

TURKISH CIVIL SOCIETY'S RESPONSE TO REFUGEES DURING COVID-19

July 2020



HasNa

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INTRODUCTION

The novel coronavirus pandemic and its economic fallout have exerted disproportionate effects on vulnerable populations across the globe. Hosting around 4 million refugees,¹ more than any other country, Turkey has proven to be uniquely susceptible to the difficulties posed by the pandemic. Throughout this period, local civil society organizations (CSOs) have shown remarkable adaptability and creativity in serving Turkey's refugee communities under these difficult conditions.

The role of Turkey's CSOs in assisting refugees has evolved over time: while their initial objectives in the early years of the Syrian Civil War may have been to meet the immediate humanitarian needs of the Syrian influxes crossing Turkey's southern border, over time they have come to assume greater responsibility in promoting long-term social cohesion and integration efforts through the implementation of diverse programs. The coronavirus pandemic has presented a rupture

in this process however, as CSOs have now been forced to once again apply approaches that prioritize the emergency needs of refugee communities ravaged by widespread unemployment and diminishing access to resources. As the country continues along the path of normalization, the long-term effects of the pandemic will become clearer with time, yet the ways in which this public health crisis has exposed the precarious position of Turkey's refugee communities should inform the future efforts of CSOs.

Based on qualitative interviews with around 30 representatives from non-governmental organizations (NGOs), municipalities, and academics working either directly or indirectly with Turkey's refugee response efforts, this report aims to explore the role of Turkey's CSOs in serving Syrian refugee communities before and during the coronavirus pandemic, while drawing lessons from this period to further a more holistic understanding of the implications of the outbreak for future humanitarian and integration efforts.



IMAGE: Syrian refugees from Aleppo and Idlib entering Turkey in Kilis. © Radek Procyk | Dreamstime.com

¹ For the sake of clarity and brevity this report uses the term “refugee” to describe the diverse group of forcibly displaced peoples residing in Turkey, regardless of their “Temporary Protection”, “International Protection”, or pre-/unregistered status under Turkish law. A brief description of the “Temporary Protection” status and the rights it confers to Syrians is discussed in Section 2.

Methodology

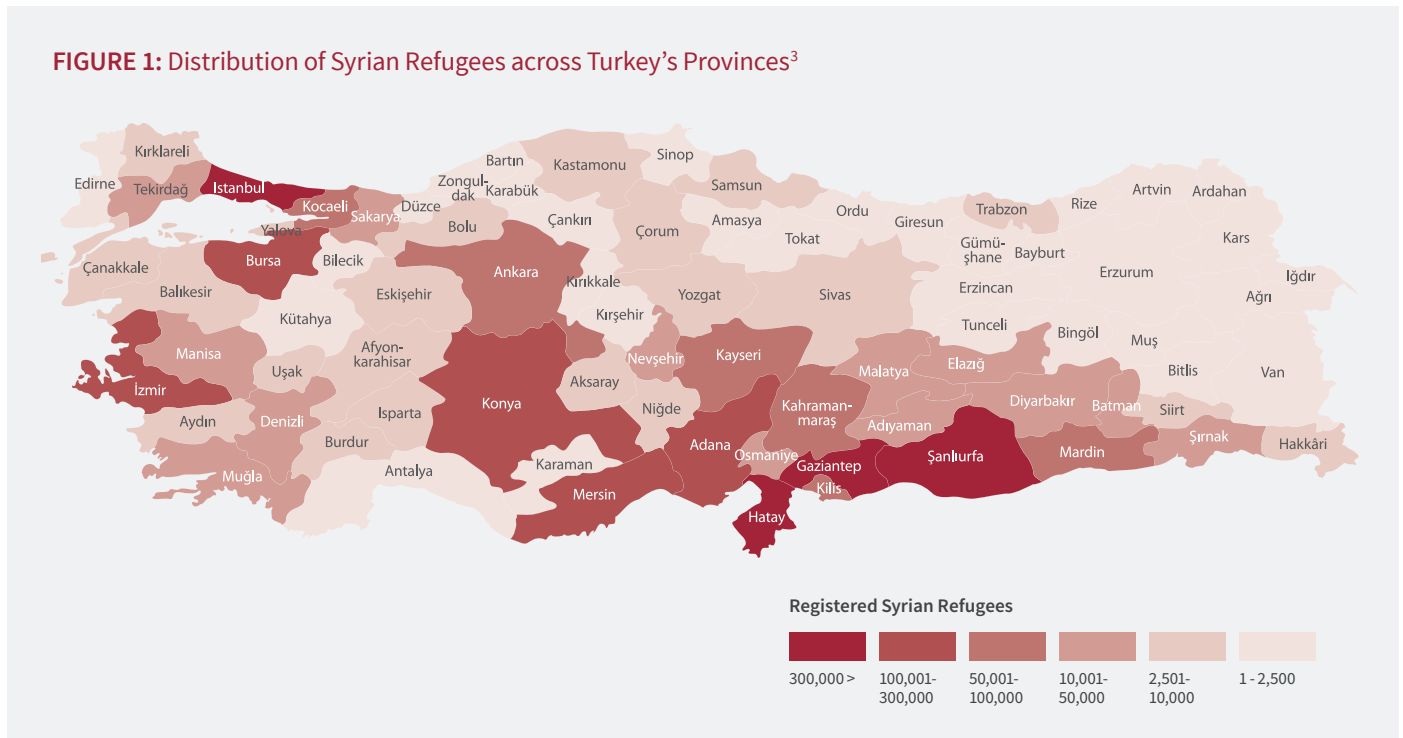
The qualitative data for this report was collected between May and June 2020 through a series of interviews with a range of international, national, and local NGOs, as well as municipal representatives, and academics devoted to the study of immigration in Turkey. Seeing as this work aims to focus on the efforts of local, grassroots CSOs as opposed to governmental or international actors, interviewees representing local organizations with rooted activity in community engagement were prioritized and consequently comprise the majority of those interviewed. Interviews primarily revolved around a set of five questions designed to provide insight into CSOs' operations amid the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, their need for and access to capacity building programs, their roles in facilitating refugees' access to humanitarian aid, basic services, and employment, and their efforts to ensure long-term social cohesion before, during, and after the pandemic.

In preparing to collect data, the general absence of a database detailing Turkish CSOs focused on refugee aid complete with their geographic locations became apparent. While the Turkish Ministry of the Interior's Directorate for Civil Society

Relations breaks down the number of CSOs working within specific thematic areas within the country, it does not have a unique classification for those targeting refugees.² This makes sense considering that many of the CSOs operating in this field provide services to broader target audiences and engage in varying areas of focus that seek to promote the public good for both host and refugee communities. With this in mind, the international and local CSOs interviewed for this report engage in cross-cutting sectors such as poverty alleviation, women's rights, education, disability rights, labor cooperatives, legal access, community development, and hunger relief.

The geographical distribution of interviewees was designed with the intent of reflecting the overall distribution of refugees across Turkey. When considering that Syrian refugees under Temporary Protection status constitute approximately 90% (or 3.6 million) of Turkey's 4 million refugees, it is observed that the majority of these populations are registered in provinces along Turkey's southern border as well as in larger metropolitan areas such as İstanbul (see Figure 1). In this sense, CSOs interviewed for this report have headquarters in the Ankara, Batman, Gaziantep, Diyarbakır, İstanbul, Mardin, and Şanlıurfa provinces. Other larger organizations interviewed also have field operations in the Adana, Hatay, Kilis, and Mersin provinces.

FIGURE 1: Distribution of Syrian Refugees across Turkey's Provinces³



² Turkish Ministry of Interior. Directorate for Civil Society Relations. *Derneklerin Faaliyet Alanlarına Göre Dağılımı*.

³ UNHCR Turkey. *Provincial Breakdown Syrian Refugees in Turkey*. (2020, June).

CSOs: FROM SHORT-TERM IMPROVISATION TO LONG-TERM SERVICE

When Syrians fleeing civil war first began to arrive in Turkey en masse in 2011, the Government of Turkey (GoT) embraced them, following an open-door policy despite its lack of an institutionalized and centralized refugee and asylum seeker framework. In effect, this situation necessitated an ad hoc approach on the behalf of the local municipalities and CSOs that were in many ways the first responders to a budding refugee protection crisis. During the early years of this crisis, “needs-based” responses took precedence in the near absence of a “rights-based” refugee and asylum seeker regime.⁴ Nonetheless, as the GoT came to formulate and implement legislation on the status of Syrians in the country and as CSOs came to grips with the long-term, diffuse settlement of refugees in their localities, a gradual shift towards “rights-based” approaches seems to have been gaining ground in the years and months leading up to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In October 2011, the GoT announced that Syrians entering Turkey would be granted “temporary protection”. Considering the “geographical limitation” to Turkey’s application of the 1951 Geneva Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, displaced people entering Turkey from outside of Europe are not granted the protections afforded to those with internationally recognized refugee and asylum seeker statuses.⁵ In this way, Turkey’s Temporary Protection (TP) regime, which was institutionalized through the passage of the “Law on Foreigners and International Protection” in April 2013, gives Syrian refugees “access to health and welfare services, access to education, access to the labor market, and access to services for people with special needs”.⁶

The formalization of the status of Syrian refugees marked an important step in allowing CSOs to provide services to this group that grew exponentially from less than 225 thousand in 2013 to 3.6 million in 2018.

Turkey’s Temporary Protection (TP) regime gives Syrian refugees “access to health and welfare services, access to education, access to the labor market, and access to services for people with special needs”.



IMAGE: School for Syrian refugees in Yayladağı. © Radek Procyk | Dreamstime.com

⁴ Mackreath, H. & Sağnic, S.G. (2017, March). *Civil Society and Syrian Refugees in Turkey*.

⁵ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). (1951). *Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*.

⁶ Batalla, L. & Tolay, J. (2018, September). Atlantic Council. *Toward Long-term Solidarity with Syrian Refugees? Turkey’s Policy Response and Challenges*.

As could be expected, the response of the GoT and Turkish CSOs to the ever-growing influx of refugees has been shaped by trends in their needs and movements. Once again, initial emergency measures to the mass displacement resultant of the Syrian Civil War necessitated a largely humanitarian approach as illustrated by the GoT's construction of 26 Temporary Accommodation Centers (TACs) that were intended to house and service Syrian refugees. Indeed, until early 2013 nearly all Syrian refugees lived in TACs, but as time went on and as more and more Syrians entered Turkey, by June 2020, TACs housed less than 2% of the Syrian refugee population, with the rest living alongside host communities scattered across the country.⁷ Within this context, local CSOs have come to play an increasingly important role in facilitating refugees' access to the services provided to them under the TP scheme and in promoting overall social cohesion and harmonization between host and refugee communities.

In 2020, the Syrian Civil War entered its ninth year, and it continues to show little to no sign of a resolution in the short to medium terms. With this in mind, Turkish host communities, CSOs, and Syrians themselves have all been forced to come to terms with the potential of long-term cohabitation. While those refugees under TP are officially considered "guests" as illustrated in the "temporary" stipulation of their status, the Turkish Ministry of Interior's

Directorate General for Migration Management (DGMM) has been developing a Harmonization Strategy and National Action Plan that emphasizes long-term social cohesion and the critical role of CSOs in the promotion thereof.⁸ Throughout this process the term "harmonization (*uyum*)" has superseded more traditional notions of "integration", as it underscores the two-way processes of adaptation and mutual learning on the parts of both host and refugee communities. Alternatively, academics Başak Kale and Murat Erdoğan argue that "at the government level, there was an undeclared fear that a structured state supported integration policy would have undermined temporariness, which would in the long-term encourage Syrians to stay in Turkey permanently".⁹ Nonetheless, the mainstreaming of harmonization activities into the regular programming of CSOs working with refugees has become increasingly prominent over time. Yet the lockdowns, closures, and social distancing measures enacted to combat the spread of COVID-19 have forced many CSOs to halt nearly all of their programs relating to social cohesion.

Throughout this process the term "harmonization (*uyum*)" has superseded more traditional notions of "integration", as it underscores the two-way processes of adaptation and mutual learning on the parts of both host and refugee communities.

⁷ Makovsky, A. (2019, March 13). Center for American Progress. *Turkey's Refugee Dilemma: Tiptoeing Toward Integration*.

⁸ Directorate General of Migration Management. *About Harmonisation*.

⁹ Kale, B. & Erdoğan, M. (2019). International Organization for Migration. Vol 57 (6). *The Impact of GCR on Local Governments and Syrian Refugees in Turkey*. pp. 228

COVID-19 AS A RUPTURE IN REFUGEE RESPONSE EFFORTS

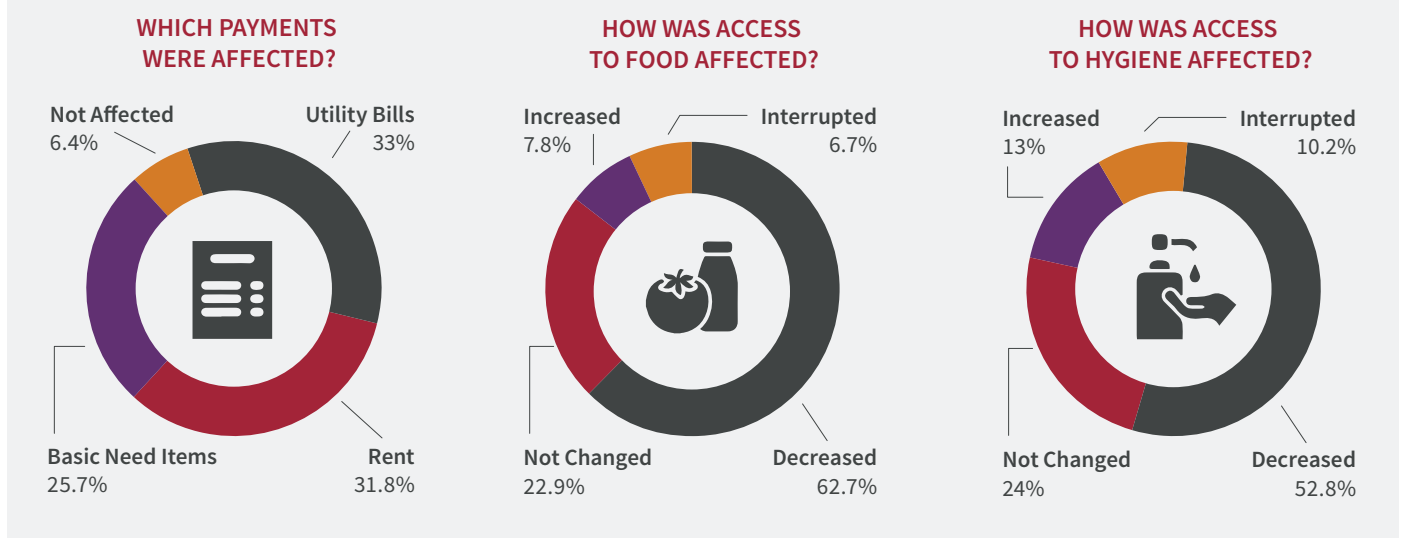
The novel coronavirus outbreak in the spring of 2020 marked a definitive turning point in Turkey's refugee response efforts. The onset of the pandemic created an unexpected rupture in the evolution and implementation of the interventions pursued by various stakeholders, as workplaces, government offices, and CSOs were compelled to temporarily suspend all face-to-face activities and respond to the growing needs of those affected by the burgeoning public health emergency and its socio-economic backlash. In many ways the pandemic resulted in a sudden reversion to refugee response approaches that have not been seen since the early days of Syrians' mass movement to Turkey.

Turkey's Ministry of Health reported the country's first case of COVID-19 on March 11, 2020.¹⁰ In order to prevent the spread of the virus, the GoT imposed strict measures including bans on flights to and from certain countries, school closures, the implementation of remote education programs, the closure of non-essential businesses, and indefinite restrictions on the movement of people over the age of 60 and under the age of

20.¹¹ Inevitably, these measures had a negative effect on the projects and interventions carried out by local governments and CSOs serving Syrian beneficiaries across the country.

During the lockdown, most CSOs were forced to close their offices, and case management teams suspended their activities on the ground. Many local and international organizations such as Concern Worldwide, AFAQ Academy, and Kamer Foundation set up hotlines for refugees, offering psychosocial support and social protection services. Related activities included responding to complaints about domestic and gender-based violence, providing essential transportation, and offering translation and interpretation services for beneficiaries facing language and other logistical barriers at hospitals. Even CSOs with research mandates began to receive an increased amount of requests for emergency assistance the likes of which had not been seen in years. In an attempt to meet the rapidly rising urgent needs of refugees affected by the pandemic (see Figure 2), many CSOs responded by distributing

FIGURE 2: Changes in Refugees' Access to Services amid COVID-19 by Sector¹²



¹⁰ Relief International Turkey. (April 2020). *Impact of COVID-19 Outbreak on Syrian Refugees in Turkey*.

¹¹ Ozturk, F. (2020, March 14). BBC News Turkish. *Koronavirüs: Türkiye'nin aldığı tedbirler yeterli mi?*

¹² Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants (SGDD-ASAM). (2020, May). *Sectoral Analysis of the Impacts of COVID-19 Pandemic on Refugees Living in Turkey*.

food and hygiene kits to beneficiaries while prioritizing families with little or no income or those with disabilities. Most CSOs indicated that their own financial donors were willing to be flexible when it came to budgets, spending, and the allocation of resources due to the unprecedented nature of the crisis.

A notable humanitarian relief measure taken by the GoT and created under the coordination of district governors was the establishment of Vefa Social Support Groups, which mainly comprise public employees such as those from local police and gendarmerie departments, the Ministry of Interior's Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD), and the Turkish Red Crescent as well as employees of locally engaged CSOs.¹³ Working across all of Turkey's 81 provinces, the Vefa Groups delivered hygiene kits, food, and cash assistance to citizens within priority risk groups including those over 60 years old and those with chronic illnesses or pre-existing conditions.¹⁴ Beneficiaries were able to apply for support from district Vefa Groups by calling designated phone numbers and speaking to call center representatives. Most of the CSOs interviewed for this report worked to meet the needs of the vulnerable segments of their communities in coordination with district governorships and Vefa Groups in particular, sharing resources and information.

In addition to the Vefa Groups, the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) program, funded by the European Union and administered by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the Turkish Red Crescent Society, and Turkish government institutions, has provided monthly cash assistance to over 1.7 million of the neediest refugees since 2016. The outbreak of COVID-19 has been particularly devastating for ESSN recipients, with 71% already living in poor quality apartments, 12% having insufficient access to water and hygiene products, and 17% living in crowded spaces that are less than ideal for social distancing.¹⁵

Following the COVID-19 outbreak, delivery of protection services and access to basic needs such as food, hygiene, and cash assistance became the highest priority for both responders and beneficiaries, thereby shifting focus away from long-term socio-economic social cohesion programs and vocational training that facilitate refugees' increased access

to the labor market. Even though the pandemic appears to be a temporary break in the somewhat linear progression of refugee aid efforts in Turkey over the years, the ways in which it has affected the lives of refugee and host communities provide valuable lessons for the future.



IMAGE: Syrian refugees mainly from Aleppo and Idlib entering Turkey in Kilis.
© Radek Procyk | Dreamstime.com

¹³ Hürriyet.com.tr. (2020, April 14). *Vefa Sosyal Destek Grubu nedir? Vefa Sosyal Destek Grubu başvurusu nasıl yapılır, iletişim numaraları kaç?*

¹⁴ Haberler.com. (2020, April 11). *Vefa Sosyal Destek Grubu nedir? Vefa Sosyal Destek Hattı iletişim*

¹⁵ International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), & Turkish Red Crescent (TRC). (2020, May). *Impact of COVID-19 on Refugee Populations Benefitting from the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) Programme*.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE COVID-19 PERIOD

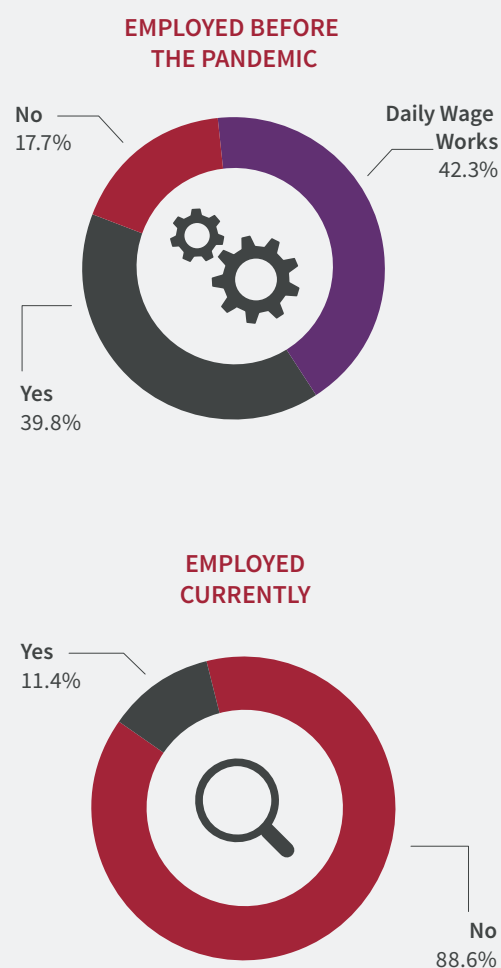
Access to Livelihoods

The results of a June 2020 survey conducted by the Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants (SGDD-ASAM) measuring access to means of livelihoods for refugees living in Turkey after the outbreak of the pandemic revealed that about half of the 184 survey participants made their living through assistance and daily wage work. The other half indicated that they relied heavily on government incentives, savings, and borrowed money for sustenance. Among these participants, only 18% were unemployed before the coronavirus outbreak. After March 2020, this figure increased to a staggering 88% (see Figure 3).

Moreover, in a series of interviews conducted by the Gaziantep office of the Kamer Foundation, a majority of refugee women stated that either they themselves or a close family member had lost their job or were on unpaid leave due to the suspension of activities at their places of employment. Since most of them were informally employed, they were not eligible for unemployment benefits or other governmental safety net systems.

According to a grant manager at Support to Life (Hayata Destek Derneği, İstanbul), out of the 3.6 million Syrian refugees living in Turkey, only about 31,000 have work permits.¹⁶ As a result, a majority of Syrian refugees are either employed in the informal sector, or continue to depend on assistance programs for survival.¹⁷ Following the imposition of the lockdown, obtaining work permits became an even greater challenge, with most offices being closed and fewer public employees being available to process new applications for work permits. Even among the educated, high-skilled refugees, many have lost the official copy of their educational degrees and can no longer prove their level of qualification. The language barrier also continues to be a significant obstacle, especially in regions far from the Turkish-Syrian border. However, some organizations located in Mardin and Gaziantep highlighted

FIGURE 3:
Effect of COVID-19 on Refugees' Employment¹⁸



¹⁶ Reliefweb. (2019, November). *A New Policy to Better Integrate Refugees to Host Country Labour Markets*.

¹⁷ HasNa consultation with Hayata Destek Derneği. (2020, June 24).

¹⁸ Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants (SGDD-ASAM). (2020, May). *Sectoral Analysis of the Impacts of COVID-19 Pandemic on Refugees Living in Turkey*.

the fact that Arabic and Kurdish were often used as the lingua franca between refugee and host communities, thereby functioning to break down the language barrier.

Yet even amid the COVID-19 pandemic, long-term approaches should still be emphasized. “There are a plethora of actors providing humanitarian services, but most activities are still protection-oriented”, noted the representative from Support to Life, “while protection continues to be the main priority for donors, the reality on the ground indicates that even to address protection, the government and other regional actors need to prioritize durable solutions such as access to livelihoods”.

Since the coronavirus outbreak most CSOs operating in the region had to suspend vocational training programs targeted at refugees and host communities because emergency assistance became the primary need of the hour. “Beneficiaries cannot

afford to participate in trainings”, noted a grants manager from AFAQ Academy, implying that such interventions have been somewhat de-prioritized amid COVID-19.¹⁹

Many CSOs that were interviewed also expressed worry in the way that the pandemic would affect social cohesion, especially amid a national and macroeconomic downturn. Highlighting the overlap between access to livelihoods and social cohesion, a 2017 survey found that nearly 71% of Turkish respondents believed that Syrians were taking jobs from Turkish citizens, and as both Turks and Syrians lost their jobs at alarming rates throughout the pandemic, deeper divisions could be on the horizon.²⁰ The larger societal emphasis on survival during COVID-19 could lead to the strengthening of the already existent “Us vs. Them” narrative: the idea that the two communities are separate and competing for limited resources such as food, shelter, and jobs.



IMAGE: Syrian refugee children in Reyhanlı, Turkey. © Radek Procyk | Dreamstime.com

¹⁹ HasNa consultation with AFAQ Academy. (2020, June 22).

²⁰ Erdoğan, E. & Semerci, P.U. (2018, March 12). Istanbul Bilgi University, Center for Migration Research. *Attitudes Towards Syrians in Turkey - 2017*.

Social Cohesion in the Times of Social Distancing

“Social cohesion activities are difficult to arrange even in normal times”, noted a program coordinator from the İstanbul-based Refugees Association, “the issue of social cohesion is not something that refugees are thinking about right now”.²¹ Such observations were widespread among organizations interviewed for this report. Moreover, as many organizations were forced to close their doors and suspend face-to-face contact with their recipients, social cohesion efforts took a back seat to humanitarian, urgent need priorities.

Many organizations still managed to continue their social cohesion programming amid the pandemic, albeit with a significant shift to remote digital and telework. Some CSOs such as the Research Center on Asylum and Migration (IGAM), pivoted to the digital sphere, launching awareness campaigns on social media in English, Turkish, and Arabic where they provided information on preventing the spread of COVID-19, government restrictions on movement, interviews with

experts, and useful guides directing beneficiaries to agencies and organizations that could help them meet their urgent needs. Other organizations such as the Refugees Association actually stepped up their field work, coordinating with local government and volunteers to deliver aid to those in need.

The proliferation of online meetings, webinars, and workshops throughout the pandemic was seen as a double-edged sword for some organizations. On the one hand, online activities that promoted mutual learning and discussions between host and Syrian communities allowed some organizations to reach audiences outside of their usual localities while promoting a general sense of “togetherness”. On the other hand, some organizations reported low turn-out among digital participants due to vulnerable communities’ limited access to internet and computers. Moreover, seeking to address the natural stressors resultant of the pandemic, the Refugees Association has provided psychosocial support a space within their online programming efforts. For them, “there is a positive correlation between wellbeing and positive thinking and so positive communication [...] is a key point for ‘social cohesion’”.²²



IMAGE: Woman shopping in Eminönü Square, İstanbul amid coronavirus pandemic. © Tolgaildun | Dreamstime.com

²¹ HasNa consultation with Multeciler Derneği (Refugees Association). (2020, June).

²² Multeciler Derneği (Refugees Association). (2020, May 11). *The Effects of COVID-19 in Social Cohesion Activities*.

Social Harmonization through Access to Livelihoods

Considering the immediate employment and protection needs of the Syrian refugee and Turkish host communities following the outbreak of COVID-19, social cohesion needs to be a central and cross-cutting theme in the relief and development work of the government and CSOs. During the gradual reopening following COVID-19, many CSOs have continued offering their services online, with some even noting that certain services such as physician and physiotherapist consultations might be better suited to online delivery. Since economic stability contributes to positive peace, CSOs and international nongovernmental organizations would do well to adopt a blended approach to vocational training in order to develop relevant skill sets for beneficiaries while simultaneously allowing refugee and host communities to come into contact with one another and build mutual trust and understanding.

Perhaps the greatest barrier to obtaining formal employment for Syrian refugees in Turkey is that potential employers are — in most cases — unwilling to incur the increased hiring costs, such as the monthly gross minimum wage of 2,943 Turkish Lira (approximately 429 USD), as well as the associated tax and social security payments.²³ In order to relieve some of this financial burden placed on employers and to encourage formal employment, the International Labour Organization (ILO) in close cooperation with Turkey's Social Security Institution funded the Transition to Formality Programme (KIGEP) which “aims to promote formal employment through facilitating labour market access” for both Syrian and Turkish workers.²⁴ Financial support under this program consists of i) social security premiums for 6 months, and ii) a one-time payment of the work permit fee for Syrian workers. When considering that informal employment is a problem for both Turkish and Syrian workers, with over 30% of Turkish workers employed in the informal sector, programs that address the barriers to formal employment of both communities are especially useful.²⁵

Moreover, ILO's Workplace Adaptation Programme initiated in 2018 aims to help refugees adapt to work “while orienting them culturally in the host community”.²⁶ This program supports workplace adaptation “by contributing to collegial rapport among Syrian and Turkish workers in the same workplace for the establishment of an efficient and peaceful working environment”.²⁷ Innovative solutions, whose applicability has been highlighted by the the pandemic, are also seen in the sector of e-commerce, remote skills training, and digital employment and entrepreneurship.²⁸



IMAGE: Portrait of Syrian refugees living in Karkamış, Turkey.
© Radek Procyk | Dreamstime.com

²³ Turkey Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Services. *Asgari Ücret – 2020*.

²⁴ International Labour Organization (ILO). *Transition to Formality Programme (KIGEP)*.

²⁵ Turkish Statistical Institute. (2018, February 15). *İşgücü İstatistikleri*.

²⁶ Kronisch, I. et al. (2020, March). Global Compact on Refugees Digital Platform. *ILO/Turkey: Social Cohesion Through Workplace Adaptation Programme*.

²⁷ Kronisch, I. et al. Ibid.

²⁸ Revel, B. (2020, July). Atlantic Council in Turkey & United Nations Development Programme. *Turkey's Refugee Resilience: Expanding and Improving Solutions for Economic Inclusion of Syrians in Turkey*.

CONCLUSION

Turkey's proven ability to embrace and accommodate more refugees than any other country constitutes the foundation of what can be seen as a best practice in migration management. The role of Turkish civil society should not be understated throughout this process as myriad CSOs have repeatedly exhibited a remarkable degree of adaptability in the face of adversity and a strong commitment to sustaining and improving communal harmony, even amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Nonetheless, the high degree of overall social acceptance of refugees can still be considered fragile, and as the pandemic has shown, refugees' and host communities' economic access may well be the Achilles' heel of Turkey's robust refugee response efforts. Considering this, the symbiotic relationship between gainful employment and social cohesion needs to be emphasized in the design and implementation of international and local humanitarian aid and protection programs.

In order to address the long-term socio-economic needs of vulnerable host and refugee communities in Turkey while also providing a powerful method of social harmonization, CSOs and local governments need to modify their interventions to move away from a "burden" approach to an "opportunity" approach. Instead of viewing the refugee community as a liability, CSOs would do well to highlight their untapped human capital, and emphasize the different ways in which they can become active participants in the economic life of the country they are living in. This can be accomplished by strengthening the link between humanitarian assistance and long-term development goals and by fostering resilience and self-reliance, which in turn would contribute to greater social cohesion. A few recommendations for this approach are as follows:

- Promoting joint economic ventures for refugees and Turkish citizens
- Developing and implementing internship and apprenticeship programs for refugees and host communities that increase individual employability and marketability
- Designing and instating capacity building programs for Turkey-based CSOs that empower the creation of opportunities for the most vulnerable of refugees, such as women, children, and unemployed youth²⁹
- Creating gender-friendly employment contexts wherein women are provided access to language training courses and affordable day care for children and the elderly
- Establishing entrepreneurship and micro-business trainings depending on the needs of the labor market, particularly in the digital sphere
- Creating platforms for coordination between government representatives, international nongovernmental organizations, and smaller CSOs rooted in the local communities to facilitate exchange of information and best practices³⁰

Despite the outbreak of COVID-19 and the restrictions imposed on interpersonal contact, social cohesion should be at the front and center of all livelihoods interventions in order to ensure a smooth transition from the humanitarian assistance perspective to the medium and long-term development perspective. This method of achieving social cohesion through access to means of livelihoods resonates closely with HasNa's own model. In the end, peacebuilding among communities with different identities through livelihoods training programs constitutes a shared platform for pragmatic cooperation and communal harmony.³¹

This method of achieving social cohesion through access to means of livelihoods resonates closely with HasNa's own model. In the end, peacebuilding among communities with different identities through livelihoods training programs constitutes a shared platform for pragmatic cooperation and communal harmony.

²⁹ Revel, B. Ibid.

³⁰ *The Anadolu Platformu*, with its more than 120 member organizations, is one such successful platform.

³¹ Wolak, P.E. & Banerjee, R. (2018, March). HasNa, Inc. *20th Anniversary Report*.

HasNa's mission is to facilitate cross-cultural understanding between communities divided along ethnic, religious, racial, gender, and national lines, and to reduce barriers to effective integration and positive peace.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS:

Rukmini Banerjee has worked with HasNa since 2014, becoming President of the organization in 2018. Her areas of interest include forced displacement and gender mainstreaming in humanitarian assistance contexts. She holds a BA and MA degree in English Literature from Jadavpur University (Kolkata, India) and an MA in Conflict Resolution with a special focus on Refugees and Humanitarian Emergencies from Georgetown University (Washington, DC, USA).

John Dykes has been a Program Associate at HasNa since early 2020. His primary fields of interest include Turkish-EU relations, democratization, europeanization, and Turkey's role as an emerging regional power. He holds BA degrees in Germanic Studies and International Affairs from the University of Colorado and a dual MA in German-Turkish Social Sciences from Humboldt University (Berlin, Germany) and Middle East Technical University (Ankara, Turkey).

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