it difficult for Syrian children to join Turkish institutes. Moreover, most Syrians felt (and some are still feeling) that their stay in Turkey is temporary and there was no need to enrol children in Turkish schools.

The findings of the survey show the following:

- 31% of the boys do not go to school because they do work instead to support their families
- 35% of the girls do not go to school because of the long distance to school and safety concerns

One child, aged 14, said that he would love to go back to school. However, as his father is sick and cannot work, he had to work. He works as a daily worker in a plastic sheet factory and he is paid TL 150 per week; he is very proud that he can support his family as his family is in urgent need for money; if he does not work, they will have no money to meet basic needs

Another child, aged 15 years old, works as a carpenter (worker). His father's salary is not sufficient, so he is supporting him. He said that he was not good at school and he is happy with working. The respondents added that due to the fact that they were working, the families were consulting them in order to take decisions even if they were children, and they felt empowered by that.

¹⁴ This shows the lack of information refugees have on available services: Faith Sultan Mehmet Primary School had classes of 10 grades at the time of the field research.

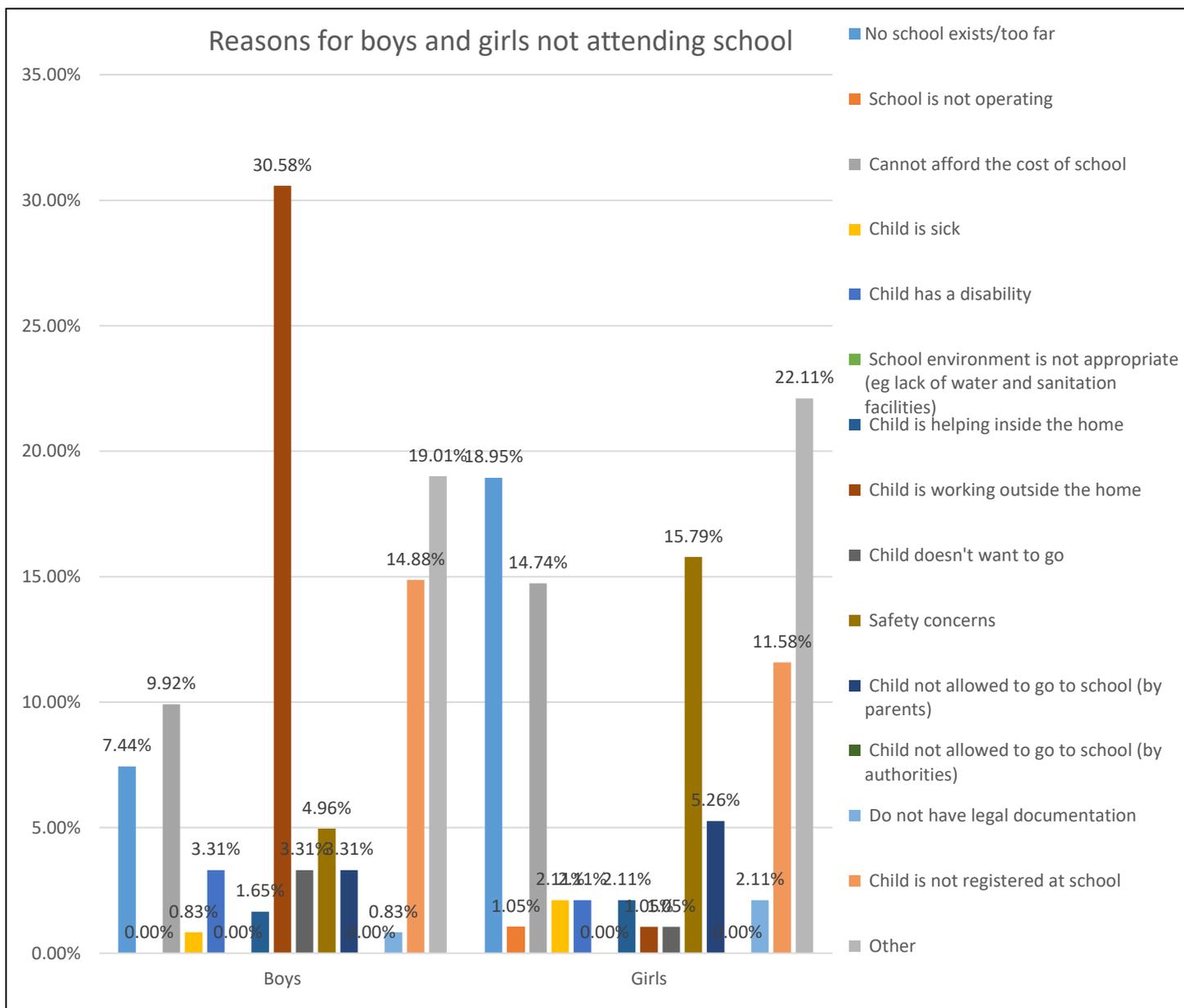


Figure 12: Reasons for boys and girls (6-18 yrs of age) not attending school

The gender gap within the Syrian refugee community affects children too: if schooling is not possible, girls stay home or are married off in order to alleviate the family economic burden; boys work since the age of 10 and therefore do not go to school. According to the NRC survey, 45% of Syrian boys from 6 to 17 did not attend school regularly in the last year while the percentage of girls is 44%. Boys tend to marry earlier than before the war because there is no more the compulsory two-year military service as in Syria. Moreover, given the general situation of despair, the traditional requirements for marriage – having a job, owning a house and a car – are no longer mandatory. Many are widows (even younger than 30) with small children, who struggle to arrive at the end of the month: some are getting re-married to compatriots and a few to older Turkish citizens (according to one key informant from Aleppo, a shop keeper, who is also a community leader). The phenomenon of polygamy should be further investigated since, although it is forbidden by the Turkish law, some Syrian key informant reported such cases of couples married

with religious ceremony only. Female teenagers are reportedly consenting to get married “because there is nothing to do”.¹⁵

Young school aged males participating in a FGD were not attending school: one respondent, who is 16 years old, cannot even read and write. Three respondents attended three/ four classes and cannot read and write well (aged 14, 19, 21). One respondent got an elementary certificate (15 years old). One respondent has diploma (civil engineering). Two dropped out since the time they were in Syria, because of multiple displacements. Two out of 6 expressed the desire to return to school, “in case their families are supported by cash handouts, as the main reason they work is to support their families”.

Syrian children compared themselves with Turkish children of the same age who “go to schools and most of them have iPhone. They are happy and hey have what they like, unlike Syrian students who have nothing”. They also confirmed that there is no place for young people: only a gym that costs 90 TL per moths and they cannot afford it.

The fact that Syrian working children (mainly boys) do not attend school is creating the premises for future conditions of social vulnerability because these children will either be confined to manual work, or to unemployment and the risk to get involved in criminal activities¹⁶. The present trend in work patterns reflects and reinforces the gender gap in ways that could be unpredictable and could foster higher social exclusion. Men older than 40 years old, even those with previous experience, are not hired by employers, who prefer young boys and children because they are paid less than their fathers, can work longer hours and speak more Turkish (or at least learn faster). All the above mentioned indicators create a gap between children from the Turkish and the Syrian community. In addition, Syrian children are not given the possibility to live their childhood and have instead to take upon themselves the responsibilities of adulthood such as being the family breadwinners.

Seven Syrian girls of the same age living in Önder have been also involved in FGDs. Three respondents are going to the TEC, two are waiting to next year to attend it because of lack of space. Two other respondents stopped their studies from Syria and they got married: one of them, aged 19 is widow. Unlikely the male respondents, the girls considered the TEC good: the only negative point for them was the fact that it was crowded (according to them “there is only one TEC for girls in Altındağ”. TECs are in principle not divided by gender but in practice, upon parents’ request, they are¹⁷: Turkish schools are mixed instead).

¹⁵ Focus Groups Discussions with young Syrian refugees in Altındağ, June 2016.

¹⁶ 28% of Syrian families (against 7% of Turkish families) reported that their children work to generate income – this was reported to be salaried work from the private sector largely (13%).NRC Survey 2016.

¹⁷ School principle interviewed by NRC education team (June 2016)

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

The Turkish government, with the Temporary Protection Legislation, has taken important steps to legalize a refugee regime that formalizes the perceived exceptionality and temporariness of the refugee status. Where the host state offers protection, and better options are precluded, the refugee has a stake in becoming visible to the authorities¹⁸. At the same time, the lack of full judicial integration and protection – added to the competition for job opportunities and disadvantages such as the language barrier – could lead the refugee to engage in informal activities. Syrian refugees remain largely invisible to local administration and tax authorities: most Syrian shops are unlicensed, many refugees become underpaid and are often underage temporary or seasonal workers with many children out of educational institutions. Refugees are living in a grey area where they have multiple identities (illegal migrant, asylum seeker, “guest”, black market worker, smuggler etc.) and are crossing borders between legality and illegality, recognition and informality.

Syrian refugees have already endured a long exile and have little prospect of return in the foreseeable future. Their situation requires “durable solutions” and innovative governmental measures, such as the Temporary Protection status, that call into question the distinction between citizen and non-citizen.

The recognition of basic rights and minimum living standard to refugees compete and collude with the poverty of the urban poor, like the Turkish people NRC interviewed in Altındağ¹⁹. Poor Turks who are also living in old houses marked for demolition under the Urban Transformation Plan also face eviction and feel victims of the policy of social assistance (from the Government and NGOs) that, according to them, is favoring the Syrians. The convergence of standards and claims of ‘the global marginals’ and the ‘urban marginals’ calls for an understanding of the condition of refugees through the lens of urban space and urban informality rather than the assumed “exceptionality” of the refugee status²⁰. The situation in which refugees live in Altındağ opens also reflections in terms of security (also as a consequence of the level of social cohesion) and public policy.

According to Syrian young men and women interviewed in FGDs, the main challenges are the following:

- Language barrier
- Different culture
- Bad treatment by some Turkish people
- No enough space in schools
- Very limited/no space in high schools²¹
- No enough houses available in the area
- Few job opportunities for Syrian people

¹⁸ Especially after the EU-Turkey deal, with the increased surveillance of the Turkish coasts, refugees are more keen to register with the Turkish authorities in order to get the Temporary Protection ID card or *Kimlik* and access the services related to this entitlement.

¹⁹A. Sottimano, S. Buzzoni, “Urban landscapes, new comers and fragmented society: the case of the Altındağ district of Ankara”: paper presented at the first INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON MIGRATION AND SECURITY (2016) organized by the Turkish National Police Academy/GÖÇMER on November 11-13, 2016 in Antalya.

²⁰ A. Sottimano, S. Buzzoni, “Urban landscapes, new comers and fragmented society: the case of the Altındağ district of Ankara”: paper presented at the first INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON MIGRATION AND SECURITY (2016) organized by the Turkish National Police Academy/GÖÇMER on November 11-13, 2016 in Antalya.

²¹ On the paper, TECs have high school level and state school accepts Syrians at high school level: the interviews with the Syrian respondents show that they consider the high school period very important. On the other hand, it shows that in the practice TECs have limited space for new students (reasons need to be further explored such as: limited amount of teachers, not enough pupils to form a class, limited resources, etc) and/or do not accept new students’ registration.

- Many Turkish employers do not pay on time and in many cases they do not pay at all.

Topics for further analysis

There are critical gaps that this assessment highlights for future research. First, this research suggests that the Syrian refugees tend to replicate the status and living conditions they had in Syria but in the host community. In fact, they have reconstructed their original marginality/vulnerability in the host country by moving into a peripheral (both socially and spatially) area of Ankara - which was home to poor internal migrants since the 1940s – and by keeping their traditions (food, culture, clothing) without mixing with the host community. All the interviewed Syrians were coming from Aleppo countryside and from the south eastern part of Aleppo city, under the control of the opposition and were urban poor and lower middle class.

Second, public policies can have a role in the re-production of vulnerability and social and spatial marginality. Further study of this issue is imperative for a deeper understanding of the issue and for devising more effective policy interventions. Crucially, such study could contribute to opening a dialogue on the nature of the Temporary Protection policy²² and its medium to long-term effectiveness - including the local integration of the urban Syrian refugees.

Finally, another important gap in public policy making, which is also understudied, is the local integration of other refugees, such as the Afghans and the Somalis, who are experiencing deeper levels of political and economic marginalisation.

Recommendations

The original purpose of this assessment was to define the profile of the Syrian refugees living in Ankara /Altındağ and increase our understanding of the vulnerability of urban refugees, how they perceive their lives, their choices and future opportunities in the context of Ankara /Altındağ. The implications of these findings are far-reaching for policymakers, humanitarian assistance providers, donors and international observers.

First of all, many have already started to integrate into Turkish society. The Turkish government and civil society need to switch gears from measures driven by humanitarian concerns, emergency assistance and “temporary protection” to policies focusing on the long term to facilitate the integration of the refugees into Turkish society.²³ Suitable measures to encourage the integration process do not have to be a simple extension of full citizenship to Syrians or to migrants across the board: socio-cultural and labour market integration policies are needed to help mitigate social conflict, which is mounting.

Proposed policy interventions include the following:

General recommendations

- Ensuring refugees access to ‘decent work’ (ILO) through work permits and training, information about their rights, access to justice, access to education (also in terms of acknowledgement of diplomas) especially through bridging programs to integrate children into the Turkish system and massive Turkish language courses tailored according to age groups and skills
- The General Directorate of Migration Management (DGMM) should not only complete the registration of refugees living outside of camps but devise clear protocols and conduct studies

²² The country’s asylum system has a dual structure, with refugees from Syria granted what is called “Temporary Protection” (Law on Foreigners and International Protection No. 6458 entered into force on 10th April 2014) as a group, while people of all other nationalities are required to make individual applications for “International Protection.”

²³ Kirişci, Kemal. “Syria refugees and Turkey challenges”, Brookings, 2014.

to identifying vulnerabilities, starting with gender issues that came out very prominently in our study

- The authorities need to work on devising a strategy to promote a positive and inclusive agenda regarding the refugees. A starting point could be the establishment of a steering committee, including government officials, civil society representatives, academics and refugee representatives to formulate a comprehensive, long-term integration policy. International non-governmental organizations should be engaged in this process to allow for an input by the international community.²⁴
- Vulnerability should be addressed regardless of the nationality, therefore targeting vulnerable Turks and non-Syrian refugees in order not to create discriminations among these communities and foster social cohesion
- Emergency programmes such as basic needs support and safety nets should be only short term measures (from 3 to max 9 months) and they should only target the most vulnerable individuals who can't work
- Public policies should be adapted in order to respond to the above mentioned point, increasing the coordination between the Government and international and local agencies in order not to leave any vulnerable person behind.

Engagement with the international community

- Work with national and international NGOs to strengthen the government capacity to reach out to refugees in urban, rural and peri-urban locations
- Continue to engage the international community to keep the focus on the humanitarian challenges and advocate for increased international involvement. The international community should address the shortcoming of the protection system.

Information, Counselling and Legal Assistance (ICLA)

- Ensure that Syrian refugees as well as authorities are fully aware of their rights and responsibilities to avoid misperceptions and violation of refugee rights. Information centres and portals should be available in Turkish, Arabic and other languages and there should be translators in all services (health, education, legal departments etc.) to overcome the existing language barrier
- Collaborative Dispute Resolution (CDR), including negotiation and mediation, to resolve disputes, in particular for tenancy and labour issues
- Accompaniment of refugees to administrative bodies and/or legal representation
- Relevant protection pathways should be in place so that people with special protection concerns such as victims of sexual gender based violence and child abuses are referred to specialized services.

Education

- Parents should be informed on the benefits of sending children to school and the most vulnerable should be supported through conditional cash for education in order to prevent child labour

²⁴ See Kilic Bugra Kanat and Kadir Ustun (2015). "Turkey's Syrian Refugees toward Integration", SETA.

- Turkish teachers and other workers dealing with refugees' children should receive adequate training on how to deal with them (ex. The NRC Better Learning Program)
- Standardized accelerated learning programs (like the NRC Child Education Package) should be put in place in order to get back to school children who missed years of education
- For adolescents who cannot integrate anymore into the secondary school, there should be vocational training programs and Turkish language courses and soft skills in order to preparing them for the labour market once they are 18. The above mentioned measures will prevent social problems, including exploitation, abuse and criminality
- Provide customized Turkish courses to people of different age and background including literacy and numeracy especially for women and girls. The need to offer language courses is an uncontroversial move with short term benefits for all parties, migrants (Syrians and others) and Turks. Social cohesion, better education and more diversified work opportunities would benefit all. Renewal of kimlik and their benefits could be made conditional on the acquisition of Turkish language working knowledge.

Health

- Migrants/refugees health centres should increase and have translators and the available Syrian and Turkish doctors should be seen as a resource and employed in Turkish hospitals. This will also limit the brain drain of qualified Syrians.

Labour market

- The mobility of the Syrian workforce should be allowed and encouraged according to the needs of the market (against the current policy of restricting Syrians within the province of registration).
- Improvements to the new Labour Law could include the assessment of skill profile of Syrian workers and their vocational training before employment or on the job as part of the job contract.
- Existing Trade Unions should also focus on resolving disputes arising between Turkish employers and Syrian workers or in case of Syrian workers in Syrian companies. Arbitration bodies /organs and relative legislation should be made accessible for both Turks and Syrians,
- Legal consultancy offices for labour relations supporting people willing to establish private small business should be set up at the local (district) level
- Tax reduction for limited periods of time or financial support (in terms of subsidized work permit) and other special treatment could be granted respectively to migrants establishing private businesses and companies hiring migrants, encouraging the establishment of private business by disadvantaged individuals (on the basis of economic status rather than nationality). This would encourage small entrepreneurs to abandon informal activities, alleviate poverty and give chances to work to women (whose activities are culturally bound to small family-owned venues)

Infrastructures

- Improve WASH infrastructures and roads and transportations to/from new neighbourhoods
- Improve urban planning with public green spaces, structures for sport activities and socialization venues for all, especially youth, women, elderly and disabled (with cultural sensitivity to women needs.)

- Support municipalities in planning and make the above mentioned infrastructures operational.

Annexes

- [NRC Needs Assessment Survey Questionnaire](#)
- [FGD Guide](#)