



Need assesment report of Woman Consultation Center

Analysis of the needs of refugee women living in Esenyurt district to access services

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INTRODUCTION

Since MaviKalem started working with Syrian refugees in Istanbul in 2017, it has been conducting needs analysis in the field. In the studies that started within the scope of the child protection project, the needs of children, their mothers and therefore their families were investigated. Since 2019, it has been conducting studies with refugee and local women within the GIZ project in the Esenyurt district of Istanbul, which has received intense refugee migration. Through these studies, MaviKalem collects information from the field through one-on-one interviews and/or group studies to learn the needs and demands of the beneficiaries. It was decided to conduct a needs analysis in December 2024 and preliminary work was done on this subject. In January 2025, one-on-one in-depth interviews were conducted with thirty women, the majority of whom were refugee women, in the Needs Analysis study. Data evaluation was started in February and report analysis was started in March and the report was completed in April.

This study was designed by two specialist psychologists, and a specialist sociologist who participated as an interviewer and reporter. When necessary, support was provided by a native Arabic translator.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The following are the prominent topics that emerged from the Needs Analysis:

1. The household incomes is not sufficient.
2. Basic needs cannot be met. Rent and bills cover a large portion of the income, and food and clothing are cut back.
3. The most important obstacles to accessing the health system are not being able to make an appointment, registration,

and economic situation.

4. More than half of the households have a person with a chronic disease.

5. Two-thirds of women do not have good mental health. Women and their families intensely need to continue psychological support.

6. More than half of the refugee women are informed about their rights and the services they can receive in Turkey.

7. Two-thirds of the women's children continue to school.

Contributing to the family income is the most prominent reason for boys to drop out of school. The most important problems children experience at school are adaptation and bullying. Being registered in another province is also a reason for not being able to continue school.

8. More than half of the women needed counseling for a legal process. Women who applied to MaviKalem to divorce and get an ID received legal and financial support.

9. The women's household income is low and they cannot cover their expenses. Two-thirds of the households receive an average income of 16,000. - TL which is below the 2025 minimum wage.

10. All mothers expressed the reason why their children work with the words, "We have to survive!"

11. The rate of those who do not want to return to Syria is two-thirds.

12. Among the reasons for not wanting to return to Syria, housing is the first, insecurity and uncertainty are the second. Lack of infrastructure is the third reason.

13. Women expect support for renting, carrying furniture and transportation in the case of returning to Syria.



METHODOLOGY

A needs analysis study was decided to be conducted in the field to see what kind of needs were emerging in the current economic and political changes in Turkey and Syria. In-depth interviews with women, lasting an average of one hour, were conducted at the MaviKalem Esenyurt Project Office. The needs analysis interviews with women were conducted back-to-back on January 6-17, thus preventing any changes in needs in the field. Questions prepared in advance were asked during the interviews. These questions were composed of 6 themes under the titles of basic needs, health and well-being, access to education, access to legal needs, economic income and return to Syria. Each theme included more than one question. A total of 23 questions were interviewed with the women. A preliminary study was conducted with the interviewer who would implement the study on the questions and the application. Afterwards, the interviewer tested the questions with two women before the application. Thirty women who benefited from the MaviKalem Women's Counseling Center and Mentoring Project were invited to the application. Twenty-four of the women were Syrian, 3 were non-Syrian refugees and 3 were from Turkey. These numbers are consistent with the target group of the project in which the study was included.

Questions

Theme 1: Basic Needs

1. Are there any basic services/service providers that your household has not been able to access in the last 6 months? (Write separate answers for food, heating, clothing, rent, etc.)
2. What are the basic services and/or service providers that your household has not been able to access?
3. Why were your household members unable to access these services?

Theme 2: Health and well-being

1. Have your household members been unable to access any health services in the last 6 months?
2. What health services have your household members been unable to access?
3. Does anyone in your household have a chronic disease?
4. How would you evaluate your mental health?
5. Do you/your children need support for your mental health?
What kind of support do you need?

Theme 3: Access to Education

1. Do you think you have sufficient information about your rights and services in Turkey?
2. Do your children go to school in Türkiye?
3. Have you or your children encountered any difficulties in your children's attending school?

4. (If they do not go to school) What is the reason for your children not attending to school?

5. (If they do go to school) What were the difficulties you experienced in registering your children to school?

Theme 4: Access to legal rights

1. Have you ever encountered a situation where you needed legal services (including legal advice)?

2. What are the issues where you need legal services (past and present)?

3. Have you ever received legal support? From where? Has your need been met?

Theme 5: Economic Income

1. Are you or any other household members working?

2. How many people currently work in your household?

3. Are you able to meet your monthly expenses and basic household needs?

4. Are there children in the household who work? (If so, what are their ages? What do they do?)

5. If there are child workers in the household, what are the main reasons for this?

Theme 6: About Returning to Syria

1. Do they consider/want to return to Syria? Why?

2. (If yes) What are their needs to return?



SAMPLE

Thirty women participated in the needs assessment study. Three of these women were from Turkey, three were non-Syrian refugees, and twenty-four were Syrian refugees. The ages of the thirty women who participated in the study ranged from 25 to 67. Twelve of the Syrian refugee women came from Aleppo, eight from Damascus, one from Bab, one from Hamas, one from Raqqa, one from Rif, and one from Afrin. Two of the refugees were Palestinian and one was Moroccan.

The educational backgrounds of women vary from primary school to university. Twelve women are primary school graduates, eight women are middle school graduates, 4 women are high school graduates and 6 women are university graduates.

When we look at the marital status of women, 4 women are divorced, 1 woman has never been married, 3 women's spouse have passed away, 1 woman is in the process of divorce and 21 women are married.

The monthly household income declared by women varies between 3,000.-TL - 40,000.-TL.

It was determined that the thirty women who participated in the study had a total of 95 children. The table below shows the women and the number of children they have.

Number of women	Number of Children
2	None
5	1 çocuk
4	2 çocuk
7	3 çocuk
4	4 çocuk
6	5 çocuk
1	6 çocuk
1	9 çocuk

Since the ages of each of the women's children were not asked, the number of adult children and children under the age of 18 was not determined. The education of their children is divided into open education and formal education. There are also children who work at school age. The table below shows the distribution of education.

Formal Education	Open Education	Young worker	Not working or going to school	Disabled
40	3	2	2	3

Refugee women and their families came to Turkey between 2012-2018. It was determined that there were two different ways that women came to Turkey. The majority entered Turkey with their nuclear families. In the second group, the husbands or sons came first and then the woman took her children and entered the country.

It was also determined that there were two ways that refugee women and their families came to Istanbul. The majority consisted of families who came directly to Istanbul and had their IDs registered in Istanbul, and those who had internal migration to Istanbul after the earthquake.

The spouses of 6 women are unemployed, 2 are self-employed, and 1 is in prison. Two women do not have spouses. The spouses of the remaining twenty women are waiters, workers, drivers, gardeners, barbers, pharmacists, greengrocers, butchers, teachers, or work in transportation, textile, and carpentry companies.

When the number of people living in the same household with the women participating in the study is examined, it is seen that it varies between 1 and 10 people. One woman lives alone. Three women live with 2 people in their households, 4 women live with 3 people in their households, 7 women live with 4 people in their households, 7 women live with 5 people in their households, 4 women live with 6 people in their households, 2 women live with 7 people in their households, and 1 woman lives with 9 people. When we examine the degree of kinship of the women with the people they live with in their households, 11 women live with their children, 14 women live with their nuclear family consisting of their husbands and children, and 5 women live with their extended family with their relatives.



ANALYSIS

In-depth interviews were conducted on six themes in the needs analysis. These themes and their evaluations will be discussed in order.

THEME 1: BASIC NEEDS

This title asks about women's access to basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, heating, etc. This is a multi-answer question. Only three of the women who participated in the in-depth interviews stated that they could meet their basic needs, while the other 27 stated that they could not. The rent is the most difficult cost to meet, and 21 women stated this first. They stated that they cut their food and clothing expenses to meet the rent, which was said by 11 and 13 women, respectively. Fifteen women stated that they had difficulty meeting the bills. Natural gas was mentioned as the heating cost by two people, but when you consider that it is also included in the bills, it constitutes a significant proportion. School needs, health, and medicine are among the needs stated individually under this title.

In the interviews conducted with the women, it is seen that basic needs are largely not met. It has been determined that since the bills include basic needs such as water, electricity and na-

tural gas, there is difficulty in meeting these as well. It is seen from the responses given by the women that the first deductions are made from food and clothing, and it is especially hard for them not to be able to meet the food needs of their children.

When women were asked why they could not meet their basic needs, the answer given by twenty-seven women was that the income coming into the house was not sufficient. The few people working at home, for example, there being only one person, not having a full-time job, and making ends meet by selling what they produced at home were the reasons given. In most households, the income is provided by a single person. Eight women stated that their husbands work, and seven women stated that their sons work. Three of them work from time to time depending on whether they find a job. The number of women whose daughters or sisters work is two. Six women earn income by doing handicrafts or cooking at home. The number of women living with support is six, two of whom receive support from the Red Crescent. The support of the others comes from their children or family members abroad. In addition, the support of two women who received support from the Red Crescent was cut off for different reasons. Two women stated that they were in debt and still could not pay. Two women are divorced, one of the women earns her living by working, and the other's son works.

Two out of thirty women live as a joint family. One lives with her sisters and nieces, and the other lives with her daughter and children because her married daughter's husband went abroad

to work.

When describing the situation of those who bring income to the family, it was stated that 8 women have serious health problems in their families, which prevent their husbands or themselves from working. Four women's husbands and one of their sisters are ill. Two women also have illnesses.

THEME 2: HEALTH

Under this heading, health services that households do not have access to, chronic diseases, and mental health issues were examined.

In the last six months, twenty women stated that there was a health service that their households could not access. Ten women stated that they did not have such a problem. Two of these women stated that they did not have a problem because they went to a private hospital, and another stated that they did not have a problem because they went to a refugee health center.

The most important obstacles to women's access to the health system were identified as not being able to make an appointment, registration problems, economic status, and distance. Twelve women reported that they could not make an appointment at state hospitals or that they could only make an appointment at a later date. Among those who could not make an appointment, two stated that they could not make an appointment due to language problems. Among the women who stated that they had registration problems were those who were

registered in another province for themselves and/or their children, and those whose registrations were closed. Those who did not have an economic situation stated that they had to go to refugee health centers, could not pay for medicine, could not make an appointment at state hospitals, and therefore did not have the financial means to go to private hospitals. Syrian refugees or non-Syrian refugees who are unregistered or registered in another province can only benefit from emergency health services. Syrian refugees under Temporary Protection or refugees under international protection who are registered and live in the province where they are registered can benefit from emergency health services and various other health services. One of these institutions is the Migrant Health Centers. Migrant Health Centers are centers designed to provide primary health care services to Syrians under Temporary Protection living in Türkiye in accordance with Turkish family practice standards. These centers have been established since 2015. The centers are divided into two groups: Strengthened Migrant Health Centers and Migrant Health Centers. In settlements where the number of Syrians is over twenty thousand, services are provided by Strengthened Migrant Health Centers. In addition to the Migrant Health Centers where primary health care services are provided, internal medicine, pediatrics, gynecology-obstetrics, oral-dental health, and psychosocial support services are provided in Strengthened Migrant Health Centers. Laboratory and X-ray services are also provided in these units. Arabic-speaking Syrian doctors and personnel provide services in these centers.

Refugee women say that while they used to receive service from health centers close to them, they now have to go to these centers and that the long distance affects their ability to receive service. They also stated that there is no appointment system in these centers and they must queue and wait all day. Seventeen of the women stated that there was a chronically ill person at home, while 13 stated that there was no one with a chronic illness. There was more than one patient in eight households. In households with extended family members, the interviewed woman had patients such as her mother, sibling, and father-in-law. Eight women themselves were ill, and five women's spouses were ill. One family had Thalassemia. One woman had a son with Down Syndrome, and the other had Cerebral Palsy. Two women had daughters, and one woman had a sibling with disabilities. There were nine people with heart disease, hypertension, and palpitations.

Only two women said they were happy when they were asked about their psychology. Eleven of the women said they were fine, while two of them said their mood was also variable. Uncertainty negatively affects women's psychology. This emotional state manifests itself as anxiety and stress in some, and as not being well in others. Six women said they were anxious: Due to the developments in Syria two of these women have concerns about returning there. There is both positive and negative anxiety here: uncertainty and returning home. Eleven women described their psychology as not being good at all. Those whose spouses are abroad do not know whether they will be able to go there or not, and they fear that their registra-



tions here will be frozen. Most of the women continue to have traumas and scars that they and/or their families experienced in Syria. There are those who feel torn apart, who experience fatigue and insomnia. There are women among them who have received psychiatric and psychological help. In previous sections, women have also mentioned those in their families who cannot work due to psychological disorders, for example, one said that her husband cannot work due to war trauma, and another said that her sister cannot work due to psychological problems. There are also concerns experienced by those who watch the developments in Syria with concern but do not want to return.

Finally, this section investigates whether women themselves and their children need psychological support. Eleven women stated that they did not need psychological support, while thirteen women requested support for themselves, their children, their spouses, or family members. Ten women stated that they had previously received psychological support from MaviKalem, and one stated that she was still receiving it. One woman stated that she had received therapy outside, including medication, and another stated that she had not gone to a psychiatrist although she had been referred to a psychiatrist by MaviKalem, but had requested speech therapy. Eight of the women stated that they still needed psychological support and wanted to receive it. Eight of the women had daughters or sons who had previously received support from MaviKalem. Two women stated that their children received psychological support from

school and/or an external institution. Five women stated that their children needed psychological support, while one woman requested support for her husband and one woman requested support for her sister who had lost her husband.

When we look at the data in this section, the intense demand for health support by refugees continues. Those who have had or will have surgery, those who want regular treatment are present even in this small sample. It is estimated that the demand for psychological support will continue for a long time. The trauma of war, the losses experienced, leaving their country, coming to a new country, learning a new language, trying to establish a new life, struggling to go to Western countries and living as families divided because of this, the reactions faced by those who want to stay in Turkey, the stress of their daily lives, both the excitement of those who want to go and the fear of an uncertain future are the stress sources mentioned. While psychological support can also be received from civil society institutions, medical support is limited to Migrant Health Centers and private hospitals. The identity/registration problem is the first obstacle to accessing health, financial difficulties are the second.

THEME 3: EDUCATION

Under this heading, women were asked whether they knew their rights and the services they could receive in Turkey. Eighteen women said they knew their rights and services, six said they knew little and six said they did not know. One of the women stated that she learned her rights and benefited from

the services when she encountered problems. Again, two women stated that they learned their rights from MaviKalem and received legal support. Five of the women stated that although they knew their rights, they did not have the opportunity to use them because they were refugees in Turkey. Two women even stated that the children in their families were beaten and that their applications were unsuccessful. Another fear expressed by the women was that they would be deported from Turkey if they complained.

When women were asked whether their children were attending school in Turkey, twenty-one women said yes, while 12 women said no. It was observed that women's some children went to school and others did not. Among the children who dropped out of school, the reason for the boys to earn money and contribute to the family's livelihood comes forward. Another reason is bullying at school. The four children who did not go to school are older than school age (+18). Two mothers' children (5 children) are attending Open Education.

Half of the women who participated in the interview said that their children had difficulty in continuing their education, while the other half said that they did not have any difficulties. The most frequently stated reason among the difficulties experienced (8 women) was adaptation and bullying. Other difficulties stated were leaving school for work due to financial difficulties (5 children), having problems registering or enrolling in another province (4 children). Only one mother mentioned the language problem of her child. Eighteen of the women whose children continued to school did not have any problems with

their children's registration process. The problems mentioned were as follows: not being able to register, identity problems, and registration fees. One mother wanted to transfer her child to a closer school, but this did not happen either.

THEME 4: ACCESS TO LEGAL SERVICES

During the in-depth interview, women were asked whether they needed legal services. Thirteen women said they did not, while seventeen women said they did. Five of the women said they needed legal services due to their divorce case and received support from MaviKalem for this. Four women needed counseling regarding ID registration, and two received counseling from MaviKalem. Two women needed legal support due to their husbands' jobs, two women due to violence against their children, and two women due to disputes. In the case of violence involving children being beaten and involved in fights, women stated that they could not do anything because they were refugees and were blamed on top of it. Nineteen of the women stated that they did not receive counseling for their need for legal support. In this case, we see that two women did not state this despite needing it. Five of the women sought counseling and legal support from MaviKalem for divorce, and these needs were met. The number of women who solved their problems by hiring a private lawyer was four, and these cases were about their husband's job, their son's involvement in a fight, and obtaining an ID. The women said that they hired a private lawyer to speed up the process of obtaining an ID. Three women sought support regarding school, one did not apply

because she was not informed about her rights, and the other two applied to MaviKalem, and one's need was met. The other applied to MaviKalem for family reunification and was directed to ASAM, but stated that she has not received any results yet.

THEME 5: ECONOMIC INCOME

Under this topic information was obtained about people working in the families, financial supports they receive, and child labor through the questions. Only three women do not have anyone working in their households, and these women earn their living through the financial support their families send from within the country/abroad. Thirteen women's spouses and ten women themselves work. Seventeen households have one person working, nine households have two people working, and two households have three people working. Eight of the women do handicrafts or sewing at home. Among them, there is a journalist who works part-time and a hairdresser who goes to refugees. Nine women have son/s working, and one woman has a daughter working. Two women stated that they receive cash or rent support from the Red Crescent. One family lives as an extended family, and one sister works. Most women working at home do handicrafts or sewing and produce when they receive orders. Three women work alone. Among the working sons, three of them work when they find one.

When the income status of thirty households is examined, it is seen that twenty-two households are provided with a single person and the average income is 16,000.- TL. Two people

work in six households, but one household does not have income information, therefore the average income of five households is 32,500.- TL. There is only one household where three people work and the income is 34,000.- TL. In total, two households did not provide income information. Twenty-four of the women stated that they could not meet their monthly expenses and needs. Five of them stated that they managed by borrowing. The number of those who stated that they were barely getting by was four. Two women stated that they were getting by. The women stated that they could not afford their children's school needs, the necessary school supplies, and secondly, that they gave up on buying food and clothing.

Twenty-one of the women interviewed did not have child labor in their households. Nine women stated that their children worked. Six of the working children were over the age of eighteen, three were young workers and one was of child worker age. All mothers stated that the reason the child labor was to provide for the family, and even expressed this with the words "we have to in order to survive!"

THEME 6: GOING BACK TO SYRIA

Under this heading, refugee women were asked whether they wanted to return to Syria or were considering returning. It was also investigated why they did not want to return. Finally, those who were considering going back were asked about their needs. Two of the Syrian women stated that they would return to Syria and three stated that they were considering going. The

number of those who did not consider going was nineteen. These questions were not asked to the two Turkish participants. Two women stated that they wanted to go to Europe or a third country. Those who were considering returning to Syria stated that they wanted to return to their country and that they could work in their country. Those who were not considering returning stated that housing was the most important problem. They stated that their homes in Syria were destroyed, that they had to go there and find a rental house, and that they would have to start a new life from scratch. The second reason given was that there was still uncertainty and insecurity in Syria. Another reason that is equally mentioned is the lack of infrastructure in Syria, that is, the lack of basic needs such as electricity and water. The health services and education received in Turkey are also among the reasons for not wanting to go back. It is noteworthy that the children also do not want to return to Syria, they do not know the place and want to stay here. Among those who want to return but do not think about it, there are those who say that their relatives are in Syria and that they miss them. Also, among those who do not want to return, there are two people who say that they have no one left there.

Syrian refugee women were asked what they needed to return and their answers were shipment, shelter, and transport. The women said that they had set up a house here and wanted to ship their household goods to Syria. They also stated that since their houses in Syria were destroyed, they had to rent a house there and needed financial support for this. Finally, there was a need for financial support for transportation.



EVALUATION and CONCLUSION

The in-depth interviews conducted with women show the depth of poverty and deprivation. It is seen that basic needs cannot be met. The biggest expense item is rent. The second is the bills, which include electricity, water, and natural gas. Food and clothing needs cannot be met. There is also the inability to purchase materials needed for children's education. This table shows that refugee women live in a poverty level where they cannot meet their basic needs. Women stated that this poverty is due to the lack of workers at home. The number of day jobs is low. There are those who work when they find work, and those who work when they receive piecework orders. In addition, there are those who cannot work due to chronic illnesses.

When it comes to benefitting health services, the obstacles that prevent women from accessing the health system are stated as not being able to make an appointment, registration problems, economic situation, and distance. It is seen that the identity/registration problem and economic opportunities are the main ones. More than half of the women interviewed have a chronic patient at home. It is seen that the need for long-term and regular help in terms of mental health continues. Anxiety and stress levels are high in women, children, and spouses. It is seen that they receive psychological support but still need this support. This indicates that post-traumatic syndrome continues.

When women were asked about their rights and the services they could receive in Turkey under the title of education, more than half

of them said they knew a little, some said they learned as they experienced problems, and some said they learned from MaviKalem. Some women whose children had problems stated that although they knew their rights, they could not access them because they were refugees, and they did not seek their rights for fear of being deported. This indicates that they have little trust in justice and that they experience discrimination.

All women particularly emphasized that they wanted their children to receive an education. While there are children who cannot attend school in Turkey due to migration, there are also children who study at a university in Turkey. There are those who attend school and those who do not. The most prominent reason to drop out for boys who do not attend school is to contribute financially to the family. The most frequently stated reasons for dropping out are incompatibility and bullying at schools. There are children who leave formal education and go to open education. The reasons for children not being able to attend school include not being able to register, identity problems, and registration fees. The need for support in education continues.

In terms of the need for and access to legal rights, it was observed that women mostly had cases of divorce, getting an ID, and their children getting into fights. They also stated that they received legal support due to their husbands' jobs. Some of the women who filed for divorce and those who wanted to get an ID received support from MaviKalem. Some women hired private lawyers to speed up their cases.

Nine out of ten women who participated in our study have at least one person working at home. More than half of the households are single-income earners. Women also try to contribute to the

household economy. Three out of ten women work at home by producing piecework. Four children under the age of eighteen are working. However, there are children who are now over the age of eighteen but started working when they were children. Mothers explained their children's working with the phrase "we have to in order to survive!" We see that those with chronic diseases work occasionally among family members, while young people work when they find a job. Women have emphasized throughout this study that their economic income is not enough to make ends meet. The first area where women make deductions from their income is education, followed by food and clothing. The striking point here is that even though there are employees in the household, their income is insufficient. This shows that they can work in low-wage jobs. The net minimum wage in Turkey for 2025 is: 22,104.67 TL. Most women's household income is below the minimum wage.

Finally, one in six women stated that they would return to Syria or were considering going back. Seven out of ten women do not consider returning. The primary reasons for this are the difficulty of rebuilding a life from scratch in Syria, the ongoing uncertainty, and the lack of sufficient security. The lack of infrastructure is also an obstacle to establishing a life there. Those considering returning to Syria expect to pay for rent, transportation, and transportation costs to move their belongings to establish a new life there. Those who do not consider returning to Syria stated that they have established a routine in Turkey, that their children are receiving education, and that they are benefiting from healthcare services here. Women also stated that their children do not want to return. The biggest fear of those considering staying in Turkey is being forcibly sent back to Syria. This study shows that Syrian refugees continue to need support in every aspect.

Add your color to life!

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