



Turkey Hosts Largest Number of Refugees Worldwide

© UNFPA Turkey/ Selçuk Şamilođı

Turkey hosts more refugees than any other nation – surpassing 4 million – a record held for the past five years. Most are from Syria, among the millions who have fled to neighboring countries since the start of the Syrian conflict in 2011. Most live in urban areas with very little access to resources and employment, not in camps. And more than two thirds are women and children, many directly exposed to violence in their home country and now vulnerable to gender-based violence (GBV) and health issues as refugees. UNFPA Turkey is implementing its humanitarian programme to increase resilience amongst the most vulnerable refugees and to strengthen institutional capacity to address their needs.

Continue reading >>



HUMANITARIAN SITUATION

© UNFPA Turkey

One million women and girls of reproductive age

An estimated 71 per cent of refugees in Turkey are women and children, and one quarter of this population (nearly 1 million people) are women and girls of reproductive age, 15 to 49 years old. On top of the regular risks they face, displaced women and girls are particularly vulnerable to gender-based violence, including sexual violence, early and forced marriage, high-risk and unintended pregnancies, adolescent pregnancy, unsafe deliveries, newborn complications, unsafe abortions, traumatic fistula and sexually transmitted infections and HIV.

Only 2 per cent of Turkey's refugees from Syria receive direct humanitarian assistance in camps, while most of the others live in urban areas with very little access to resources and employment.

While refuge in Turkey lessens the imminent threat of violence faced back home, significant threats persist for displaced women and girls as they attempt to adapt to a new environment. Child

marriage, accompanied by adolescent pregnancy, is a particularly common issue among the refugee population due to the economic hardships faced by many families.

Past and present violence affects mental health and psychosocial well-being

According to a study conducted by UNFPA Turkey, 8 out of every 10 refugees surveyed at the primary health care level indicated that they were exposed to violence during the crisis in Syria. Among these respondents, depression is the most frequently diagnosed mental disorder, the prevalence of depressive disorders being significantly higher among women compared with men. In addition, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder are common diagnoses. These conditions are only exacerbated by additional stress and trauma experienced as a displaced person and refugee in a new country. Women and girls who have experienced GBV and other trauma in before and after their arrival in Turkey are among those most in need of mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) services.

STRATEGIES AND INTERVENTIONS

As of 2019, UNFPA, in collaboration with implementing partners and the Ministry of Health (MoH), has strengthened MHPSS in key areas for service provision and capacity development:

Women and Girls Safe Spaces and youth centres

The centres provide sexual and reproductive health information, counselling and services at the primary health care level; GBV prevention and response services including psychosocial support (PSS); outreach activities; and empowerment and social cohesion activities for women, girls and young people. The safe spaces are in the process of being taken over by the MoH, which is integrating PSS into primary health care service provision for refugees.

Capacity development

Technical assistance from UNFPA has strengthened government-run Social Service Centres. The centres provide individual and group PSS, case management, counselling, information provision, awareness-raising activities and outreach for refugees.

Services for key refugee groups

Specialized to meet the needs of marginalized groups, the service units provide individual and group PSS, case management, information provision, legal counseling, HIV counseling and peer support, and awareness-raising activities in six provinces through a hotline and research.

UNFPA RESPONSE OBJECTIVES

To support populations in need in Turkey, UNFPA is working to:

- Create environments free from GBV and discrimination for all refugees, particularly for women, girls, young people and other populations most at risk
- Ensure all survivors of GBV have access to care and services, including for MHPSS
- Improve access to sexual and reproductive health information and services

Partnership for training

Bilgi University Mental Health and Trauma Center is providing training to ensure that service providers are equipped to respond to the increasing humanitarian and health needs of displaced persons, with support from UNFPA. The training covers a broad spectrum of MHPSS activities, such as Psychological First

Aid, psychoeducation, basic principles of migrant mental health, self-care, psychosocial approaches for displaced people, community-based psychosocial support, identification of sexual violence and case management. These training sessions are followed by ongoing in-person and online supervision, as well as in-person self-care sessions for service providers.

PROGRESS AND RESULTS

As of 2019, UNFPA and partners have accomplished these key results:

- **Established 35 Women and Girls Safe Spaces and four youth centres** in 17 provinces
- **Strengthened the capacity of 27 Social Service Centres in 19 provinces** operated by the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services
- **Established seven Key Refugee Groups Service Units** for LGBTI persons, sex workers and people living with HIV
- **Improved psychosocial support training** for health service providers through a partnership with Bilgi University Mental Health and Trauma Center



"How can one return to a country beset by war? One can return there only in a shroud. We are living here as if we were half-dead."

Ravze Al Muhimid, 33, visited the UNFPA-supported safe space in Eskişehir in March 2019
© UNFPA Turkey/Selçuk Şamiloğlu

"We see three to four [child brides] per month. We know the number is higher, but they don't want to get caught so they don't show up in the health centre... They need special attention, but our hands are tied because so few come for care."

—Huda, midwife providing services in Turkey



143,259
REFUGEES

received psychosocial support from January 2018 to June 2019



402,265
REFUGEES

received GBV prevention and response services



559
GOVERNMENT STAFF

received training on gender, GBV and psychosocial support

From January 2018 through June 2019, the following results were achieved with the support of UNFPA:

- 213 service providers and 559 Ministry personnel received training on gender, GBV and psychosocial support
- 364 service providers received supervision on PSS and self-care sessions
- 235,280 refugees received sexual and reproductive health services
- 402,265 refugees received GBV prevention and response services
- 143,259 refugees received psychosocial support, most (135,818) at Women and Girls Safe Spaces
- A psychosocial terminology dictionary was developed for use by service providers

LESSONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Language, and the limited number of service providers who speak Arabic, Persian and other languages, are significant barriers in service provision. UNFPA and its partners prioritize working with psychologists and social workers who speak these languages. In addition, training of interpreters on gender, GBV and PSS terminology and ethical issues is essential for maintaining quality care.

Inclusion of refugees themselves as role models in service provision has proven to be effective in building trust with the refugee community, forming a bridge between the community and the service units. Refugees have been trained to work as service mediators or outreach workers to identify basic psychosocial

problems in the community and refer individuals to relevant services.

MHPSS was identified as an area by the Ministry of Health in need of international support. The integration of Women and Girls Safe Spaces into the primary health care system has facilitated the provision of essential MHPSS services and should complement other health care services in migrant health centres.

Due to social stigma and discrimination, key refugee groups often do not use services available to the rest of the population. KRG Service Units have become safe spaces for these refugees to rebuild community networks and to join peer support groups and other MHPSS activities.

“I would feel so lonely when I stayed at home, doing nothing. After I started to visit this centre, I felt psychologically relieved and my mood improved. I feel that I have changed... I feel so different.”

—Syrian refugee woman, 41, with four children in Turkey

PARTNERS AND DONORS

Implementing Partners

Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants
Bilgi University Mental Health and Trauma Center
Community Volunteers Foundation
Hacettepe University Women’s Research and Implementation Center
Harran University
KAMER Foundation
Osmangazi University
Positive Living Association
Red Umbrella Association
Resettlement Support Center
Y-PEER Turkey

Partners

Ministry of Health
Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services
Ministry of Interior Directorate General of Migration Management
European Union
UNHCR
UNICEF
World Health Organization

Donors

European Union Japan
Sweden The Netherlands
Denmark

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

UNFPA would like to thank all donors and partners who support humanitarian response. This MHPSS country example was produced in September 2019 by the UNFPA Humanitarian Office with support from Duygu Arıç, Gokben Bilgen, Dr. Selen Örs Reyhanioğlu, Fatma Hacıoğlu Sarıdağ and Nazlı Moral Uydu.