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Gender Analysis of Association for Aid and Relief Japan Beneficiaries and Activities in Gaziantep, Şanlıurfa and Mardin

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List of Abbreviations

AAR Japan	Association for Aid and Relief Japan
DGMM	Directorate General of Migration Management
ESSN	Emergency Social Safety Net
GBV	Gender-based Violence
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-based Violence

Executive Summary

Ten years after the start of the civil war in Syria and the mass forced migration to neighboring countries, there are almost 3.6 million Syrian refugees living in Turkey, as the country has become the world's largest refugee-hosting country in the world (UNHCR, 2020). While the overwhelming majority of Syrian refugees are still under temporary protection, a precarious legal status defined by temporality and insecurity, it is clear that the presence of Syrian refugees in Turkey is far from temporary.

While the increasing number of the Syrian community in Turkey promotes protection and integration efforts of the international and national civil society actors, it also draws attention for research purposes. Both organizational and academic research focuses on different aspects of forced migration, such as labor participation, schooling, and integration, meanwhile seeming to neglect the heterogeneous character of the refugee community, such as age, gender, social class, and ethnicity. However, for more accurate and sustainable processes of policy making on protection and integration, it is essential to understand and address intersectional factors that shape the everyday experiences and struggles of the concerned community.

In this sense, gender emerges as a particularly important concept to understand the refugee communities' dynamics, capacities, vulnerabilities, and strategies. While gender analysis of the refugee community in Turkey relatively found its place in the literature (see Freedman, Kıvılcım and Baklacıoğlu, 2017; KADEM, 2018; ASAM, 2018; Özden and Ramadan, 2019; Danış and Biehl, 2020; Körükmez, Karakılıç and Danış, 2020), it still requires further research. Collection of gender segregated data and analysis of the gender dynamics of a given community is also essential for international and local civil society actors in order to come up with tailor-made policies and programmes targeting various intersectional groups among the refugee community. Integration of our pre-existing knowledge on gender-based power structures, dynamics, and inequalities into policy making and programming in every step of the way is crucial for the success of gender responsive and/or transformative protection and humanitarian efforts.

The central aim of this study is to focus on a more gender-responsive approach to child protection and to identify and analyze different gender-based needs, capacities, vulnerabilities, and strategies to introduce a more intersectional approach to better address the protection needs of different groups of refugee communities in the designated cities of Antep, Urfa, and Mardin.

To support this objective, a closely related aim is to explore the ways in which forced migration effects gender dynamics of the refugee community to better understand the gendered constructions, norms, relations, expectations, and aspirations that shape the experiences of refugee children and youth. With this purpose, we have conducted qualitative research with mixed methods involving the participation of 76 informants including AAR Japan staff and beneficiaries in three cities, Antep, Urfa, and Mardin. All situated in the Southeast of Turkey, bordering Syria, particularly Antep and Urfa, these locations are among the 10 most refugee hosting cities[1] in the country.

Principal Findings

Increasing care work and tension in the family due to the pandemic

Most nuclear families live in rented houses with their multiple dependents, presenting a traditional family structure. In some cases, multiple families live together in order to share the rent costs. As a result, neither parents nor children get to enjoy their private space. There is a strict gendered division of labor in the household in which mothers and adolescent girls are in charge of domestic and care work in the family. The care duties of women and girls have increased drastically due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic where the family members' access to public space has been limited. The pandemic situation has also augmented the level of stress within the family as a result of deteriorating livelihood opportunities, arguably leading to domestic violence cases against women and children.

Outside is for boys and men only

While the majority of interviewees from the refugee community believe that their neighborhoods are secure for both women and girls, their access to public spaces without other family members present is very limited, with the exception of schooling and Koran courses. As a result, adolescent girls particularly have limited opportunities to socialize with their peers outside of school due to possible security concerns and traditions. Boys, who have more options to spend time in public spaces, experience discrimination from the host community, causing

[1] The 10 most refugee hosting cities of Turkey https://www.goc.gov.tr/gecici-koruma5638, consulted on 25 December 2020

disagreements and even fights among children. Refugees who are not yet registered with DGMM present a particularly vulnerable group in terms of access to public spaces and socialization outside of the house due to the risk of deportation.

School is important despite serious demotivating factors

Ten years after the start of the Syrian civil war and the subsequent mass forced migration to Turkey, many believe that their stay in Turkey will be permanent. As a result, both parents and children give immense importance to children's schooling in Turkey. While the general satisfaction from the school system under normal circumstances is promising, children face various demotivating factors adapting to the education system, such as the language barrier, missing yeas of school along the way, experiences of discrimination from their peers, and financial difficulties. These factors particularly impact adolescent boys who often prefer to seek opportunities elsewhere, particularly in the informal labor market. Children from families with multiple dependents have an especially hard time continuing their distance learning courses due to the lack of technical devices. Children express wishes to continue their education in the long-term and obtain high-skilled professions despite their need for external financial support to realize their future aspirations.

Livelihood opportunities are rare and precarious

While men's unemployment seems to be a general trend in all three cities due to the difficulties of finding sustainable work, those who do work are commonly employed in the informal market, doing "traditional migrant jobs" associated with precarious working conditions, lack of labor security, low pay, and long working hours. Women's and adolescents' participation in labor seems to be a survival strategy resulting from financial necessity, particularly in the absence of male breadwinners. While women's participation in productive labor remains low and limited to feminized domains of labor due to possible security reasons and tradition, in the long term, it holds the potential to empower women to reshape gender dynamics and roles within the family.

Harmful Coping Mechanisms as a Survival Strategy

The experience of forced migration and adaptation of survival strategies in the country of migration hold the potential to accelerate harmful coping mechanisms, influencing both young men and women in various ways. Financial difficulties due to parents' unemployment, especially in the cases of families with multiple dependents and single female headed households, in combination with demotivating factors in schooling, force young men to join the labor market. The ageism in the labor market also provides a fruitful context for child labor, where children are perceived to be more exploitable, and thus more employable, in the informal labor markets. In the case of adolescent girls, both financial incapacities and gender-based security concerns seem to increase the risk of child marriages. It is also possible to consider the child marriage of girls as a patriarchal bargain (Kandiyoti, 1988) in which young women seek protection from the risks of society and paternalistic oppression of their parents. While the illegality of child marriage holds the potential to bring some level of invisibility to the issue, the ongoing mistrust of the protection mechanism also remains a demotivating factor in terms of reporting.

AAR Japan Community Centers: A place of socialization and individualism

The Community Centers provides its young beneficiaries an important space for socialization with their peers away from discrimination and family pressure, which is particularly valuable for young girls, who have very limited access to public spheres, besides going to school, where they feel happy but not always welcome. Children greatly appreciate taking part in the decision-making processes, such as deciding together on the upcoming activities, which contributes to their sense of individualism and self-worth. Adult men's participation in activities remains quite low. While the most obvious reason seems to be their employment – despite ongoing male unemployment - and not having enough time for non-productive activities, there is also a general belief that provided activities would not be in their interest. Considering further support from AAR Japan, language classes and vocational training are believed to hold the potential to access more hard-to-reach groups.

Research Methodology

In order to address the current experiences, challenges, and strategies of the target community with deeper understanding, a tailor-made methodology and data collection tools have been discussed and developed by the researchers in close collaboration with AAR Japan team. Taking into consideration the time limitations, as well as the heterogeneous demographics of the AAR Japan beneficiaries in designated cities, the research team came up with detailed mixed qualitative research methods, namely semi-structured in-depth interviews and open-ended question surveys.

The data collection process has been composed of two stages: desk research and field data collection. Firstly, the existing literature on gender analysis of the refugee community in Turkey, gender-responsive and transformative humanitarian approaches from other case countries with mass migration experience, and relevant gender and child protection analysis, tools, and reports developed by other organizations worldwide have been examined. In addition, the research team analyzed previous reports from AAR Japan and held three consecutive meetings with Antep, Urfa, and Mardin field staff in order to acquire better insight and determine the emerging issues that would inspire the content of the data collection tools.

Data collection tools for mixed qualitative research, such as in-depth interviews and open-ended survey questions, have been developed. While surveys hold the potential to reach out to broader demographics to observe repeating patterns, in-depth interviews have provided us a deeper understanding of the emerging issues. Due to the Covid-19 context, focus group discussions as well as participant observations have remained limited.

Data collection: The first phase of the data collection took place between 14-23 October 2020 when the research team visited Antep, Urfa, and Mardin. In total, 25 individual and group in-depth interviews with 30 participants were held either in person or via WhatsApp due to Covid-19 measures. In the second phase of the data collection, in total 46 open-ended surveys were held via phone by the AAR Japan field staff in Antep, Urfa, and Mardin over three weeks in November- December 2020.

In depth interviews with in total 30 participants

Participants	Antep	Urfa	Mardin
AAR Japan Staff	3	3	4
Parents	2	2	3
Adolescents	2	2	4
Children	2	1	2
Total:	9	8	13

Surveys with in total 46 participants

Participants	Antep	Urfa	Mardin
Parents	4	7	8
Adolescents	4	5	8
Children	2	4	4
Total:	10	16	20

Sampling

The intersectional and heterogeneous nature of the refugee community have been respected and represented in the sampling. The target groups have been designed as a result of the meetings held with the AAR Japan staff based on their feedback on emerging patterns of beneficiary profiles and hard-to-reach groups. The research team agreed on a purposive sampling, meaning participants were not selected randomly, but based on their active participation in AAR Japan activities. As a result, the participants have been chosen from among AAR Japan beneficiaries according to their gender and age groups. The sampling size both for the in-depth interviews and surveys have been determined based on the size of beneficiaries and AAR Japan activities by city as well as the human resource and the time frame.

Research Ethics

Considering that both child protection and gender are highly sensitive topics of research, feminist research methodology and ethics based on awareness and minimizing the gendered power relations and hierarchies between the researcher and the participants have been incorporated during the preparation and data collection phases of the research as much as the pandemic context has allowed. In this sense, we have paid attention to hear the voices of particularly vulnerable and hard-to-reach groups through our sampling, focusing on participants' personal experiences, stories and ideas rather than material situations.

All participants have been fully informed about the raison d'etre of the study and were asked to give verbal consent for the use of the information given for the purpose of this study. Full anonymity of participants has been protected in order to minimize the harm that the research might cause on participants and a non-hierarchical rights-based approach in knowledge production has been implemented. The ethical rules and code of conduct of the organization have been respected fully, and the ethical concerns related to conducting research with children and other vulnerable groups have been discussed with the AAR Japan team.

Limitations

The first limitation of the current study is based on the representativity of the data. Taking into consideration the purposive sampling method of the research for practical reasons, its sampling size and geographically embedded nature focusing on only three cities, it is not possible to argue that our data is big or objective enough to represent the whole Syrian refugee community in Turkey.

Furthermore, as the data collection phase took place during the context of Covid-19, beneficiary in-depth interviews in Urfa and Antep as well as beneficiary surveys were held via WhatsApp and phone. While data collection via phone is not an ideal method for qualitative research, it also limits the researcher's ability to connect with the participant on a deeper level, and possibility of participant observation, in the AAR Japan Community Centers, which were temporarily closed due to the pandemic measures.

Finally, with the exception of some young children who speak fluent Turkish, all in-depth interviews with beneficiaries were held in Arabic with the help of an interpreter in order to ensure that participants express themselves more easily and freely. Similarly, the surveys have been translated to Arabic and to English as well. Due to simultaneous translation of the interviews and multiple translation of the surveys, the data could not allow any discursive analysis and some information may have remained untranslated.

Analysis of the Findings

Demographic Information

The survey was conducted with 10 children (5 boys and 5 girls) between 8-11 years old, 17 adolescents (7 boys and 10 girls) between 13 and 17 years old, and finally 19 parents (9 men and 10 women) between 30-57 years old. All 46 participants were from Syria and were currently living in Antep, Urfa, and Mardin. The in-depth interviews were held with 10 AAR Japan Staff in Antep, Urfa, and Mardin, 7 parents (5 women, 2 men) and 13 children and adolescents (8 girls and 5 boys). While the in-depth interviews with AAR Japan staff and beneficiaries in Mardin were held in person, due to the pandemic measures the beneficiary interviews in Urfa and Antep were held via WhatsApp with the help of an AAR Japan interpreter.

All participants were living with their nuclear family as well as some close relatives, with the exception of some children living with their grandparents due to the loss of their parents. The number of single female headed households was particularly high in Antep, accounting for almost half of the participants, due to the loss of fathers in the Syrian war, presenting a particularly vulnerable group. When household demographics are concerned, it is clear that most families had multiple children, up to 14, representing a traditional family structure.

Private and Family Life

The first set of questions asked in the in-depth interviews and surveys were allocated to private and family life, namely a regular day in the household, in order to get a sound grasp of the gender dynamics in the family. The majority of the participants stressed that they spend their free time watching TV, going to the park with their family, and visiting neighbors and relatives. An expected outcome in terms of the gendered division of labor was the participation in

domestic and care work in the household. While all participants answered the question 'who does the housework at home' with 'the mother', especially older daughters' participation to housework was considerably higher when compared to male children. Sons tend to help their mothers with household duties when they are young, but once they are teenagers, the numbers decrease. In addition to the strict gendered division of labor in the household, the consequential decrease of boys' willingness to help their mothers might be interpreted as embracing their new family roles as possible bread winners despite their young age. **The observed gendered division of labor in the household was similar regardless of the number of men in the family, both fathers or children, working outside of the house or not.** The most commonly mentioned family activities were watching TV and going to the park together, which, in fact, has been affected by the Covid 19 pandemic. It has been stated by both AAR Japan staff as well as the parents that the pandemic dramatically increased children' dependency on electronics, namely mobile phones and TV, as a result of the curfews in Turkey for children under 18.

All beneficiary participants stated that they live in rented apartments, sometimes with extended family members, while in some cases 2-3 families would live together due to financial hardship. Most children were sharing their rooms with their siblings or parents due to the number of the family members. The conditions of the household and number of rooms would vary depending on the income of the family. All children participants have stated that they were sharing their rooms with someone, mostly siblings of their gender, and were also sharing the space where they play and do their homework. In other terms, it is clear that none of the children that participated in the research had any personal space in the household, especially during the pandemic circumstances. Particularly teenage girls who have new care duties such as taking care of their siblings have stressed their wish and need to have a personal space and some time for their own.

Social Life and Access to Public Space

"Boys are free as they can go out, girls can only go out to go to school. It is tradition."
(Urfa, adolescent girl, 17 years old)

In the survey, all participants except one stated that they like the neighborhood they live in and they find it safe for both women and children. Paradoxically, **some female participants shared their concerns, stating that they are afraid to go outside without other family members**

present because of security concerns such as harassment and theft. Half of the female participants stated that 'it is difficult for girls to go to the park or the center on their own'. While some explain girls' impossibility to go outside alone as a simple outcome of tradition, it is also stated that lower-income neighborhoods, where refugee live mostly because of their financial situation, would be less secure. During an in-depth interview, a teenage participant from Mardin has explained that when she goes outside, she feels like people would stare at her because of the way she dresses, but she would shut them down instead of being intimidated. She explains;

"I cannot wear anything -showing her shirt- just because I wore this, put something over it, it is shameful. I am bored, I see other girls and I fancy. I am a girl, not a boy! Shame, people would talk" (Mardin, adolescent girl, 15 years old)

Parallelly, another female participant in Mardin also complained about the social pressure, stating that she felt more free in pre-war Syria. Considering the fact that Arab Syrians have migrated to cities such as Urfa and Antep, while Kurdish Syrian refugees preferred to migrate to a geographically, ethnically, and traditionally closer city, such as Mardin, it is interesting to observe that particularly women find the host community to be more conservative than the one they were used to back in their country of origin.

Particularly male children in Mardin also stated their concerns about safety, when it comes to going outside in their neighborhoods because of **discriminatory practices among children based on their country of origin, that lead to fights among young boys sometimes even escalating to physical attacks**. While the experiences of social pressure towards women and girls as well as fights among young boys due to discrimination are mostly mentioned in Mardin, it has not been clear both from the surveys or in-depth interviews whether it is because Mardin is genuinely more dangerous for women and children, or going out to the public sphere is particularly more important for refugee women and children with Kurdish origin living in Mardin as they are more accustomed to it before migrating to Turkey. It is possible to consider that women and children living in Antep and Urfa - which are inherently believed to be more conservative then Mardin - did not explicitly mention such concerns regarding their experiences outside of the house because they are not accustomed to spending time in the public sphere anyways.

On a more positive note, compared to children who arrived more recently, children who have spent more years in Turkey stated that they have more friends that they spend quality time with thanks to their improved language skills. A participant in Antep (Antep, adolescent boy, 17 years old) who recently registered with DGMM stressed that he had an active social life in Syria and he had friends, but in Turkey he is afraid to go outside as he was lacking a foreigner ID until recently. In terms of both access to public spaces as well as schooling, children who are not registered refugees under temporary protection in Turkey seem to present a particularly vulnerable group in terms of their socialization outside of the house regardless of their gender.

As a result of possible security threats as well as the social pressure especially on women and girls, gendered socialization patterns of children have been observed. While most female girls stated that they spend most of their time at home, with the exception of going to the park or neighbors/family members with their mothers and Koran classes – which seems to be the only place for socialization outside of the family, in the pre-pandemic situation, boys tend to play on the street with their friends and benefit from physical activities such as sports. However, when asked if they have any close friends, especially older boys answered the question negatively.

The Covid-19 pandemic has had surprising effects on children's daily lives in terms of access to the public sphere. While boys, who, in normal circumstances, can play and socialize with their peers outside of the house mentioned how much the pandemic influenced their lives, girls who generally spend their time in the household stress that their lives have not been affected drastically with the exception of schooling. When adolescents are asked 'what makes them happy or sad', the most common positive answer has been spending time with family and friends, while the outcomes of the pandemic, such as not being able to attend online classes, not being able to go to school, and not socializing with friends have been stressed as the negative ones. Multiple children explained it as "we used to go to each other's houses, we would go to school, we would play together, I miss my friends deeply".

Schooling and Access to Online Education

With the exception of families newly registered with DGMM in Antep, the majority of children stated that they attend school. If fact, the schooling rate was much higher than expected. Although these results based on purposive sampling cannot be generalized to the whole Syrian refugee community in the country, as one AAR Japan staff from Mardin states, **the increasing**

schooling rate is an indicator of the community's intention to remain in Turkey in the long-term. All children participants stated that they are happy with their school, teachers, and classmates. Some female participants mentioned that they love their teachers because they pay special attention to refugee students, wanting to help them from potentially falling behind because of the language barrier.

Despite this very positive general picture, some demotivating issues emerge. Firstly, multiple children stress that since their education in Syria, they have lost some school years, especially those who remained in the camps. As a result, they are expected to continue their education from the grade they last graduated from, which means studying with younger students instead of their peers. In addition, while students who start attending school in the first-grade show success rates similar to their Turkish peers, those who register in higher grades consider themselves falling behind because of the language barrier. The latter seems to be a demotivating factor particularly for boys. Finally, all children who attended the survey, without exception, mention that they are feeling discriminated against at school because of their country of origin and language. The only exception are the children in Mardin, where ethnically Kurdish Syrian refugees and host community reside, who mentioned that they were only discriminated against for being Syrian and not because of their language.

A young participant explained his experience of discrimination and being stabbed by older children as;

"Every time I go to school and come back, fights! I was little, in 4th grade, they were older, 7-8 grade. They said "you are from Syria, you came to our country!" We complained with the police as well as the school principal but nothing. He said "we cannot do anything as the fight took place outside of the school". (Mardin, male adolescent, 14 years old)

Due to all these negative factors, children, especially older boys, tend to be demotivated to continue their education and choose to drop out of school in order to find a job and provide for the family. When school dropouts and child labor experiences of boys are questioned in detail, it has been stated by multiple participants that it is not simply an outcome of demotivating factors related to schooling and financial difficulties the families are experiencing but also it is **the young boys themselves who believe that they are not getting enough output from the school and they have responsibilities as 'young men' towards their families.**

The most prominent problem concerning schooling mentioned by the overwhelming majority of participants has been access to distance learning. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic measures in Turkey, students in some grades attend school for two days per week (during the timeframe when the research was conducted) while the rest of the classes are conducted online and via Television. Almost all children who are registered at school mention that they are not able to properly attend their online classes because of lacking technological devices such as phones, tablets, or computers, as well as not being able to access the State Education Channel EBA TV. In households where there are multiple children of school age and only one or two mobile phones, children are experiencing serious hardships in terms of accessing their online classes. Additionally, it has been mentioned that **distant learning is not as effective as in class teaching, particularly for children who need special attention due to the language barrier.** As a result, while many have mentioned that they are registered at school currently, they are demotivated by the circumstances and are not willing to attend distant learning classes. Despite all these difficulties, all participants of school age stated that they are planning to continue their education.

During the interview, some AAR Japan staff, as well as beneficiary parents, also stated that the financial aid for schooling, The Conditional Cash Transfer for Education (CCTE) Programme[2], is not nearly enough to properly financially support the schooling of children. It has been stated that some parents, especially those with multiple dependents, are reluctant to send their children to school because of schooling (educational material and contribution fees) and travel expenses. A parent explains the situation as "I am grateful for Corona, because the transportation to go to school is very expensive, now children stay at home and attend their classes online."

Despite the benefits of reducing schooling costs, the majority of children shared their negative experiences concerning online education. A participant states:

[2] The Conditional Cash Transfer for Education Programme (CCTE) is a national social assistance programme implemented by the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services in order to promote the school attendance of refugee children in Turkey. The programme funded by European Union Directorate General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) provides 45 TRY for boys and 50 TRY for girls at kindergarden and primary school level (from kindergarden to 8th grade) and 55 TRY for boys and 75 TRY for girls at high school level (from 9th grade to 12 grade. https://globalcompactrefugees.org/article/conditional-cash-transfers-education-ccte-programme-refugee-children

"My mother has only one phone. We keep passing it to each other. For example, if I am falling short in a subject, I look at the book, but I do not understand. I have to go on youtube and search for it. But I cannot do it because I cannot get the phone. My class finishes, my brothers' class starts, that finishes, my sisters class starts, that finishes, another starts. Because of consecutive classes (of my siblings), I cannot get the phone to myself".
(Mardin, female adolescent, 16 years old)

Another participant shared his negative attitude towards online education:

"When the online classes started, the teacher gave homework, but I didn't do it. But my parents told me do it, then I learned how to organize my time and do homework."
(Urfa, male adolescent, 13 years old)

From these examples, it is clear that children are in need of financial and technological assistance and know-how from outside, as well as parental guidance in order to regularly continue their education.

Livelihood

As a result of the gendered division of labor, with the exception of single female headed households, the number of women working outside of the house has been very limited. In the case of participation in productive labor, women would generally do handcraft or sewing related jobs in the household, if financially necessary. Those who work outside of the house also mentioned sewing workshops as well as domestic labor. In this sense, it is possible to observe that, once employed, women tend to do jobs associated with 'feminized domains of labor' such as sewing and cleaning. In other words, **the participation of women in productive labor, in this case, mimics their reproductive duties.**

It is also believed that working outside of the house posits security threats for women, particularly for divorced or widowed women, as they can be subjected to harassment in the workplace. Considering most refugees work without a work permit, in the case of sexual harassment or any kind of SGBV, women would be afraid to report it to the police. In other words, in the case of undocumented employment, working without a work permit puts women

in a particularly vulnerable situation in which they work under more precarious conditions, for example, for less salary, but also exposes them to the risk of sexual harassment.

In the case of men's participation in productive labor, **men tend to have 'traditional migrant jobs' regardless of their profession and skill level.** The experience of forced migration is, in fact, a phenomenon in which previous livelihood skills cannot always be translated into the new context (see Deniz Sert, 2016). As a result, most men work at labor-intensive dead-end jobs as workers at construction sites, in factories, sewing workshops or as carriers of goods in the bazaar. This type of labor involves characteristically low skilled manual work, with long working hours, and the workers are significantly underpaid. Participants expressed that these daily jobs are also not sustainable, as they work day to day, up to 12 hours, being paid around 50 lira per day. All participants defined these jobs as unsafe, as the nature of the job is inherently dangerous and there are no protection measures, such as health insurance, due to working in informal markets.

"We survive day by day, we do not know what will happen tomorrow."
(Urfa, woman, 43 years old)

Male unemployment is another emerging problem. In the survey, **1/3 of the participants mentioned that the men in the family were not able to find work due to lack of job opportunities, language barriers, or health problems.** Due to the lack of State and civil society support and organization, the possibility of finding a job depends on one's social network, which remains very limited in the case of newcomer refugees, especially in Antep. One of the main reasons why male unemployment is quite high in all three cities is due to the fact that there are less jobs available for middle aged men as employers prefer to hire younger men, even children. In this sense, it is believed that **the employability of men decreases significantly with age.** While **male unemployment provides a place for child labor**, it is also stated that it increases domestic violence cases in the family, especially during the pandemic.

The average income of the household in three cities was mentioned to be around 1000-2000 lira, which is not expected to be sufficient for a family with multiple dependents. As a result, all participants stated that they were dependent on the ESSN financial aid[3] that all were receiving. However, not every family fit the criteria of having multiple dependents in the family, and thus did not qualify for aid. A similar problem emerges in the case of Social and Financial Support of the Ministry of Family, Labor, and Social Services. Particularly in Antep, where the number of single female headed households is high, it has been stated that Social Services demands an official proof that women are single or widowed, in the case of husbands leaving or losing their lives. In the case of not being able to provide an official proof of singlehood, women cannot benefit from this particular aid. In addition to ESSN and Social and Financial Support of the Ministry, it has been mentioned that there are some civil society organizations who provide financial assistance for rent and food, but these contributions were not sustainable and limited to couple of months.

Harmful Coping Mechanisms

In the face of financial and physical insecurities, refugee communities may adopt harmful coping mechanisms in order to seek security in the host country. For this project, we have focused on two particular gendered phenomena, namely underage or child labor and child marriages. While addressing these sensitive issues, it is important to avoid cultural determinism as well as simplistic economic explanations. Forced migration is a phenomenon that redefines gendered norms and values embedded both in the culture of the countries of origin and destination, where harmful mechanisms of survival might emerge. For the purpose of this study, we decided to focus on these two specific issues as they particularly impact adolescents from a gender perspective.

Child Labor

"We cannot keep our heads above the water without the money the children earn."
(Urfa, woman, 43 years old)

[3] The ESSN is a cash assistance programme for vulnerable people under temporary or international protection in Turkey, funded by European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) and implemented by Türk Kızılayı, Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Services, and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). https://kizilaykart.org/en/index.html

In the survey, %70 of the participants from all three cities stated that either there is a working adolescent in their family or they know of some. Except one child participant, who stated that she has two older sisters who work at a sewing workshop, all mentioned relatives and acquaintances were boys between 14-18 years old. It has been stated that these children work out of financial necessity, especially in the case of single female headed households or adult male unemployment. It has also been mentioned that having multiple dependents in the family increases the possibility of male child labor where **young boys think that it is their duty to take care of their families.** Having multiple dependents in the household has similar outcomes in terms of school dropouts and overall access to children's rights.

While child labor seems to be a financial necessity, it also became clear that it is a direct outcome of labor relations and dynamics. Without any exception, all participants stated that employers prefer to employer younger men because of their lack of negotiating power, which makes them more vulnerable to labor exploitation, such as being underpaid and working longer hours. It is also mentioned that younger men are more suitable for these labor intensive manual jobs because of their assumed physical strength and higher productivity. Similar to older men, adolescent boys also work at sewing workshops, bakeries, grocery stores, construction sites, or have porterage positions. It has been stressed by many that boys go to work with their fathers.

It has been stated that these jobs are not secure for them because of the hard working conditions, and the families of children who work are concerned for them. The cases of child labor under 15 years old has also been reported, especially in Antep. When it comes to girls, child labor is not as common, a participant (Antep, woman, 37 years old) stated, *"I once wanted to work with my daughter, but the owner of the workshop turned to my daughter and asked her whether she is old enough to work, even though I was 37 and could work".*

"If a girl has a dream, %90 she can achieve it. Because she doesn't have to make money" (Antep, adolescent boy, 17 years old)

While male child labor seems to be a general trend, girls are relatively exempted from this phenomenon. A 14-year-old adolescent from Mardin explains the gender gap and possible security concerns as:

"If I were a young girl, my parents wouldn't let me work. If I were a teacher like my aunt, they would allow it, but they wouldn't accept if I wanted to work at a store or at the factory. I wouldn't accept it as well. Mean boys, men, would mess with them." (Mardin, male adolescent, 14 years old) Another boy agrees saying *"It is boys' duty to work. Girls should remain at home. If someone tries to hurt me, I can protect myself. A girl would be afraid".* (Mardin, male adolescent, 14 years old).

However, it seems like it is seen as a necessity for young women to enter the labor market in the case of the absence of men. A participant talks about a young woman she knows as:

"One of our relatives from Syria was living in the area of ISIS. After they came to Turkey, they told her 'you should go back to the 1st grade'. She says I'm a big girl, it is so difficult to be in the same class with younger kids. So, she dropped out. Now she is working at a restaurant because she is the only one working from the family, her other siblings are 10 years old. So, she should work. She has a sister (15 years old) who got married early. Because ESSN card was not enough and their financial situation was very bad. Getting married was economically better than staying." (Urfa, woman, 43 years old)

Both AAR Japan staff and adult participants who we interviewed mentioned their concerns about the long-term effects of child labor. It has been stated that children hold low-skill dead-end jobs, and they are not benefiting at a profession which increases their long-term prospects. Unlike adults, children cannot benefit from vocational training. It is also underlined that working at physically demanding jobs at such young ages might cause physical and mental health problems in the long term. An AAR Japan staff states that children may also not be aware of the long-term effects of their employment at young age as:

"They cannot learn a profession, business owners prefer to employ cheap child labor, make them overwork. Parents really want to work too but they cannot because they are not preferred. It causes more mental pressure for parents as well. Children do not know their options; they think it is normal. Once they grow up and compare themselves with others who went to school, they will understand what they did." (Antep, AAR Japan Staff)

Child Marriages

In addition to child labor, another harmful coping mechanism we focused on was child marriages. As a serious issue raised by those working in the field, we aimed to understand whether child marriage is a common phenomenon and what are the possible reasons for its occurrence. Half of the participants, with the majority of them being from Urfa, mentioned that they know someone who got married at an early age, particularly young girls. Girls separated from their parents or from families with multiple dependents are believed to be at higher risk for child marriage. The main reasons for child marriage have been stressed as difficult living conditions and financial problems as well as customs and traditions. While child marriage has been presented as a coping strategy to share the financial burden of girls by marrying them out in order to provide them a more financially secure household, it has been repetitively mentioned as a result of harmful traditions as well. A participant explains the situation as:

"We are afraid to send our daughter to school or of her walking alone on the street so it's better for them to be married. So it is for security reasons, to avoid harassment. Also because of money. Maybe the husband might have money so at least she can live with him and he can take care of her. Some people say even when the family has money it happens because of tradition." (Antep, woman, 37 years old)

A participant also stresses that child marriage is a way of escaping paternal pressure in the family:

"It is not forced, if there is a suiter, the child wants it too. Sometimes they want to get out of the house, they aspire to be like their friends. Household conditions, sometimes poverty, sometimes the pressure of the family, the father, the brothers" (Mardin, woman, 30 years old)

In the case of adolescent girls, both financial incapacities and gender-based security concerns seem to increase the risk of child marriages. It is also possible to consider **child marriage of girls as a patriarchal bargain (Kandiyoti, 1988) in which young women seek protection from the risks of society and paternalistic oppression of their parents**. In these terms, it is important to underline that traditions change drastically due to the experience of forced migration and harmful mechanisms such as child labor or child marriage (re)ppear in conditions

of insecurity and instability. Simultaneously, they are blended with the social norms of the new place of residence. **Another important aspect when addressing child marriages in Turkey is its illegality, and thus invisibility.** It has been mentioned, especially by AAR Japan staff in Antep and Urfa, that the fact that child marriage is illegal, and the refugee community is aware of that, results in them keeping the information to themselves, as they are reluctant to share it with the State and civil society actors. In the case of child marriage, the protection measures of the State are also believed to be ineffective, unable to provide a better alternative.

While child marriage is presented as a harmful coping mechanism that effects young girls in Antep and Urfa, in Mardin, it has been stated that early marriage of boys is also an emerging phenomenon. It has been mentioned by a participant that **families want to marry their sons at a young age so that they can remain safely in Turkey and work, instead of going back to Syria to fight.**

AAR Japan Relations and Activities

"I like activities that makes me trust myself, make me feel free, like I can do anything I want to, because we want to study and go outside, like we are free girls."
(Urfa, adolescent girl, 17 years old)

Another set of questions focused on participants relations with AAR Japan and participation in AAR Japan activities. Children and adolescents in Urfa and Mardin stated that they visit the Community Center (CC) with their siblings and sometimes mothers. **Both women and children underlined the socialization aspect of visiting the CC as very crucial and beneficial for them**. A child participant from Mardin states;

"*My mother is going outside thanks to the CC. She's made some new friends. When she feels bored, she comes to the group and they talk."* (Mardin, adolescent boy, 14 years old)

When parents' attendance is concerned, mothers have mentioned their domestic and care duties as the main reason for not being able to attend activities as much as they want. When fathers' participation was the focus, the majority of the participants stated that fathers generally cannot attend the activities because of work, even despite the ongoing male unemployment. One participant explained it as *"even when they do not work, they think of work".* In addition to this

financial explanation, it has been also mentioned that the lack of participation to AAR Japan activities is an outcome of tradition and the fact that men do not find these activities useful or beneficial. A participant from Mardin explains men's reluctance to participate in activities as;

"The tradition of men is different, they do not like such things. If it was card games, they would come 24 hours a day. Men like themselves, their joys, spending time alone. In our family, men do not go to the bazaar with the rest of the family, then go out alone. Spend time with their friends. Men live with the burden of financial stress, bringing home the bread. That's why they want to release stress during their free time." (Mardin, adult man, 31 years old)

Some suggestions aimed at increasing adult male participation in AAR Japan activities included increasing outdoor activities, organizing activities on the weekends, and organizing livelihood related courses or workshops which men might find more useful for themselves. While men do not necessarily find AAR Japan activities beneficial for themselves, they generally support their children and partners attending such activities. Contrarily, a participant from Mardin states that when women share their newly required knowledge from the CC on women's rights with their husbands, it might end up causing disagreements in the family.

All children and adolescents who regularly attend AAR Japan activities stated that they like the activities and they find them beneficial for their family life, schooling, and social life. A child states:

"*I'm getting along so much better with my mom. I grow a lot. I'm taking a breath here. I'm so bored at home".* (Mardin, adolescent boy, 12 years old)

While children mostly mention that they particularly like games such as drawing and handcrafts, adolescents stated that they develop new skills and have the opportunity to meet new friends while the parents stated child development and educational activities as their favorite activities. In fact, particularly for young girls who do not spend a lot of time in the public space, their socialization at the CC is crucial for their mental health and development. When asked which kind of activities they would organize if they were in charge, most children and adolescents mentioned outdoor activities, sports and exploring new places. All beneficiaries also mentioned that AAR Japan staff consult with them before organizing the activities therefore they feel included, and a part of the decision-making process. The latter is particularly

important for children coming from households with a lot of dependents where they do not always feel like they are being heard.

Both the children and parents who stayed in touch with AAR Japan via WhatsApp groups mentioned that home-based activities they were suggested such as preparing greeting card and Ramadan decorations were useful family activities, but they miss visiting the CC as they are missing their friends.

The effects of the Covid 19 Pandemic

Taking into consideration that the concerning research has been implemented during the Covid-19 pandemic, research participants were asked how the pandemic influenced their lives in various ways. While teenagers stressed the increasing psychological stress due to not attending school and thus staying at home and not seeing their friends anymore, a similar concern was shared by the parents. It is mentioned that **the fact that children cannot go out and have social lives outside of the house, in addition to their increasing dependency on electronics, create tension in the household.** It has been stressed that the family responsibilities of girls have increased during the pandemic such as taking care of their siblings. A young girl states:

"My psychology has been affected; I have watched all the series on the internet. I keep cleaning the house, I want to do something. It is very difficult to be together (with the family) all the time, I want to be alone just for a little while." (Mardin, adolescent girl, 15 years old)

Meanwhile, the pandemic seems to have created an opportunity for male children to spend time with their family as a participant mentions: *"I had the opportunity to spend more time with my parents and siblings. I had no idea what was going on at home when I am at school."* (Mardin, adolescent boy, 14 years old)

While most women mention the increasing stress in the household as the most important outcome of the pandemic, men mentioned their concerns related to livelihood opportunities. The concerns related to gendered division of labor seems to influence both women and men in different ways. While women mention the increasing amount of domestic and care labor in the household (housework and teaching and caring for children at home) during the pandemic and the psychological and physical stress accompanying it, men mostly

mentioned the unavailability of finding jobs, lowering wages, and decreasing working hours, thus decreasing overall income of the household. An AAR Japan staffer from Antep stresses that during the pandemic, the majority of calls they received were to ask for rent or supply support, particularly the ones from single mother headed households.

Unlike men, women also underlined the importance of lack of socialization, such as visiting neighbors and family members, and other social activities both for themselves and their children. All these financial and social obstacles are believed to increase the overall stress within the family, for both for parents and children, and hold the possibility of causing disagreements among the parents, but also with the children, leading to cases of verbal or physical domestic violence.

Future Aspirations

Concerning future aspirations, while all participants mentioned that they would like to continue living in Turkey in the long term, they have underlined the importance of education. It has been also mentioned by several parents that their children already became accustomed to the Turkish language and educational system, and it would be more difficult for them to go back to Syria to study in Arabic. **While both children and parents stressed the will to continue children's education, children expressed their plans to continue their studies in higher education and acquire high skilled jobs such as engineers, teachers, and doctors.** While older children have more realistic and limited expectations and aspirations, they also stressed that they would need financial assistance in order to attend higher education, as it doesn't seem possible due to the current financial situations in their families. While it is impossible to trace gendered patterns in children's future plans, a parent stressed that *"we have reached a time when no one can impose their desires neither on a boy nor a girl."* (Antep, woman, 37 years old)

When expectations from AAR Japan in order to achieve these future goals are asked, the access to education and skills have once again been mentioned. Children from both age levels have stressed the problems they are experiencing in terms of access to online education. As stressed above, particularly in families with multiple children of school age, the lack of mobile phones, tablets and computers necessary to follow online classes is mentioned as an emerging problem, one for which children require assistance from the civil society. In addition to electronics, other educational equipment and supplies that often create an important financial burden on the

family, are mentioned as a prominent need as well. Multiple parents and children in all three cities expressed their wishes to follow both Turkish and Arabic language courses. Finally, skill developing courses, workshops, and training which may provide them semi-skilled job opportunities have been suggested by the parents. Such livelihood activities are believed to increase the overall participation of men as well.

The majority of female participants stressed their satisfaction with group meetings, suggesting organization of consciousness raising meetings where they discuss their common problems. It has been also mentioned that the organization might initiate other activities, such as home visits, which would provide them an opportunity to socialize with more women. Finally, some participants stressed the age gap in terms of attendance, suggesting organization of activities that might promote inter-generational socialization among women.

Recommendations

Organizational Level

Continue involving beneficiaries into the **decision-making** processes. Disrupting the hierarchy of aid and involving beneficiary communities into the decision-making processes in a more systematic and meaningful way, beyond deciding on the activities, does not only hold the potential to increase the sense of belonging and attachment to the institution, but would also contribute to their community engagement and contribution. Struggling with social, economic, and legal insecurities, precarities and ambiguities, creating a space for beneficiaries where they feel they can express themselves and be heard, but also can contribute as active agents, would have empowering effects on all gender and age groups.

The findings of the research shows that adult male participation in activities remains low, despite the ongoing male unemployment. This seems to be a general trend all over the world, where even gender-responsive policies of protection and aid implicitly limits men's role in the family and the society as breadwinners, the protectors of patriarchal norms and traditions and thus possible symbolic and physical threats to girls and women. Engage men as **active agents of change** and gender equality rather than potential obstacles to it.

In order ameliorate outreach and attract hard-to-reach groups, such as adolescents and men, come up with a tailor-made **gender policy** that pays attention to the gender dynamics of the community as well as the material realities of the region. Thus, regularly collect gender segregated data, include a gender lens into all your future programming cycles, monitor the changing gender related needs and risks, and evaluate the short and long-term impact of your programs on gender dynamics of the community in question. This also requires a deeper understanding of gender related perceptions and constructions within the institution which might be addressed with thematic gender training.

Civil Society Level

Ten years since the start of the war in Syria and refugees' arrival in Turkey, the language barrier still seems to be a considerable problem in terms of access to rights, schooling, labor market, and social services. Enhance **Turkish language classes** in addition to other language classes, such as English and Arabic.

Considering that, after all these years, refugees are still employed in dead-end precarious jobs with no opportunities for social mobility, increase **vocational trainings** that challenge gendered division of labor. Guide women to be employed in domains of labor that are not necessarily feminized. **Employment of women holds the potential to reshape gendered norms and expectations in the long run as long as they are not, once again, stuck in jobs that are seen as an extension of their reproductive labor.**

Despite the increasing interest in **refugee children's participation and integration into the Turkish education system**, there are still structural factors which are demotivating children, thus increasing child labor, particularly for adolescent boys. The pandemic context amplifies these difficulties and the overall decrease in the interest in schooling. Advocate for international and state intervention to support refugee children with further material, financial, and technical tools to continue their education.

The context of the pandemic has also greatly influenced the livelihood opportunities for refugees, as well as their domestic and care duties and family relations. All of these factors seem to increase the overall stress in the family, reaching to the point of possible domestic violence cases. Continue providing remote services and needs assessments while keeping a

close eye on these gendered risks. Focus your advocacy efforts on strengthening **protection mechanisms against harmful practices,** such as domestic violence in any form, child labor, and child marriages. Enhance legal support mechanisms within the civil society.

Self-organization and collaboration among the civil society to provide more sustainable resources and services is needed in order to overcome the limitations of project-based aid and protection work. Establish gender protection committees among stakeholders in each city in order to provide more cohesive and durable responses.

Country Level

In addition to the humanitarian and civil society efforts, cooperation between the State and private sector is needed in order to **channel refugee labor from informal to formal markets**. Despite the facilitation of acquiring work permits for Syrians in Turkey – which remains very low in the case of women's legal employment--the employment patterns seem to not change due to the demand for informal labor. More planning, control, and guidance from the State is needed to engage the private sector in a way that is mutually beneficial.

The State should provide **durable protection mechanisms and sustainable alternatives** to emerging harmful coping mechanisms among the refugee community, such as child labor and child marriages, in a way that would not further victimize the persons at risk. Considering these mechanisms are also shared by the Turkish community in the region, these efforts should address both the host and refugee communities.

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