

SOCIAL ADAPTATION
RESEARCH REPORT CONCERNING
REFUGEE
WOMEN
AND THEIR FAMILIES IN GAZIANTEP

OVERALL OBJECTIVE

Assessment of Syrian refugees and ensuring their integration with local community.

OVERALL PURPOSE

Determination of socio-economic status and psychological states and demographical distribution of war weary Syrian women, children and men living outside the refugee camp in Gaziantep. Setting the priorities/strategies which will provide basis for possible political practices in order to build a database and especially ensure social and cultural integration for the refugees.

REASON LEADING TO THE RISE OF THE NEED

War in Syria has effected the entire world in terms of humanitarian dimensions and one of the highly affected countries by this war is Turkey. The unjust suffering of women and children is at a rate that can also affect the future generations. Reaching up to nearly two million in Turkey, 253,222 of Syrian population live in Gaziantep. 50.3% of this population consist of women and remaining consists of men. Major part of the total refugee population consist of children under the age of 18 years-UN standarts) (AFAD,2014). While studies and applications, although being partial, that can offer social and cultural adaptation are carried out in camps, social adaptation problems of Syrian refugees living inside and outside the camp are increasing and becoming more visible everyday.

The refugee problem has to be discussed within the economic, geographic and cultural context, in general. However, the evaluations on that topic in terms of gender are rare and undermined. The project aims not only putting an inclusive approach towards refugees, but also, it has revealed the problems of women and children and put forth suggestions for solution.

SOCIAL ADAPTATION RESEARCH REPORT CONCERNING REFUGEE WOMEN AND THEIR FAMILIES IN GAZIANTEP

It is seen that in the short and medium term, it is not possible to compensate the effects of Syrian Civil War starting in March 2011. Rather than the political, economic and global dimension of the war, its human dimension that can have an impact on future generations is particularly serious.

With the outbreak of crisis, many Syrians had to migrate to different areas of the world in order to secure themselves and they took refuge in European and African countries, neighboring countries such as Lebanon, Iraq, Jordan and especially Turkey. Turkey is one of the countries that firstly felt the effect of the war erupting nearby. The statuses like guest, refugee, and asylum have not become clear for the war-weary in Turkey yet.

Since 2011, by the decision of the Ministry of Interior, war-weary Syrians have been granted temporary protected status in Turkey. Temporary protection defines the protection that is granted to aliens who are forced to abandon their own countries, cannot return to their homeland, come to our country borders in mass or on an individual basis in this mass influx period in order to find an urgent and temporary protection or cross our borders and whose request for international protection cannot be assessed individually.

Temporary protected status is not an individual status such as refugee and asylum status, it is a massive influx status and enables countries providing protection to save time and responsibility from dealing with individual monitoring. It provides those who have this status access to services such as health, education, access to labor market, social assistance and services, translation, customs procedures.

Thus, Syrians are provided opportunities regarding permanent stay, forced non-refoulement, protection and fulfilment of needs. The basic necessity for utilizing this from of status is registration with the official institutions. The necessary assistance and service are provided to Syrian citizens who are registered in shelter centers and outside the camp. However, the ones who are not registered cannot benefit from these opportunities.

According to the Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD) data dated 25 August 2015, the number of Syrians under temporary protection living in camps in Turkey is 261,141. In that case, the number of war-weary Syrians living outside the camp is over 1.6 million. It can be expressed that especially in Sanliurfa, Gaziantep and Kilis, the Syrians escaping from internal war are densely populated both in camps and outside the camp.

Gaziantep became one of the cities that was affected mostly from migration because it is close to the border of Syria, it has lines of descent and trade linkages. While the number of Syrians under temporary protection staying in camps was 202 in Gaziantep in March 2012, it became 42,656 in the first half of 2015. It is estimated that in addition to those staying in camps, there are over 500 thousand who settled outside the camp/in the city center.

In the period when the first barrels bombs were dropped in Syria and it created the second migration wave, the number of Syrians in Gaziantep who fled from the internal war in Syria suddenly increased. In this process, demographic and economic mobility passed smoothly with native population's embracing the war-weary Syrians and the expectation of repatriation after the war finishes. In that phase, it can be asserted that from now on, Syrians' expectations about return to their homeland in the short term will decrease.

To make sketchy socio-economic classification related to war-weary Syrians living in Gaziantep, we can classify them as impoverished, middle class and wealthy. The impoverished consists of the population that is poor and works informally for temporary jobs. It is possible that a part of this population whose access to health and education services are limited and residing both in camp and outside the camp was impoverished also back in Syria.

1. METHOD

Syrian asylum seekers facts and their social adaptation problems pose a very complicated and multilayer situation. This study that aims revealing the demographic, social and economic conditions of Syrian asylum seekers living in Gaziantep, and offering solution recommendations for current and possible problems, has a descriptive character.

In order to determine properly the situation of a population that is spread inside the city, is socio culturally different, and dynamic, the research used different methods such as questionnaires, focus group discussions, in-depth interviews methods by means of home visits. The points observed during data collection process were recorded and included to the research.

A questionnaire survey was conducted face to face on totally 1200 people from Araban, Aktoprak ve Oğuzeli districts of Gaziantep where Syrians under temporary protection live densely and Vatan, Ocaklar, Beydilli, İbrahimli, Karşıyaka, Güzelvadi, Karataş, Binevler, Şehreküstü, Düztepe, İnönü neighbourhoods, which have different life style and demographical characteristics and are selected by sampling method. In focus group discussions, over 100 families were interviewed.

2. THE RESULTS OF FIELD RESEARCH

The results of questionnaire survey conducted on 1200 people in Araban, Aktoprak ve Oğuzeli districts of Gaziantep and Vatan, Ocaklar, Beydilli, İbrahimli, Karşıyaka, Güzelvadi, Karataş, Binevler, Şehreküstü, Düztepe, İnönü neighbourhoods are the following:

When the age distributions of research participants are examined, 28.3% of them is from 35-44 age group, 27.4% of them is from 25-34 age group. 16.7% of the participants are in 45-54 age group. Thus, it can be stated that Syrians who escaped from the war in Syria and settled in Gaziantep are mostly in the 15-64 age group and they are in productive age. 15.1% of the population are in 15-24 age range, 2.7% of the population are in 55-64 age range, 0.8% of the population are over 75. 56% of the participants are men, 44% are women. 87% of the participants are married, 11% are single and 3% of women lost their husbands. Contrary to general perception that due to the cultural structure of Syrian society, the women are not open to this kind of communication (a communication in the context of asking questions about their own lives by a foreigner), gender distribution of research participants is relatively balanced.

The educational background of participants are different from each other. It is determined that the rate of primary school graduates is 33%, the rate of university graduates is 17%, the rate of secondary school graduates is 13% and the rate of high school graduates is 11%. It is determined that the rate of illiterate among participants is 24%.

The rate of ones who agree with the statement "I don't feel like I belong here" is 57%, the rate of ones who do not agree is 28% and the rate of ones who are indecisive is 15%. The improvement of sense of belonging of a community who had to migrate to another country in war conditions will take years/generations. Because of this, this data defines relatively high belonging rate. Whereas 68% of participants think that native population is disturbed by Syrians, it is determined that the rate of ones thinking the reverse is 19%. However, positive answer in the ratio of 87% is given to the question "Do you feel secure in Gaziantep?".

Hence, it can be expressed that the awareness of this disturbance issue does not lead to a serious uneasiness. 65% of participants declared that they do not have information about legislative regulations and rights related to Syrians, 20% of them declared they are undecided, 15% of them said that they are informed.

According to survey reports during questionnaire and home visits it was witnessed that,

- Shelter is one of the biggest problems, unqualified houses and apartments are rented for Syrians with high prices,
- A few Syrian families usually share one single apartment,
- Educated women who have Syrian diploma looking for a job related to their education and skills they generally cannot find such jobs,
- Basic food needs are hardly fulfilled ,
- Women contribute to earn a living for the family, they are employed particularly at unskilled jobs or manual works with low income,
- The crowded male groups live together in bachelor pads and the university graduates do not find eligible jobs, many send the large part of their income to their families that are left in Syria,
- They refrain from making job applications because they do not speak Turkish,
- They sometimes earn an average wage in factories but they do not have job security and when a person who accepts a lower wage is found, they are dismissed,
- The employers usually give moral and material support to Syrians who have a work-related accident,

- They do not know properly or fully how to access services available to them,
- Since there are many researches and studies towards Syrians, pollsters are approached with suspicion and prejudice,
- Many Syrians describe their coming to Turkey and escape from their homeland as a necessity,
- The school-age children do not go to school in Vatan, Ocaklar and Ünalı neighborhoods, the neighborhood needs a school,
- They experience problems with village headmen related to language barriers and the management of aids,
- The reason of high rents is associated with war-weary Syrians and they get reaction from Turkish as the responsible of this situation,
- It is considered that Turkish people have prejudice against Syrians,

During field research, the observations regarding the native population and asylum seekers' problems that are common in some cases, different in some cases are important in terms of giving integrity to research results have been investigated:

- Native population has similar problems that Syrians under temporary protection have. It can be stated that with the addition of war-weary Syrians into Gaziantep's dense population, public services do not match the needs of population and both communities experience problems with access to services.
- Native population is also deeply disturbed with the increase in house prices, traffic problems, the fact that Syrians under temporary protection are not tax payers but open shops leading to unfair competition, the victimization of native workers due to the massive supply of new workforce that accepts low wages and leads to job shortages.
- Unofficial marriages aggrieve the women of two communities.

3. FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

With focus group discussions, it is intended to prevent misunderstandings and bring depth to data in terms of seeing the diversity and differences that the questionnaire survey and generalizations fail to reflect.

In focus group discussions it was revealed that for the war-weary Syrians who sought refuge in Gaziantep;

By revealing how the Syrians under temporary protection perceive the issue, it was attempted to form an information pool based on personal information and experiences of participants.

In focus group discussions it was revealed that for the war-weary Syrians who sought refuge in Gaziantep;

- Language barrier creates serious problems in daily life, working life, public life; firstly it is essential to learn Turkish in order to increase communication and conformity,
- The house rents are very high; the rent and rented house/shop/shed and similar buildings do not have humane conditions,
- The wages are low, even if they find the opportunity to work, redundancies depend on arbitrary reasons,
- There is a general appreciation on services that Republic of Turkey provides for the Syrians,
- Verbal harassment in public sphere affects them socially and psychologically, These subjects are constantly repeated by a large mass.
- As interviewers interpret the problems experienced in daily life, individual and corporate relationships, they have an approach "each nation has both good and bad people".
- It appears that some Syrians developed some subsistence mechanisms by taking advantage of war victimization of its fellow citizens.

- It is asserted that serious problems are experienced especially with neighborhood village headmen.
- It is observed during the discussions that there are some changes regarding disintegration of families as well as protectionist attitude. The protectionists are generally women, they give some instances saying that the family ties become stronger here.
- The indications related to cultural disintegration are generally economic based. It appears that the fact that men/fathers having trouble finding work begins to transform domestic roles as women and girls start to work. The psychological effect of this situation in terms of men is emphasized. The impact of this situation on women is different, some feel more liberated.

4. CONCLUSION

Findings Towards Conformance

- The asylum seekers are aware of the fact that learning Turkish is essential to establish good communication with native population. %38.3 of ones taking part in questionnaire express that the most important factor preventing the relationship between native population and Syrians is "language". 23.3% of them assert that the differences stemming from culture and tradition prevent the communication. This situation comes to the forefront also in focus group discussions.
- 65% of participants declared that they do not have information about legislative regulations and rights related to Syrians, 20% of them declared they are undecided, 15% of them said that they are informed.

Findings Related to Native Population's Attitude

- Syrians are aware of the fact that they reinvigorate Gaziantep economy and they are somehow aggrieved due to native population's approaches. 89% of ones taking part in questionnaire think that Syrians contribute to Gaziantep economy.
- The rate of participants thinking that a distinction about wages is made between Syrians and Turkish citizens is 89%.

- Whereas 68% of participants think that native population is disturbed by Syrians, it is determined that the rate of ones thinking the reverse is 19%. However, positive answer in the ratio of 87% is given to the question "Do you feel secure in Gaziantep?" Hence, it can be expressed that the awareness of this disturbance issue does not lead to a serious uneasiness.
- Even though there are a historical, cultural and economic linkages between Gaziantep community and Syrian community, in the current situation there are social examples, indications regarding the fact that native population creates "me and other" perception with orientalist point of view. This situation appears as a phenomenon that might feed social tension.

Findings Related to Family and Social Disintegration

- The rate of Syrian women who participated in the research who think that living conditions of women in Gaziantep are better than themselves is 56%, the rate of those thinking the reverse is 33%.
- It can be stated that the participants do not have clear answers for questions including belonging, creating a feeling of rootlessness or rooting and they feel uncertain on this issue.
- Moreover, during field research, it is closely observed that the groups that experience most deeply the psychology of war, poverty and discrimination are women and children.

3. SUGGESTIONS

- The issue of Syrians under temporary protection should not be degraded to safety and security issues only but should be considered in terms of human rights.
- There is a need for a neutral and solution-focused intermediate structure that will report the problems appearing in communication or issues related to rents, safety, food, schooling, hospitals and similar institutions and organizations.

This mechanism will bring solution to the problems of Syrians under temporary protection in Gaziantep in medium and long term. Both for the Syrians and for the native population, it will have a result that will increase social capital.

- An inventory study towards Syrian labor force capacity should be performed.
- To recover from the trauma of war, the problem of finding translator should be fulfilled in the psychological treatment processes.
- A buffer zone can be established for asylum seekers with comprehensive and international cooperation.
- It is required that food cards are designed with picture, number, chip etc. and assigned to every individual under temporary protection. Otherwise, there is no personal indicator on cards and this leads to abuse.
- Provincial Directorate for National Education has to regulate the infrastructure of schools and curriculum. A mechanism that will eliminate victimization of Syrians under temporary protection in that issue has to be established.
- It can be figured that because the Syrians under temporary protection are numerous in some neighborhoods in Gaziantep as a natural consequence of migration, to a certain extent ghettoization is seen. This condition will influence urbanization, socialization, economy, social events and similar structures in the future. This issue should be taken into consideration in terms of Syrians and the native population.
- The school age children should be determined and the educational environment should be prepared immediately for the Syrians under temporary protection.
- Highlighting the priority of human rights basis with affirmative examples rather than negative examples can help to decrease the tension in the native population.

- Mobile service mechanisms regarding Syrians under temporary protection who are garbage collectors and beggars can be developed. Model applications related to this issue can be adapted.
- Syrians under temporary protection should be informed well about their legal rights and opportunities by authorities, more functional communication mechanisms should be established.
- The main reason of possible social and economic tensions in Gaziantep can be evaluated as economic interests of the economically worse-off, loss of employment of native community. This should be considered when planning the cultural and political foundation of refugee policies in the future.



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