







# Raising Awareness of Forced Migration (FARK)

Advocacy Report - 2022



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The original of this report has been prepared in Turkish and it has been translated into English and Persian.

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#### **1. SUMMARY**

This report is the main research output of the Raising Awareness of Forced Migration (FARK) Project. The project is being implemented within the scope of The Delegation of European Union to Turkey: Support of Civil Society Networks and Platforms in Turkey Program, The Strengthening the Refugee Council of Turkey Project and Promoting the Rights of Refugees and Local People in Turkey Project, under the auspices of the Afghan Refugees Solidarity Association (ARSA) and with the support of the Support for Life Association. The purpose of the report is to examine the dynamics related to the status of refugees, the access to services such as health, education, labour and employment, the social inclusion and to reveal the obstacles and protection deficiencies that refugees face in areas such as social participation and exclusion in Turkey, which hosts nearly 4 million refugees and is the country that hosts the largest number of refugees in the world. The report also aims to contribute to the sharing of information about the Afghan communities with the largest refugee population after the Syrians, where there is limited research.

The aim of the study is to increase awareness about the phenomenon of forced migration, especially among non-governmental organizations, service providers and policy makers, and to support evidence-based advocacy works in this area.

Project activities and outputs are designed in a rational axis. At the first stage, a detailed situation assessment study was carried out by Afghan Refugees Solidarity Association and Life Support Association. At the same time, within the scope of the Raising Awareness of Forced Migration (FARK) Project, focus group interviews and one-on-one interviews were conducted by Afghan Refugees Solidarity Association experts in Kayseri, Istanbul and Konya provinces. Content that will feed social empathy about life stories has been obtained in the interviews. Findings on the ways in which negative perceptions affect access to services and in which sectors (such as health, law, education, work, etc.) they are mainly observed have been collected. As a result of the data analysis study, advocacy issues were determined.

#### 2. Background

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)called it a "staggering milestone" that the number of forcibly displaced people worldwide has exceeded 100 million for the first time.

According to the data of the United Nations for the year 2021, 82 million 400 thousand people in the world were forcibly displaced due to reasons such as conflict, human rights violations, violence. Of the nearly 83 million people who have been forced to leave their homes, 26.6 million are refugees, 50.9 million are internally displaced persons, and 4.1 million are asylum seekers. These numbers, which are not new, but are increasing every day, are taking their place as a problem that needs to be solved on the agenda of all states. According to the Ministry of Interior Migration Management of the Republic of Turkey, the number of Syrians with temporary protected status registered in Turkey is a total of 3 million 650 thousand 430 people as of August 04, 2022. In addition, there are more than 330,000 international protection applications and status holders.<sup>2</sup>

The multifaceted and complex nature of the migration phenomenon requires the cooperation of different actors in its management. Among the actors involved in migration management today, local governments and nongovernmental organizations stand out in particular and play an important role in solving social problems. Local governments and non-governmental organizations are seen as the most important mechanisms for the functioning of participatory democracy in the management process.

The United Nations' 2018 Global Compact on Refugees stated that progress has been made in the field of refugee rights and advocacy in recent years, and that the level of awareness and commitment has increased internationally to improve the participation of refugees. However, there are still many steps that need to be taken for refugees to access their rights. <sup>3</sup>

- 1. https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/06/1120542
- 2. https://goc.gov.tr/gecici-koruma5638

3. Birleşmiş Milletler, 2018, Yeniden Basım, Mültecilere İlişkin Küresel Mutabakat, New York.

#### **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

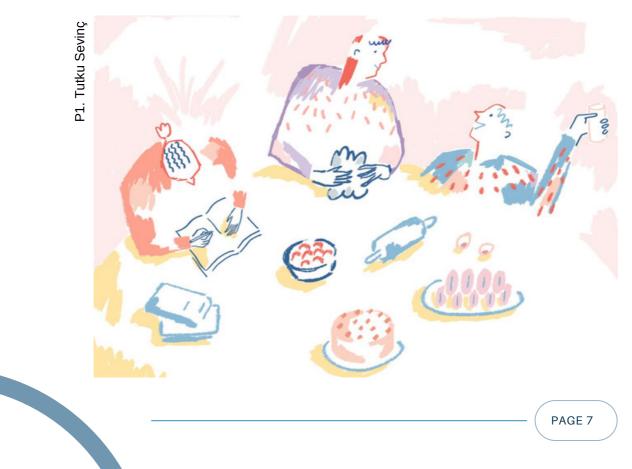
The research process in the report consists of three main stages: 1) desk-based research, 2) collection of primary data, 3) data analysis and reporting. The primary data were collected by interviewing Afghan asylum seekers who are under international protection, in the provinces of Istanbul, Kayseri and Konya, between April and July 2022. In order to provide demographic information, and diversity in terms of gender, age and nationality, the sampling method was used. The participants were determined from among the people registered in the databases of the Afghan Refugees Solidarity Association, which is the executive of the project, and the Support to Life Association which is the supporter of the project. The designated persons were informed about the project and asked to participate, and those who gave consent were included in the research. The provinces of Istanbul, Kayseri and Konya, which host crowded and diverse refugee communities, were also selected taking into account COVID-19 conditions. In the focus groups and one-on-one interviews conducted with the research participants, the centers of the Support to Life Association, Afghan Refugees Solidarity Association and El Bir Association were used decently. One-on-one interviews were conducted with 6 of the total 37 participants and 3 focus group interviews were conducted with 31 of them.

In order to collect qualitative data, focus group and one-on-one interviews were conducted in accordance with specially designed question sets. With the consent of the participant, most of the interviews were recorded with a voice recorder, and for the research participants who did not want to be recorded, a note-taking method was used instead.

Data Type	Data Collection Method	Data Size	
Primary Data	Number of Focus Group Interviews: 3 Focus Interview: 14 men, 17 women	Istanbul	10
		Konya	12
		Kayseri	9
	One-on-one Interviews: 6 (3 men, 3 women)	Istanbul	2
		Konya	2
		Kayseri	2

Between March and August 2022, 31 people with international protection status in Istanbul, Kayseri and Konya were interviewed in a focus group and 6 people were interviewed face to face, within the scope of the research. After the interviews, it was seen that the low level of social acceptance for Afghans with international protection status residing in Turkey makes it difficult to permanently solve their protection needs, and vulnerabilities tend to become chronic. It was assessed that even when people are informed about their fundamental rights, their gains are limited, therefore, advocacy on issues such as reducing vulnerabilities and meeting protection needs stands out as an important horizontal component.

Among the factors that pose problems in accessing services, it was found that the lack of information or lack of status of those in need, as well as negative perceptions of service providers and the local community, play an important role. Based on this, it was assessed that advocacy activities that will reduce negative perceptions and increase awareness of migration on the axis of fundamental rights can be an effective method of reducing existing vulnerabilities.



## 4. PROBLEMS OF REFUGEES UNDER INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION AND PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

One of the main findings of this report is that regular migrants (with international protection status) or irregular migrants (unregistered) registered in Turkey face great difficulties in accessing basic rights and services. Among the factors that pose problems in accessing services, it was determined that the lack of information or lack of status of those in need, as well as the negative perceptions of service providers and the local community, play an important role. Based on this, it was assessed that advocacy activities that will reduce negative perceptions and increase awareness of migration on the axis of fundamental rights can be an effective method of reducing existing vulnerabilities.

The increasing refugee numbers with the wars and crises are inevitably placing the refugee problem on the world agenda. Refugees that are forced to leave their homes, places, families and relatives, sometimes embark on a journey of hope in containers, in truck crates, and sometimes in thronged boats. Research shows that violence and economic factors are the significant reasons for Afghans to decamp from their country. The difficulties experienced by Afghans who either first came to Pakistan, then to Iran, and from there to Turkey, or first to Iran and then to Turkey, also continue in Turkey. These difficulties and troubles were discussed under the following headings within the scope of our study.

- a) Problems with Legal Status
- b) Access to Education
- c) Employment and Economic Problems
- d) Access to Health and Social Services, Housing, Living Conditions and Participation in Daily Life
- e) Social Cohesion
- f) Language barrier



#### A) PROBLEMS WITH LEGAL STATUS

Afghan asylum seekers in Turkey are among the most discussed issues in the country recently. Especially after the Taliban gained control in Afghanistan, the discussions have deepened even more with the increase in escapes from the country. However, since the end of the 1970s, this migration movement has been continuing for reasons such as conflicts, and political and economic problems. Turkey is one of the countries where Afghans take refuge both for living and as a transit country.

When we look at the 2000s, it is seen that the illegal entry of Afghans into the country showed a jump in 2018, increased in 2019, and fell in 2020. The reason why Afghans have been identified as asylum seekers in Turkey for many years is that their legal status is unclear in terms of domestic law. The interviewees also stated that the uncertainty of status is the biggest obstacle to Afghans' hopelessness about the future and access to rights and needs.

- By taking into account international conventions and human rights documents, the legal status of Afghan refugees can be determined and the status that will provide the people with the guarantees they deserve can be offered.
- It is observed that Afghans, including large cities, especially in border cities, are afraid to apply to the Migration Management for fear of deportation, so their visibility in the public sphere is low. This situation shows that access to the international protection application mechanism is limited. Local and non-governmental organizations can organize information sessions aimed at correcting misconceptions about access to mechanisms.
- Legal services can be facilitated for people who do not have access to adequate legal support.

#### **B) ACCESS TO EDUCATION**

Our work in the field shows that Afghan asylum seekers and their children are experiencing serious difficulties in education and training. It is seen that the most important obstacle to accessing education is economic opportunities. The economic difficulties experienced by asylum seekers affect women and children especially deeply.

The participants who were interviewed shared that the rejection rate of international protection applications is quite high, and if the applications are rejected, the students' records are immediately deleted from the school system. As a result of this application, when the family's application is rejected, the children are prevented from receiving a report card even for the class they are attending. Children of families whose protection applications are not accepted become vulnerable to all kinds of abuse, are exposed to irregular status and exploitation in the shadow sector, and children are marginalized and cut off from society.

In addition to status, poverty, peer pressure and the language barrier are the main barriers to the schooling of students under international protection. According to the Karma Migration Center's recent study on Afghan asylum seekers, 76% of Afghans experience difficulties in accessing education due to language barriers and education costs. However, it is seen that some Afghans of learning age are even more disadvantaged by not connecting with the school at all due to the risk of deportation. <sup>4</sup>

There are no reliable data on the number of refugee children under international protection. It can be said that children are one of the most vulnerable groups by facing child labour, child marriage and psycho-social stress and other types of abuse and exploitation, including the multi-faced risk of child protection. The number of Afghan refugee children who do not continue their education, especially after the ninth class, is gradually increasing towards the high school education level. This situation causes refugee boys to take part in shadow employment, and refugee girls to be exposed to abuses related to domestic work, seasonal agricultural labour and child marriage.

4. https://mixedmigration.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/115\_destination\_unknown\_policy\_brief\_tr.pdf



- Awareness-raising activities can be carried out in order to increase awareness of the educational opportunities provided by the Ministry of National Education for families and students.
- Especially when the school absences of children between the ages of 13 and 17 are detected, preventive activities can be put into operation and non-governmental institutions working in this field can be supported.
- Inspections can be carried out to prevent child labor.
- Platforms such as the "Partnership Network to Prevent Violence against Children" can be supported so that all stakeholder organizations working on child labor can carry out their work more efficiently.
- Projects related to the subject can be designed in consultation with beneficiaries, institutions and organizations providing services on schooling.
- Awareness activities for teachers can be organized. In particular, information can be passed on about issues such as peer bullying, which causes children to withdraw from school.



#### **C) EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC PROBLEMS**

Research and our observations in the field show that many children are working or forced to work in order to contribute to the livelihood of their families due to hunger and poverty. While some of the Afghan children are trying to contribute to the livelihood of their families by selling products such as tissue paper, some of them are collecting paper from garbage cans. It is also stated that employers have achieved low cost opportunities thanks to Afghan asylum seekers, as most of the boys work informally.

In the focus group interviews, it is also stated that where the number of Afghan asylum seekers is high, there is a need for labour in this area because the local population does not want to work as workers in the livestock, agricultural sector and factories.

Afghan asylum seekers, who are trying to endure difficult living conditions in different geographies of the world, are trying to continue their lives in Turkey by working in the most difficult jobs, with the lowest wages, unhealthy, precarious, and uninsured. The prevalence of informal employment, the lack of preventive and supervisory administrative work for this reason, as well as the views that Afghans, who are used as a 'cheap labour force', reduce the value of labour in the labour market, also cause a reaction from the local population.



- Non-Governmental Organizations can design programs and projects, taking into account the employment opportunities specific to cities. Collaboration with professional chambers can be established in projects and recruitment can be associated with vocational training.
- Women can be supported in social life by constructing role model studies and opinion leaders in the communities can be included in these processes.
- Women can play an important role in improving the living conditions of their families and communities. Women's refugee committees can be established so that women can prepare for these roles, and women's access to decision-making mechanisms and services at the local level can be facilitated.
- Women's initiatives can be supported and potential income-generating areas can be identified.
- In addition to projects that prioritize employment-oriented male participation based on unskilled labour or physical strength, incentives including incomegenerating activities for women can be given by analyzing the cultural dynamics and living conditions of the target group.
- Households can be trained so that women are not pressured in terms of working hours and quality of work during the employment process, and these trainings can be included in employment projects.
- A mechanism can be created by developing community-based solutions to support childcare so that refugee women can enter the labour market.
- In addition to Public Education Centers, vocational training can be given within the companies that can create employment or in equipped vocational training workshops accepted by the companies.
- Stakeholder mapping work can be carried out, including local organizations, employment opportunities, market needs, cooperation and partnership opportunities.
- In order to create complementary projects and prevent duplication, a structure can be established by different institutions that can fulfill the task of coordination, including all fund calls. The support of public authorities can be sought in the creation of the structure.
- It can be shown that social assistance is not a regular income generation method, and dependency on assistance can be reduced by organizing awareness seminars.
- The advantages of registered employment can be explained in detail to both workers and employers, and workers and employers can be informed about the sanctions that may be encountered in unregistered employment.
- Worker support groups can be established, local organizations, violations of rights in workplaces can be monitored, policies and practices related to employment can be improved through these groups.



## D) ACCESS TO HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES, HOUSING, LIVING CONDITIONS AND PARTICIPATION IN DAILY LIFE

Studies show that many asylum seekers face significant problems related to employment, health and education. One of the main difficulties they experience while accessing services is that they cannot find a house, and when they do, they have to pay high rents because they are refugees. In addition, the fact that children experience difficulties in school enrollment and cannot continue their education due to identity problems, and the language barrier, on the other hand, are the most important obstacles to their access to basic rights and services.

Access to health services and social services is one of the most important problems faced by Afghan refugees. Except for children under the age of 18 and people over the age of 65, health insurances of other asylum seekers can only be used in the first year of application. This insurance service is discontinued after the first year of application.

Afghan asylum seekers who do not have insurance coverage cannot go to the hospital and are deprived of health services. The inability to access health services creates serious problems, especially for people with disabilities, the elderly and chronic patients. Medication needs cannot be met in the same way during the treatment process.

Another important problem for Afghan asylum seekers is that if their international protection applications are rejected by the Presidency of Migration Management as a result of their interviews, their identity information and address records are blocked from the system. The inability to access their address records and identity information prevents them from being examined at the hospital or receiving health services, even for a fee. Those who cannot be registered cannot receive health services in hospitals for the same reasons, as they do not have an identity card.

Shelter, living conditions and participation in daily life are other problems for Afghan refugees. Due to the high rents, 2 or 3 families may have to share the same house. This situation not only makes it difficult for families to find a house but also causes problems in terms of privacy. The fact that neighbourhoods other than those closed to the international protection registry are both far from the city and have higher rents make housing a common problem.



- Information centers can be established to ensure that refugees obtain open and widespread access to important information.
- Non-Governmental Organizations and the Presidency of Migration Management can carry out lobbying activities for third country governments together in sending highly sensitive asylum seekers whose applications for international protection are accepted to a safe third country.
- Improving the criteria and processes for applying to a third country, making them inclusive and transparent, and providing a feedback procedure on the effectiveness of applications.

#### E) SOCIAL COHESION, INTEGRATION, INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION

Local governments and civil society have important duties in order to provide a multicultural and inclusive social cohesion environment that includes diversity in cities. Our research reveals that the activities that will bring the host community and refugees/asylum seekers together and provide the opportunity to socialize, meet and share experience are insufficient.



- Non-Governmental organizations can organize information sessions focusing on compliance.
- Good practices promoting coexistence can be disseminated, and various activities can be carried out in order to create local awareness, lay the groundwork for knowledge and experience sharing, and establish cooperation networks.
- Cooperation can be established with the village headman, schools, municipalities and universities, which are the main actors of cohesion, communication campaigns and sports-art activities related to social cohesion can be organized, and voluntary work can be supported.
- Localized harmonization studies specific to provinces and regions can be implemented, and platforms that will create opportunities for experience transfer and learning can be created.
- Social cohesion can be brought into the mainstream by ensuring the participation of local people in humanitarian aid programs and refugee studies.
- Bearing in mind that social cohesion begins at the household and neighbourhood level, headmen can be supported in reducing tensions at the community level, disseminating accurate information and bringing different groups together.
- It can be ensured that schools are used more effectively as an important interaction area that provides social cohesion among children. School administrations can be supported for zero-tolerance policies and practices against bullying and discrimination in schools.
- High school and university students can be encouraged to initiate communication campaigns on social cohesion in cooperation with local organizations. The incentives provided can support volunteer groups that will work to raise awareness about peaceful coexistence.
- Efforts can be made to prevent discriminatory language and information pollution in mainstream media and social media, and good examples such as "False Facts" can be multiplied.
- Non-Governmental Organizations can be involved in policy-making and decision-making processes by conducting advocacy activities among themselves.
- The concept of social cohesion can be expanded in policy-making processes.
- Non-Governmental Organizations can raise awareness about refugees with people such as artists, opinion leaders, and influencers, and through public service announcements, short films, public service announcements and similar communication tools by emphasizing polyphony and diversity.

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#### F) LANGUAGE BARRIER

Language is the key to establishing a new life in the country of refuge for refugees fleeing war, conflict and natural disasters. Language is not only important for individuals to be self-sufficient and build a new life, but also for survival. The language barrier negatively affects Afghan refugees in every aspect of their lives. The lack of translators who speak Persian in hospitals, or the high fees for this service, and the language barrier in accessing the right information and services affect their access to services and also create barriers to their participation in society.

- Service institutions and local organizations can increase the number of language courses by allocating more resources to education and language development.
- Continuity of language courses can be ensured for effective language development.
- School social work model can be supported to prevent children who are enrolled in school but who have problems in teaching, catching up with the curriculum and adapting to their peers due to language barriers, from dropping out of school.

#### **5. EPILOGUE**

It has been observed that there has been a significant number of Afghan asylum seekers in Turkey in recent years. Afghan asylum seekers due to the problems they experience in obtaining registration, status or residence permit; face serious difficulties in accessing basic rights and services such as housing, education, health and work permits. Moreover, the fact that the neighbourhoods where the possibilities of the majority of the refugee community are now closed to registration places housing at the top of the problems. In addition, the children of families whose files were rejected as a result of the interview by the Provincial Immigration Administrations cannot continue their education, even if they had previously studied at primary, secondary or high school.

It is seen that there is insufficient information about the mechanisms of access and referral to basic rights and services for Afghan refugees, and there are few studies on this. In addition, it can be said that programs and projects aiming to contribute to social cohesion and social acceptance are insufficient. As a solution to this; Asylum-seekers and migrants must be protected, and have access to basic needs, health, housing, education and employment. Advocating the protection of asylum seekers and migrants, regardless of nationality, should be a priority for public service providers, and local and international NGOs at all levels. The capacities of local NGOs working in this field should be strengthened. It should work to overcome the language barrier by providing translation services and/or language courses for all sectors and all age groups. It should be ensured that up-to-date and accurate information about the legislation related to the national and international asylum processes of immigrants and refugees is accessible.

Compared to many European countries, Turkey tries to produce more humane policies instead of rational concerns. However, in the face of the migration reality of today's world, it is difficult for countries to cope with migration problems alone without international cooperation. There is a need for international cooperation and a call for global responsibility in order to find solutions to the causes of long-term migration of Afghan asylum seekers and to move forward in the face of its consequences.

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