

REFUGEE WOMEN’S EMPLOYMENT IN TURKEY’S HUMANITARIAN  
RESPONSE TO THE SYRIA CRISIS:  
A QUALITATIVE DOCUMENTARY ANALYSIS

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## DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Şeyma Nazlı Gürbüz, certify that

- I am the sole author of this thesis and that I have fully acknowledged and documented in my thesis all sources of ideas and words, including digital resources, which have been produced or published by another person or institution;
- this thesis contains no material that has been submitted or accepted for a degree or diploma in any other educational institution;
- this is a true copy of the thesis approved by my advisor and thesis committee at Boğaziçi University, including final revisions required by them.

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## ABSTRACT

### Refugee Women's Employment in Turkey's Humanitarian Response to the Syrian Crisis:

#### A Qualitative Documentary Analysis

Eight years ago, first flow of refugees started to cross the Turkish-Syrian border, fleeing a bloody civil war that started to tear their lives apart while looking for a fresh new start in a new country. Soon after, these refugee flows turned into a humanitarian crisis that no longer seeks emergency actions for its problems but instead necessitates permanent integration strategies that would ease life for both Turkish and Syrian societies. This thesis examines how and to what extent humanitarian actors approach the labor market integration of the Syrian refugee women in Turkey. The thesis relies on exploratory qualitative analysis of documents produced by five prominent humanitarian actors, namely Yuva Association, Support to Life Association, Turkish Red Crescent, Association for Solidarity with Asylum-Seekers and Migrants, and United Nations agencies in the post-2016 period, which was the year that the work permits for the Syrians under the temporary protection was issued. The thesis argues that the selected humanitarian actors adopt an approach that fits in between the Basic Needs Approach and the Instrumentalist Approach according to Olivius' categorization of humanitarian responses to refugee women. The thesis finds that, although the humanitarian actors in Turkey acknowledges the importance of gender mainstreaming in their rhetoric, this acknowledgement is not reflected in their discourse on livelihood programs. Refugee women mostly appears in the humanitarian actor discourses on basic needs programs.

## ÖZET

### Türkiye'nin Suriye Krizine İnsani Yardım Müdahalesinde Mülteci Kadınların İş Edindirilmesi: Bir Niteliksel Belge Analizi Çalışması

Sekiz yıl önce, kanlı bir iç savaşın hayatlarını parçalaması üzerine ilk mülteci akını yeni bir ülkede yeni bir başlangıç yapmak amacıyla Türkiye-Suriye sınırını geçti. Çok geçmeden, bu mülteci akınları artık acil durum müdahaleleriyle çözümlenemeyecek, aksine hem Türk hem Suriyeli halk için hayatı kolaylaştıracak kalıcı bütünleşme stratejileri gerektiren bir insani kriz halini aldı. Bu tez, insani yardım aktörlerinin nasıl ve ne boyutta Suriyeli mülteci kadınların Türkiye'deki ekonomik bütünleşmelerinde rol aldığını incelemektedir. Tez, ülkenin önde gelen altı insani yardım aktörünün, sırasıyla Yuva Derneği, Hayata Destek Derneği, Kızılay, Sığınmacılar ve Göçmenlerle Dayanışma Derneği ve Birleşmiş Milletler kuruluşlarının 2016 yılı sonrası ürettiği belgelerin niteliksel analizine dayanmaktadır. 2016 yılının temel alınma sebebi Geçici Koruma Statüsü altındaki Suriyeli mültecilere çalışma izninin bu yıl tanınmasıdır. Tez, seçilen insani yardım aktörlerinin, Olivius'un mülteci kadınlara yönelik insani yardım müdahalelerini kategorize etmesine göre, Temel İhtiyaç Yaklaşımı ile Araçsalıcı Yaklaşım arasında bir yaklaşımı benimsediğini savunmaktadır. Çalışma, Türkiye'deki insani yardım aktörlerinin retoriklerinde toplumsal cinsiyetin anaakımlaşmasının önemini kabul etmelerine rağmen, bu kabulün geçim kaynakları programları konusundaki söylemlerine yansıtılmadığını ortaya koymaktadır. Mülteci kadınlar, çoğunlukla ancak temel ihtiyaç programları söz konusu olduğunda insani yardım aktörlerinin söylemlerinde yer almaktadırlar.

## DEDICATION

Writing this thesis was one of the hardest challenges of my life. During this process, the support that I have received from both my family and friends showed me once again how blessed I am. I would first like to thank my family, especially my mother and beautiful sister Beyza, for always making me feel loved and supported, no matter what. As long as you guys are here, I would survive anything. Then, I would like to express my gratitude for my lovely friends Neslihan Saydam, Nurefşan Kutlu and Tuba Aydın, for always being there for me. I hope I can do the same for you guys when the time comes. I would also like to appreciate the assistance of my beautiful friend Ebrar Küçükaşçı, thank you for never hesitating in sharing your experiences with me. Lastly, I would like to thank to my talented friend Büşra Öztürk for saving my thesis from being a boring piece with her beautiful infographics. Thank you guys for millions of times, for never leaving me alone. This thesis is dedicated to all of you, I will appreciate your support and love forever.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

It has been eight years since the first flow of refugees started to cross the Turkish-Syrian border, fleeing a bloody civil-war that started to tear their lives apart while looking for a fresh new start in a new country. At first, it seemed like a temporary situation for the all parties, from refugees to Turkish society and state. However, as the number of the refugees increased and the Syria crisis turned into a protracted crisis, both humanitarian actors and scholars started to call for a comprehensive integration strategy. That is to say, the Syrian refugee issue turned into a crisis that no longer seeks temporary solutions but instead necessitates permanent integration strategies that would ease life for both societies. At that point, not only Turkish government but also humanitarian organizations started to initiate policies that facilitate integration of the refugees. The economic integration in particular became at the forefront as the key factor in (Daily Sabah, 2018) enabling refugees to become a part of the host society (Bloch, 2002). It was in this context that the news and articles regarding the refugees' economic integration started to spread through media outlets (Daily Sabah & AA, 2016; Daily Sabah, 2016; Sarioglu, 2016; Hurriyet Daily News, 2018), revealing numbers that track down the outcomes of the integration policies and programs towards the refugees.

However, one thing was hard to not notice: there were no figures or numbers revealing the conditions of the Syrian woman refugees in the Turkish labor market. As a woman citizen of this country, this lack of mentioning of refugee women's presence in Turkish economy caught my attention. I have wondered what challenges

a refugee woman has to face and what kinds of options she has to overcome those challenges.

It is not a surprising discovery that refugee women are often overlooked (Wallace, 1993) as a quite disadvantaged group not only because they are refugees but also because they are women (Wallace, 1993). In other words, as part of a group that is already disadvantaged because of its refugee status, women refugees are even more deprived compared to their male counterparts. Therefore, the refugee women need the assistance of the main policy makers and humanitarian actors to change their disadvantageous position in the host community (Brown et al., 2017). Yet, although it is the main carrier of the burden, the actions of the Turkish government remained insufficient in its ability and willingness to roll out integration policies towards the refugees in general, leaving a gap in the field to be fulfilled by the humanitarian response. That is to say, the response from the humanitarian organizations is crucial for the refugees, particularly refugee women, in their integration to the Turkish society, particularly its economy. Considering this condition, I have turned my attention to the humanitarian actors and asked the following question: How and to what extent humanitarian response to refugee crisis in Turkey facilitate the labor market integration of Syrian refugee women?

## 1.1 Method

In this thesis, my main aim is to explore how and to what extent humanitarian response to Syria crisis in Turkey facilitates the employment of Syrian refugee women. In order to come up with an empirically grounded answer to this question, I have conducted a qualitative study that is based on the analysis of the secondary documents complemented with a comprehensive literature survey. I focused on the

documents particularly produced by humanitarian organizations that have community centers on the ground, where these organizations carry out activities that would facilitate refugee women to integrate into the labor market. Therefore, the secondary documents that I examined consists of the websites of these humanitarian organizations, their annual reports and project closing reports. I focused on five well-known humanitarian organizations that operate all around Turkey. These five organizations were chosen based on a single criterion: They have direct relations with the refugees through, for instance, community centers that provide concrete livelihood support for the refugees via vocational trainings or consultation services. That is why I have decided to study professional, internationally-funded humanitarian organizations. Although the issue of Turkish language training is also significant in refugees' integration in Turkish labor market (UN Women & ASAM, 2018), since the responsibility of providing language training to refugees belongs to the Turkish state, not humanitarian actors, I leave these activities outside of my work.

As a result, I included the following organizations: Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants (ASAM), Support to Life Association (STL), Turkish Red Crescent (TRC), UN Agencies –including the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), International Organization for Migration (IOM) and International Labour Organization (ILO)- and Yuva Association. The reason why only these five organizations made it through the thesis is the fact that they were the largest ones within the field. Abovementioned organizations constitute a heterogeneous group. While ASAM, STL and Yuva are Turkey-based non-governmental humanitarian organizations, the TRC is a Turkish semi-governmental humanitarian organization

that is part of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. UN organizations, however, derive their mandate from international agreements between national governments. Despite the heterogeneity among their organizational structures and mandates, for the purposes of this thesis, they carry out similar activities in supporting the economic integration of Syrian refugees in Turkey.

The documentary analysis is being preferred as the main method of the research since it is appropriate for a qualitative research study that is based on organizations (Stake, R. E., 1995; Yin, R.K., 1994). Modern organizations, including humanitarian organizations that this study focuses on, produce documentary realities in carrying out their functions. Therefore, one way to respond to the question on institutions is through the examination of documentary realities they produce (Atkinson, P, ; Coffey, A., 2004).

Atkinson and Coffey (Atkinson, P, ; Coffey, A., 2004) see documents as social facts and states that qualitative research should take documentary realities into account more. Although it is not possible to learn everyday routine of an organization through documents, these documents can still be treated as social facts (Atkinson, P, ; Coffey, A., 2004) and are enough to be used as the principal undertaking of a qualitative research (Prior, L., 2003). According to Merriam (Merriam, S. B., 1988), any type of document is quite useful for a researcher in grasping the issue, revealing the inner meanings and explore the perceptions that are related to the research question. Another benefit of a document analysis is that it enables to track the alterations and developments on the issue (Bowen, G.A., 2009). In previous studies, the researchers used secondary analysis when they aim to come up with something that is distinct from the original analysis (Hinds, P.S. et al., 1997),

to add further analysis to the original one (Hinds, P.S. et al., 1997) or to bring a new vision to the topic (Heaton, J., 2004).

Organizations, as modern social formations (Atkinson, P, ; Coffey, A., 2004), are heavily based on paperwork and represent themselves to the outside world through these documents (Atkinson, P, ; Coffey, A., 2004). Therefore, researchers aiming at an understanding of these organizations should pay attention to the documents they produce (Atkinson, P, ; Coffey, A., 2004). Organizations not only produce documents that reveal its memory of work through written records but also the ones that enables them to present themselves to the outer world such as annual reports (Atkinson, P, ; Coffey, A., 2004). It should also be underlined that these documents are mostly produced for specific audiences (Atkinson, P, ; Coffey, A., 2004).

While analyzing the documents, in this thesis, a more interpretive stance is being preferred rather than the critical one. A special attention has been paid to the type of language that is used, since the reports often have their own distinct language that differs from the everyday one (Atkinson, P, ; Coffey, A., 2004). There is also the similarity between the organizational documents that reveal their shared, bureaucratic style (Atkinson, P, ; Coffey, A., 2004). Another shared feature of these types of documents is the fact that they often lack an individual identifiable author. This absence of a single writer adds more to the factual nature of the documents (Atkinson, P, ; Coffey, A., 2004).

Since documents exceed time and extract the incidents from the period that they took place, they transform things through turning them into written texts. By this way, the readers are being enabled to be exchanged (Atkinson, P, ; Coffey, A., 2004). Still, despite this nature of the texts that surpasses the time, it is preferred in

this thesis to use documents, especially the reports, that are most up to date.

Therefore, the oldest researched document is written in 2016 while the newest one belongs to 2018. Another reason why I've limited my work with the post-2016 period is the fact that 2016 is the year when the right to work is being issued for the Syrian refugees in Turkey. The rationale behind this selection is to grasp an understanding over the contemporary approaches of the selected organizations, their relevant activities and their relations with refugee women when it comes to the livelihood activities. This decision is in line with the discursive shift of focus in the Syria response from emergency response to long-term integration since the mid-2010s.

In addition to the annual reports and project-specific documents produced by the selected organizations, I also used electronic documents such as the websites of the organizations and their social media accounts. In this respect, in addition to the websites of the organizations, the blogs of the some such as the Support to Life blog page is also being examined as a documentary reality that is based on the individual interactions, as these documents were described elsewhere (Atkinson, P, ; Coffey, A., 2004). These blogs provided a glimpse of how humanitarian organizations communicate their activities with the public. Lastly, the researched documents and knowledge gathered through them were summarized in tables, which provide a shorthand method to compare and contrast the views of organizations (Atkinson, P, ; Coffey, A., 2004).

Yet, it should also be mentioned that, there are some limitations to this study. Since it is based on a documentary analysis, it lacks the possibility of exploring unstated objectives and possible de facto supports of the humanitarian organizations for the Syrian refugee women which could not find a place in the publications of

these organizations but could have been examined if other methodologies such as in-depth interviews were employed.

## 1.2 Outline of the chapters

The thesis is composed of five chapters. The following chapter is Chapter 2 that gives an overview of the history and current state of Syrian refugees in Turkey, from the beginning of the refugee flow to the country to the contemporary state of affairs. Following the introduction, a section puts the humanitarian actors into the limelight by giving a framework on the humanitarian organizations' role in responding the Syrian refugee crisis in Turkey

This chapter is followed by a comprehensive literature review in the next chapter, Chapter 3. That chapter is divided into seven parts. First, the introduction, which is followed by the literature on the factors and current trends in women's labor force participation are being examined. This section is followed by the literature review on women's labor force participation in Turkey, which is presented with a focus on its main determinants. Then, a similar examination is carried out with respect to the refugee women's labor force participation. This section is followed by an examination of the role of humanitarian actors in refugees' employment. Next section presents an overview of the literature on the relationship between humanitarian actors and refugee women and the chapter ends with a conclusion section. Chapter 4 offers an analysis of the role of humanitarian organizations in facilitating the Syrian refugee women's employment in Turkey. This chapter handles all five organizations separately and offers an overall analysis of the common and diverging patterns in their approach to refugee women's employment. Lastly, Chapter 5 is the conclusion where all the findings come together with the literature



review, resulting in a discussion over the humanitarian actors' role in the economic integration of the Syrian woman refugees.

## CHAPTER 2

### SYRIAN REFUGEES IN TURKEY

#### 2.1 Introduction

In 2011, a group of young people in Syria's southeastern Daraa province started a series of protests, which were a result of complex, long-running atmosphere that was full of sufferings from rights violations, economic struggles and lack of democracy. The protests soon after spread to every part of the country, eventually sparked a civil war. Since then, hundreds of thousands of civilians died while millions have been displaced. A total of 5.648.002 people had to flee the country, mostly taking shelters in neighboring countries of Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan (UNHCR, 2019). Out of 5.6 million Syrian refugees, only a small number of them (approximately 360.000) live in camps while others continue their lives as urban refugees (UNHCR, 2019).

The majority of the refugees, however, took refuge in Turkey as the country hosts more than 3.5 million refugees which makes 64.1 percent of the overall number of Syrian refugees (UNHCR, 2019), as can be seen in Figure 1. 45.8 percent of Syrian refugees in Turkey are women (Ministry of Interior Directorate General for Migration Management, 2019) while 1.7 million of them are children under the age of 18 (UNICEF Turkey, 2019).

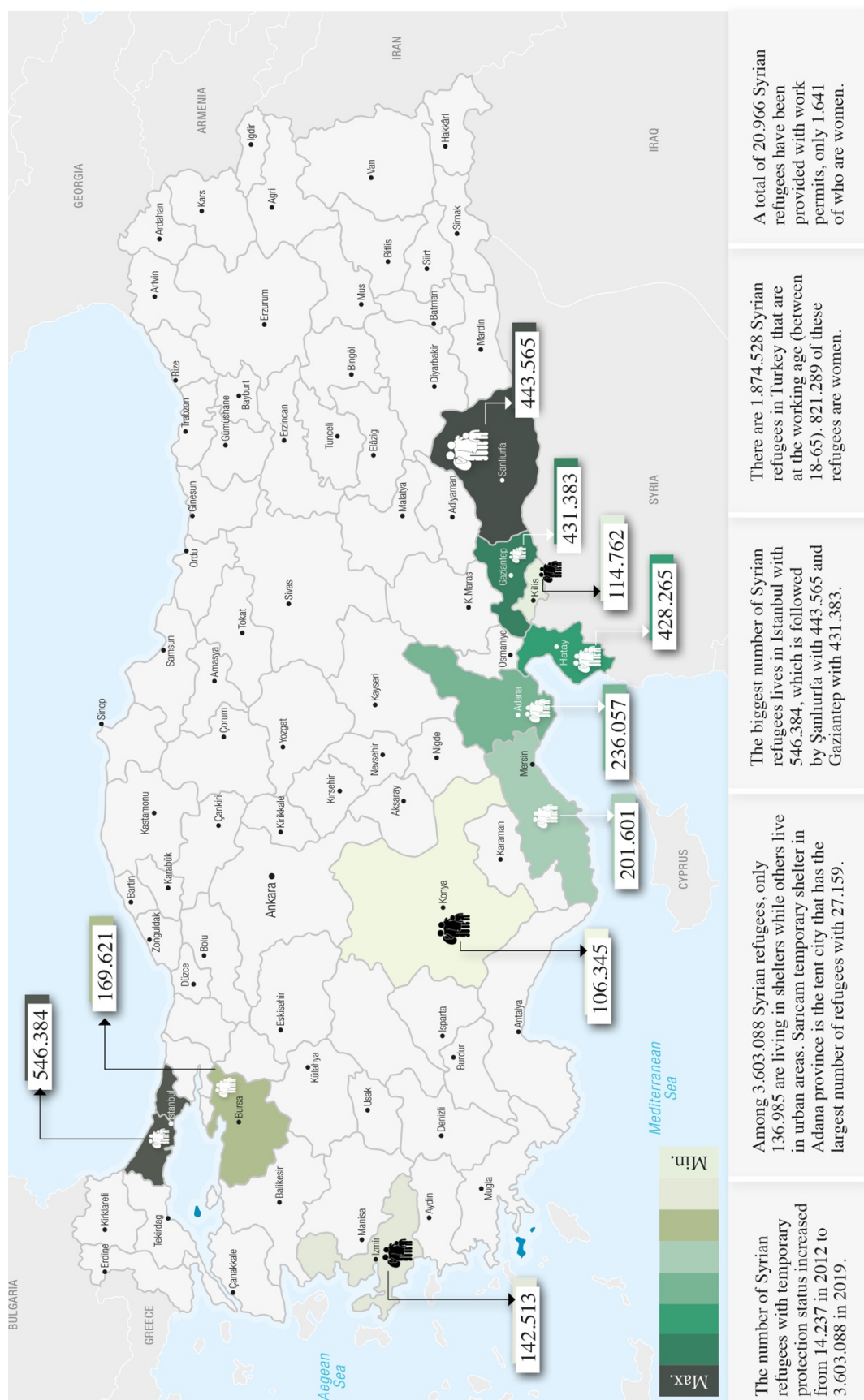


Figure 1. Distribution of Syrian refugees in Turkey

Source: (Ministry of Interior Directorate General for Migration Management, 2019)

The number of Syrian refugees with temporary protection status increased from 14,237 in 2012 to 3,603,088 in 2019.

Among 3,603,088 Syrian refugees, only 136,985 are living in shelters while others live in urban areas. Sarıcam temporary shelter in Adana province is the tent city that has the largest number of refugees with 27,159.

The biggest number of Syrian refugees lives in Istanbul with 546,384, which is followed by Şanlıurfa with 443,565 and Gaziantep with 431,383.

There are 1,874,528 Syrian refugees in Turkey that are at the working age (between 18-65). 821,289 of these refugees are women.

A total of 20,966 Syrian refugees have been provided with work permits, only 1,641 of who are women.

The number of refugees staying in camps is very low in Turkey as well since only 138.645 Syrian refugees are living in one of 13 camps that are located in the southern part of the country as of 2019 (Ministry of Interior Directorate General for Migration Management, 2019). Overwhelming majority of Syrian refugees live in cities in Turkey.

The majority is spread throughout the country as the urban refugees, as can be seen in Figure 2. Istanbul, as the commercial capital of Turkey, has the largest number of Syrian refugees and hosts 553.387 of them in total (Ministry of Interior Directorate General for Migration Management, 2019). Southern provinces that have borders to Syria such as Şanlıurfa, Hatay and Gaziantep, follow Istanbul.

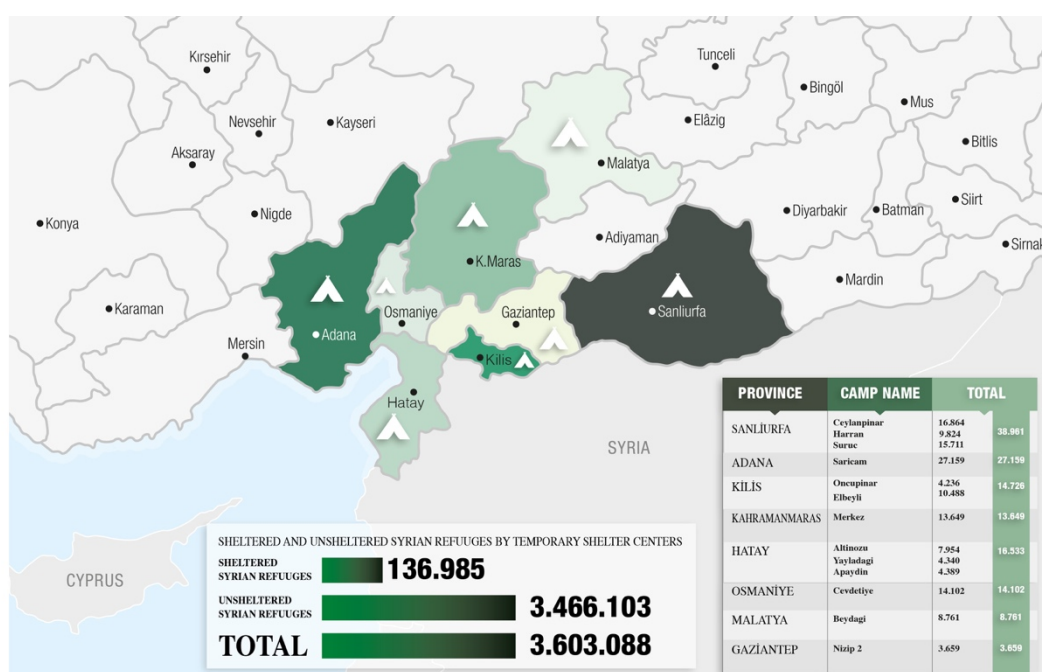


Figure 2. Syrian refugee camps

Source: (Ministry of Interior Directorate General for Migration Management, 2019)

So far, a total of 15.076 Syrian refugees have been resettled in a third country, mostly to Canada (Ministry of Interior Directorate General for Migration Management, 2019). A total of 20.936 Syrian refugees also left the country under the

scope of the European Union-Turkey Agreement and went mostly to Germany (Ministry of Interior Directorate General for Migration Management, 2019). Turkish government claims that more than 311.000 Syrian refugees, on the other hand, returned to their hometowns in northern Syria (Daily Sabah, 2019) where Turkish military have carried out two military operations named Operation Olive Branch and Operation Euphrates Shield in 2016 and 2018 respectively (Daily Sabah, 2019).

The Turkish government has presented itself as the major actor in the country in responding to the crisis and suggested that it shouldered the biggest financial burden and invested more than \$30 billion so far to support the Syrian refugees and provide services to them (UNICEF Turkey, 2019). Despite the fact that eight years passed after the Syria outbreak and the academic consensus over the fact that the majority of incoming population will stay in Turkey (Kirisci, 2008; Erdogan & Kaya, 2015; Eder & Ozkul, 2016; Asik, 2017), the Turkish government failed to come up with a well-thought integration policy (Simsek, 2018; Yilmaz, 2018). Humanitarian actors have been responding to the crisis since the very beginning and they are often regarded as successful in providing basic needs of the refugees (Mackreath & Sagnic, 2017). Nevertheless, the concerted efforts of the Turkish government and humanitarian actors still did not pave the way to a coherent response leading to successful integration (Cebi, 2018).

Syrian refugees in Turkey has been granted the temporary protection status since 2013 (Refugee Rights Turkey, 2015). According to the regulation of the Law on Foreigners and International Protection, the temporary protection status gives Syrians the right to receive education, social assistance and health services (Republic of Turkey, 2013). However, while some scholars (Rygiel et al., 2016) see the temporary protection status as a step towards acquisition of citizenship rights in

terms of social rights, Yilmaz (2018) argues that this status actually creates an ambiguity for the refugees' future in Turkey due to the fact the Council of Ministers has the power to lift the status. In fact, the legal status of a person has a major impact on his or her integration prospect (Da Lomba, 2010; Simsek, 2018). Besides, this status also enables the Turkish government to distinguish itself from responsibilities that would derive from granting the refugee status (Morvaridi, 2013), causing humanitarian actors to fulfill the gap that the government left (Yilmaz, 2018).

The right to work, however, was not recognized until 2016. With the 2016 legislation, refugees started to receive work permit. However, to receive the work permit one has to go through quite strict pre-conditions. In addition, the current way of granting work permit actually creates significant financial burdens for the employer (Emin, 2016; ORSAM, 2016), eventually providing refugees a restricted permission to integrate into the Turkish labor market. In order to receive the permission to work, refugees first need to have the temporary protection status and register their residency address in the country. According to the law, an employer can apply for the work permit on behalf of the refugees who have been living in Turkey for more than six months. Employers can hire maximum 10 percent of its employees among the refugees. The duration of the work permit is for a year, which should be renewed each year afterwards, with a limit.

This structure of granting work permits causes many refugees to fail entering into the formal labor market. As a matter of fact, only 20.966 work permits have been granted to Syrian refugees so far, only 1.642 of whom were women (General Directorate of International Labour Force, 2017). Exceptionally low numbers of work permits granted prove that obtaining work permits is a difficult task to achieve, which, eventually, leads millions of refugees to be part of the informal labor sector

and work under bad conditions with lower wages (MAZLUMDER, 2014; Emin, 2016; ORSAM, 2016; Baban et al., 2017).

The contemporary situation resembles one that Jacobsen (2005) described accordingly: governments tend to create obstacles for refugees to gain their own economic freedom, which actually prevents them from integrating into the society. Especially developing countries, like Turkey, are known to have restrictions on foreigners when it comes to participating in the economy in order to secure the national economy (ICESCR, 1979; Durable Solutions Platform & IGAM, 2019). This is an issue to be tackled since it poses an obstacle for refugees to integrate not only into the labor market but also into the Turkish society. Having economic freedom and power eases for refugees to connect with the host community (Simsek, 2018; Kirisci, 2008; Erdogan & Kaya, 2015; Eder & Ozkul, 2016; Asik, 2017) while also easing the process of having legal rights in the host community (Simsek, 2018).

Syrian refugees are not only participating in Turkey's economy as employees, but some also established their own businesses (Daily Sabah & AA, 2019). Although there are 6.500 officially registered companies that belong to Syrians (Hurriyet Daily News, 2018), the number is anticipated to exceed 10,000 once the non-registered ones are included (Durable Solutions Platform & IGAM, 2019). The companies' investments to Turkey have surpassed \$1.5 billion so far (Daily Sabah & AA, 2019).

The total number of Syrian refugee women in Turkey is 1.655.005 (Ministry of Interior Directorate General for Migration Management, 2019), 23.3 percent of whom are at the working age (UNHCR, 2019). However, only fifteen percent of Syrian refugee women work in jobs that enable them to earn their own money (UN Women & ASAM, 2018). This percentage, which is quite low compared to men's 73

percent (Durable Solutions Platform & IGAM, 2019). Despite the fact that women have the same legal rights as men, the gender gap in Syrian refugee employment shows that women are in fact in disadvantageous position with respect to employment (CTDC, 2015; Durable Solutions Platform & IGAM, 2019).

One of the reasons why Syrian refugee women are having trouble in access to employment is the fact that 70 percent of them lacks Turkish language skills (UN Women & ASAM, 2018; Durable Solutions Platform & IGAM, 2019). There are also gender-based challenges that Syrian refugee women have to face, such as limited access to education and heavy care responsibilities (UN Women & ASAM, 2018). Besides, there are traditional gender norms oblige Syrian women to undertake care responsibilities while encouraging men to be the breadwinner of the family (Khattab & Myrntinen, 2017; Durable Solutions Platform & IGAM, 2019). Despite these challenges, Syrian refugee women express intention to participate in the labor market (Durable Solutions Platform & IGAM, 2019).

One of the main factor that lead Syrian refugee women to work is the absence of a male breadwinner who will prove for the family. 22 percent of urban Syrian refugee families are actually headed by women (AFAD Communique, 2013; AFAD Communique, 2013). Even if not headed by a woman, refugee families often need two breadwinners, both man and woman, due to the economic difficulties (CTDC, 2015). Participating in the labor market, while enabling Syrian refugee women to be self-reliant, also often adds yet another dimension to their responsibilities since the household care still remains as a burden for them (Tibbs & Mubarak, 2015; CTDC, 2015). Even if they participate in the labor market, the challenges that the Syrian women face leads them to work in the informal sector (CTDC, 2015) just like their men counterparts, especially the ones who have lower education levels (Icduygu,



2016). The sectors that Syrian refugee women mostly participate are seasonal and agricultural sectors, which offer insecure and low-paid job opportunities (Durable Solutions Platform & IGAM, 2019).

The following section will handle the role of humanitarian actors in responding to humanitarian crisis in Turkey after the Syria outbreak, giving an historical background as well as a picture of the current situation.

## 2.2 The role of humanitarian actors in responding to humanitarian crisis in Turkey after the Syria outbreak

The humanitarian field in Turkey is a diverse one in the sense that both international and domestic humanitarian actors operate, which also have different approaches in responding to the humanitarian crisis (Sozer, 2017; Yilmaz, 2018). Although there are many humanitarian actors, from professional ones that have various experiences in the field to relatively newly-established ones, the faith-based humanitarian actors were historically the ones which come to forefront in terms of providing first aid to refugees (Erdogan & Kaya, 2015).

With the exception of the Turkish Red Crescent, Turkish humanitarian actors historically have limited experience in humanitarian assistance (Cetinoglu, 2019). The emergence of humanitarian actors in Turkey as significant actors in dealing with humanitarian crisis dates back to the 1960s when the UNHCR entered into the country and worked hand in hand with the Turkish government regarding the asylum seekers that were mainly coming from the Soviet Union at the time (Kirisci, 2008). In the following period, especially in the 1980s, the activities of the humanitarian actors started to be diversified as some of them started to focus on issues like human rights or democratization while others grasped ideologies such as the Westernization

or Islamization and act upon them (Keyman & Icduygu, 2003). In this era, Turkey received many refugees from regions like Middle East and Africa. However, due to security concerns, the country was not applying the non-refoulment principle back then, which was changed in the mid-1990s with the initiatives of UN. This UN-led new process had three main features which enabled refugees to stand against deportation through appeals, training Turkish bureaucrats on refugee matters and lastly, urging the Turkish government to cooperate with humanitarian actors on the issue (Kirisici, 2008). Besides, although Turkey is a part of 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, it puts a geographical limitation to the convention and states that it does not accept refugees outside of Europe.

Still, the last two decades have become the period when humanitarian actors gained major presence in both civil and political life as actors which provided urgent necessities in places where government officials are failing in reaching (Cebi, 2018). The 1999 Marmara earthquake became a turning point for the humanitarian actors in turkey as the involvement of the civil society became a must in order for crisis to be responded properly (Jalali, 2002), which increased the significance of humanitarian actors within the Turkish society in the long run (Mackreath & Sagnic, 2017). the next major increase in the number of humanitarian actors and the volume of their assistance activities took place following 2011, when Syrian civil war started, causing a massive refugee flow to Turkey.

The division of labor between the state and humanitarian actors is complex and has been subject to changes in Turkey (Yilmaz, 2018; Sozer, 2019). For instance, in the beginning of the crisis, while the government was more occupied with fulfilling the needs of the refugees within the camps, international and domestic humanitarian actors were already conducting assistance activities for the urban

refugees (Sozer, 2017; Yilmaz, 2018). This focus on camps on the part of the Turkish government has become one of the most prominent factors that necessitated the humanitarian actor activity in urban settings since they needed to fulfill the gap of government in the face of constantly increasing number of urban refugees (Research Centre on Asylum and Migration, 2013; Mackreath & Sagnic, 2017). While the Turkish government started to serve the urban refugees later, its programs could not suffice to serve the basic needs of refugees (Ilcan et al., 2018; Sunata & Tosun, 2018). In the end, the active presence of the humanitarian actors has become necessary in dealing with the humanitarian crisis in Turkey (Sunata & Tosun, 2018). Yet, it should also be mentioned that refugees still see humanitarian actors and their activities as a part of state system for the most part (Mackreath & Sagnic, 2017).

Humanitarian actors have three main functions in responding to humanitarian crisis within Turkish borders: meeting the refugees' basic needs, assisting them while integrating into the Turkish society (which includes legal assistance and protection as well) (Kilic, 2016) and lastly, helping Turkish society to acknowledge and embrace the refugees (Cebi, 2018). Main activity domains of humanitarian actors can be categorized as follows: basic needs programs including food and cash provision, enabling refugees to reach the health care services, assisting them over right to work by providing legal support, education and care services for Syrian children, developing projects for Syrian women's empowerment, lastly making the initiatives to enable the adaptation of refugees to the Turkish society (Turk, 2016) and offering protection programs targeting at the elimination of child labor, tackling gender-based violence including early marriages (Cetinoglu, 2019).

### 2.3 Conclusion

As the Turkish women are struggling in the country's labor market due to various reasons, the Syrian refugee women are expected to face a similar scenario as well.. First, the women's labor force participation level is quite low in Turkey, as mentioned in previous chapters. This is partly due to the fact that there are also lack of child-care support. For the employed women, informality is still a significant problem. All these taken into account, plus the deficiency in the integration policies for the Syrian refugees as a whole, humanitarian actors emerge as critical actors that are needed to fulfill an empty space and assist refugee women in their survival strategies in Turkey. Due to this necessity for the humanitarian actors, it is crucial to ask the question if and to what extent the humanitarian response in Turkey addresses gender inequalities in access to formal employment in Turkey.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE DETERMINANTS OF REFUGEE WOMEN'S LABOR MARKET PARTICIPATION: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### 3.1 Introduction

In comparison to a half a century ago, today, women are part of the labor force with much higher levels (Juhn & Potter, 2006; Bugra & Ozkan, 2012; Fernandez-Kelly, 2012), thanks to a substantial improvement in women's labor force participation especially following the World War 2 (Oppenheimer, 1973; Semyonov, 1980; Juhn & Potter, 2006), with the “feminization of employment,” (Standing, 1989).

The literature shows that especially during the 1960s and 1970s, there has been a rapid increase in female labor force participation rate in general, a “quiet revolution” (Esping-Andersen, 2009) mostly thanks to the high involvement of married women to the market (Juhn & Potter, 2006; DiCecio et al., 2008; Eckstein & Lifshitz, 2011). For instance, in the US, never-married women's labor force participation rate, rose from 74.6 percent in 1969 to 76.2 percent in 2004 while the percentage of married women's labor force participation rate rose from 43.7 percent to 70.8 percent in the same period (Juhn & Potter, 2006). However, although the women's labor force participation rate is on the rise compared to the past, when it comes to the refugee women, different dynamics come to the scene. In this chapter, first, the determinants of the labor force participation of women in general will be examined through an overview of the literature on the issue and then moved into the determinants of the refugee women's participation into the economy and the relevant literature written on this topic. In the following sections, factors and current trends in women's, women in Turkey's as well as the refugee women's labor force

participation will be discussed with an overview of the literature, only to be followed by the overviews of the role of humanitarian actors in refugee women's employment and the relation between the refugee women and the humanitarian actors. The chapter ends with an overall conclusion of all of these sections.

### 3.2 Factors and current trends in women's labor force participation

Over the years, several determinants of women's labor force participation were suggested by the literature. One of them is the changes in the time allocation of women that enables them to have enough space in their daily routine to join the labor force. Traditionally, women do not have enough time to participate in the labor force since they are involved with time-consuming unpaid works (Jonung & Persson, 1993). However, in the second half of the century, this situation was reversed thanks to a shift in the social organization, through which women, who traditionally spend most of their time at home, increase their share of labor market time while men increased their non-market time (Jonung & Persson, 1993; Gershuny, 2003). Now, more men and women approve the female employment and think that the two sexes are not designated for different work tasks which is why they should share paid and unpaid works accordingly (Cotter et al., 2008).

The maternity-related issues from pregnancy to childcare are other important factors that are considered by the literature as possible obstacles that may have prevented women from being active workers. The technological and scientific advances benefited women substantially, especially the ones regarding the health sector which provided women (as well as men) with sanitation and basic hygiene which remarkably reduced the ratio of deaths, increased the life expectancy and standards (Juhn & Potter, 2006; Magarey, 2014). For instance, the health conditions

for women during all processes of maternity are improved, except for some poor regions (Johnson, 2008; Shiffman, 2000). These improvements are one of the reasons behind the increase in female labor force participation rate, providing women with opportunities for paid work (Magarey, 2014). During the course of 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially between 1940 and 1965, the improvement in the maternal health conditions of women contributed heavily to married women's participation into the labor market, suggesting that as the maternal mortality decreases, women's labor force participation increases (Albanesi & Olivetti, 2009).

The easing of the housework, as another time-consuming unpaid activity, through technological developments have also claimed by some to be contributed to increasing women's participation rate to the labor force (Greenwood et al., 2005; Cavalcanti & Tavares, 2008). When women are putting in long hours at home, it is hard to entice them into the labor force unless gendered division of labor changes. Therefore, the evolution of the durable goods through the improved technological conditions are actually quite influential in female's labor force participation thanks to the declining burden of housework. That is to say, technological progress is one of the determinants that enable women to leave home and their responsibilities within the home to participate in employment (Greenwood et al., 2005; Greenwood, et al., 2016). Still, it is worth to mention that there are also other accounts (Cockburn, 1985; Wajcman, 1991; Layne et al., 2010) that claim the otherwise and argue that the technological developments do not necessarily ease the life for women but instead sometimes increase their double burden.

Gender roles that are assigned to each sex is another factor that determines a women's participation in the labor market. According to World Health Organization, gender is "the socially constructed characteristics of women and men – such as

norms, roles, and relationships of and between groups of women and men" (WHO, 2017). In many cultures, the women's role is assigned to the home and domestic work, causing a gender inequality that eventually refrains women from employment. There is a historical gender imbalance that puts women in a position where they are regarded as the ones who are more likely to get married and less likely to participate in the labor market (Grosjean & Khattar, 2014).

There is also discrimination against women in the labor market that favors men over them, creating another obstacle for women to enter into employment. The study of Goldin and Rouse (2000) shows that a blind procedure while hiring people is much beneficial for women since it increases the possibility of their being hired. According to their findings, the number of women musicians in New York symphony orchestra increased dramatically after a new policy of hiring is established in the 1970s by presenting a screen that prevents the hirer from seeing the applicant's gender identity. The study finds that thanks to the screen that is placed, women's probability of both advancing in the initial auditions and being elected at the final audition increases by 50 percent (Goldin & Rouse, 2000). Gender inequality also manifests itself in the gap between the volatility of female and male employment. The labor force participation rate for women is actually nearly three times more volatile than the rate for men (DiCecio et al., 2008). This means women are still much more likely to drop out of the labor force compared to men.

Having fewer or no children is another factor that is expected to enable women to have more time and thus participate in the labor force, a view that is backed by the statistics. For instance, as the fertility rate declines in a country, the labor force participation of women increases in accordance with that (Bloom et al., 2009). Having more children causes lowering in employment levels of women. In



fact, many women tend to leave the labor market after giving birth, some never return while others re-enter into the labor force later in life (Stier et al., 2001). Besides, countries with high fertility rates are less likely to recruit women to the labor force (Semyonov, 1980; Bloom et al., 2009). Still, in recent years, women tend to hold on to their jobs even after giving birth or shift into part-time employment to preserve their relationship to the labor market (Sundstorm, 1992; Spain & Bianchi, 1996).

In almost all labor markets, women with children work and earn less than women without children (Goldin, 1994). In their work, Lundborg et al. find that having children negatively affects women's participation. They suggest that when children are young, women have lower annual earnings because they decide to work fewer hours or quitting the market altogether. Lundborg et al. (2017) found that when the kids get older, however, there is still lower annual earnings for women because they get lower hourly earnings since they move to lower paid jobs that are closer to home.

Social policies are other factors that should be taken into account while considering the determinants of women's employment. According to Sainsbury (1994), social policies have not been very successful in shifting the share of domestic unpaid work that is why household works and particularly the childcare responsibilities still pose obstacles against women's labor participation rate. It has been also argued that in the states where welfare policies that encourage women to work are improved, women are more likely to participate in the labor force. One of the most important arguments regarding the issue comes from Esping-Andersen (1990), who suggests that female labor market participation varies across welfare regime types with relation to the size of the public sector and differences between the

structures of the labor market. Following this argument, he makes a prediction and states that social-democratic countries would have higher rates of female labor force participation where welfare policies such as childcare are common, compared to liberal and conservative countries, where the rates would be lowest (Esping-Andersen, 1990).

Family policies, from parental leaves to childcare subsidies, have an influence on female labor force participation. Jaumotte (2003) states, for instance, that if parental leaves are shorter than 20 weeks, they have a positive influence on women's labor force participation, while a longer leave may actually lead women to drop off from the market. In a similar fashion, while childcare subsidies increase female labor force participation, Jaumotte (2003) expresses that child benefits lead to a decrease. It can be seen in the comparison of OECD countries (OECD, 2017) that in countries with higher levels of public spending on social policies beneficial for the family such as child-related cash transfers to families with children, public spending on services for families with children, and financial support for families provided through the tax system, the labor force participation rates of women are higher. Some of the examples are Iceland, Sweden, Denmark, United Kingdom, and New Zealand, all of which has public spending with more than 2.5 percent as well as female labor force participation with more than 50 percent (OECD, 2017). Still, there are also some exceptions such as the US in which the female labor force participation rate is more than 60 percent despite the low ratio of public spending on family supports (OECD, 2017). Yet, according to Lefebvre and Merrigan (2008), the state-initiated childcare services are actually quite effective in increasing labor force participation of women as they showed in their study in Quebec, Canada, where the provincial government's

provision of childcare for the children that are at the age for kindergarten increased women's employment rates by 8 percent in just five years.

Another factor that shapes female labor force participation rate identified in the literature is the family structure and the role of families in welfare provision. Semyanov (1980) states that in the countries where the family system is not stable, where individuals are less likely to marry or to stay married, and where they cannot fall back on relatives for support, women are actually forced to join the labor market and to become self-sufficient. The southern European welfare states can be an example for the opposite situation where the female labor force participation rate is quite low, since it is quite difficult for women to combine their family responsibilities with the market work (Warnecke, 2008). In these countries, the welfare system relies on family connections rather than state procurement and the market work is earmarked for the male members of the society who are regarded as the breadwinners of the household, which puts the women into a disadvantaged position in the labor market (Warnecke, 2008; Salido & Moreno, 2014). Spain, however, has become an exception where a remarkable increase in female labor force participation rate was reported since the 1970s (Salido & Moreno, 2014).

The level of economic development is also listed as a determinant of women's labor force participation. According to the World Bank data, female labor force participation is highest in some of the poorest and richest countries in the world, while it is lowest in countries with incomes somewhere in between (The World Bank, 2018). That is to say, the labor force participation of women is generally U-shaped over the course of economic development (Cagatay & Ozler, 1995; Mammen & Paxson, 2000; Tam, 2011; Bugra & Ozkan, 2012). Originally mentioned by Sinha (1965), the U-shaped idea suggests that at the first stages of

economic development, since most works are in agriculture and the incomes are low, there is high demand for labor, urging women to participate as well. However, at the next stages of economic development, when the industrialization comes to the scene and non-agricultural formal sectors develop, women are left behind, especially the ones who are married and have children (Boserup, 1970). However, as the economy further develops, new white-collar job opportunities emerge for women, causing for them once again to participate heavily in the labor market (Sinha, 1965). Similarly, other scholars later also suggested that economic development, at first, decreases female labor force participation and yet as the country becomes more and more advanced in industrial development; the participation level eventually increases as the demand for the female workers also rises (Semyonov, 1980; Pampel et al., 1985). However, in middle-income countries, since men heavily dominate the labor force during the expansion of industrial work, changes in industrial structures do not have any positive effect on female labor force participation since there is no remarkable demand for them (Pampel et al., 1985).

Education is another factor that has a major influence on women's participation in employment. In most developing countries, as the education level increases, women's labor force participation also increases (Klasen, 2002; Blecker & Seguino, 2002; Esteve-Volart, 2004; England et al., 2012). To illustrate the significance of education on the matter, Nam gives the example of South Korea, where the economy was rapidly expanding and demanded a labor force with educational qualifications that women responded positively (Nam, 1991). According to Nam (1991), as the years of education received by women increase, their participation into labor force also increases and eventually women realizes that education is an investment for their capacity to earn. Education not only increases the

labor market participation of women but it also contributes to the productivity of women (Lincove, 2008).

### 3.3 Women's labor force participation in Turkey and its determinants

Women's labor force participation rate in Turkey rose from 23 percent in 2005 to 32 percent in 2017 (World Bank, 2018). Despite this increase, among the OECD member states, which has an average of 51 percent, Turkey has the lowest women's labor force participation rate (OECD, 2018). This shows that the feminization of the employment that has dominated the world in the post 1970s period went underway in Turkey (Bugra & Yakut-Cakar, 2010). The Turkish Statistical Institution (TUIK)'s data show that 28.9 percent of the women who are above the age of 15 were employed in 2018 (TUIK, 2019). However, for men, the percentage was 65.6 percent, more than twice of the women's. The statistics also show that women with higher education are most likely to be active in employment in Turkey with 72.7 percent (TUIK, 2019). The percentage of women in senior positions, however, remained at 17.3 percent. (TUIK, 2019).

The determinants of the female's participation in the labor force in Turkey, however, are not much different from the rest of the world. In the literature that focuses on female labor force participation in Turkey, education is one of the most important determinants of the employment activity of women (Korkmaz & Korkut, 2012; Bozkaya, 2013). As the education level of women increases, the labor force participation of both married and unmarried women increases in Turkey.

Because of the traditional gender roles that are assigned to women in Turkey, the women who have no or limited education are actually expected to get married at an early age and have children. Thus, women with more children get even more

respect and have a higher status within the society. However, this high status were granted at the expense of intervention of women's education (Korkmaz & Korkut, 2012).

Increase in the number of working people within the family also has a positive effect on the possibility of women to participate in the labor force (Kizilgol, 2012). However, if there are additional expenses that arise from woman's involvement in the labor force, such as the expenses for a kindergarten or a cleaner for the house, and if these expenses are outnumbering the salary of the woman, she is less likely to enter into the labor market (Dogrul, 2008).

The traditional gender roles and the conservative attitude of the society that urge women to stay at home and be responsible from the household while encouraging men to be the breadwinner (Bugra & Ozkan, 2012) is an important factor that influences female labor force participation (Korkmaz & Korkut, 2012; Yilmaz & Zogal, 2015). In addition, a study on formal and informal employment patterns among poor households shows that women's access to informal sector jobs also remains more limited than men's, suggesting that even when there is the necessity of woman to work as due to economic difficulties, the traditional gender norms are still effective (Bugra & Yakut-Cakar, 2010). This perception of the society towards women also affects the job opportunities for women by gendering the jobs themselves and thus restricting women to participate in only a restricted part of the labor market. Generally, women are considered to be fit for the works in the education, care or cleaning sectors that are regarded as the extension of the women's domestic responsibilities (Korkmaz & Korkut, 2012).

In Turkey, marriage is also a significant factor for the women's employment since the married women are less likely to enter into the labor force (Isin &

Sevuktekin, 2014). The group that shows the greatest increase in its percentage of entering into the labor force, however, are the women who got divorced, rather than the ones who have never married or whose husband died. According to Korkmaz and Korkut (2012), the reason behind this situation is the fact that married women have a lot more to take into consideration while determining whether she will be active in the labor force. For instance, she has to consider the number of children she has, the elderly whom she has to take care of or the working hours of her possible job. Besides, married women's labor force participation decreases as they get older while unmarried women's increases since they have to work to fulfill their needs even if they are old (Kizilgol, 2012). In fact, many women in Turkey, including the academics, are forced to delay forming a family if they prefer to prioritize their career since it is considered as an obstacle for the family formation, being forced to make a trade-off between work and family (Gurol, 2007; Bugra & Ozkan, 2012).

When it comes to the children as an obstacle for women's work, however, the age of the children shines out as a determinant rather than the number of children in the family. Women that have a child at an age interval of 0-5 are less likely to work since the responsibility of taking care of that child is traditionally mostly belong to the women (Korkmaz & Korkut, 2012; Kizilgol, 2012) and there are not enough public childcare services that are provided for the families (Akkan & Serim, 2018).

The difference between the rural and urban areas is also important when it comes to the importance of marital status in determining women's decision to work in Turkey. Women tend to work as unpaid family workers in rural areas in Turkey. However, having a child is not considered an obstacle for a woman's work in rural areas since she can carry her child alongside her. A woman in an urban area usually has to find a babysitter to participate in the labor market, which creates another

expanse for the family budget (Korkmaz & Korkut, 2012; Bozkaya, 2013; Yilmaz & Zogal, 2015).

The migration from rural to urban areas is also considered influential in women's labor force participation. Turkey has experienced a significant internal migration flow since the 1950s (Ozdemir, 2003), mostly from rural to urban areas. Because of this migration flow, the women who worked as unpaid family workers in the rural areas have turned into the potential unqualified workers in urban areas. Therefore, majority of these women quitted the labor force as a whole and became housewives (Korkmaz & Korkut, 2012; Bozkaya, 2013; Yilmaz & Zogal, 2015).

Another important factor that has an impact on female labor force participation is the gender pay gap in the Turkish labor market. According to the literature, if the principle of equal pay for equal work can be put into practice, women would be encouraged to enter into the labor market and would stay longer in the labor force (Korkmaz & Korkut, 2012; Bozkaya, 2013; Yilmaz & Zogal, 2015).

There is also the fact that upper middle class women using migrant and lower middle class women in care work (Toksoz & Ulutas, 2013). In Turkey, just like various similar southern Europe countries, the care work is regarded as the responsibility of the family, which leads to a gap in public services of the state that covers this area (Toksoz & Ulutas, 2013). Yet, as women, who were traditionally the ones that were taking care of the care work, start to be a part of the labor market, a "care gap" emerges (Kaska, 2006), only to be fulfilled by the women coming from the lower middle class (Kofman, 2000) or migrant women (Toksoz & Ulutas, 2013).

It should also be mentioned that women is overrepresented in the informal employment in Turkey. In 2012, 27.1 percent of the working women in Turkey were employed in the informal sector while 24.5 percent of overall working population



were in the informal labor market (Baslevent & Acar, 2015). The interesting thing is that, although the informality rate between women and men are similar for the most part, while men's informality rate shows decline in time, women's remain more or less the same (Baslevent & Acar, 2015).

Syrian refugee women arrived in the abovementioned context which is identified by a low-level of women's labor force participation, insufficient public support for care provision and high level of informality for women's labor. These characteristics of the Turkish labor market would have shaped the employment prospects of Syrian refugee women and the chances of success for the livelihood activities of humanitarian actors.

### 3.4 Factors and current trends in refugee women's labor force participation

According to Castles, et al. (2002), the literature did not reach a consensus over a single definition of integration. Still, the term can be referred to as the process of incorporating a particular group into a society or a group as an equal being.

As far as refugee integration is concerned, the labor market integration is considered as a necessity to provide long-term sustainable integration (Bloch, 2002; Phillimore & Goodson, 2006; Vroome & Van Tubergen, 2010; Phillimore & Cheung, 2014), since work gives independence to the refugees in host countries and thus facilitates them to adjust to life in the host country (Bloch, 2004; Sansonetti, 2016). Together with education, housing, and health, employment is considered as one of the crucial elements of refugee's integration process (Fyvie et al., 2003; Ager & Strang, 2004). The refugees who consider themselves as successfully integrated into the host society are found to be often accomplished in all of these domains integration (Pittaway, 2009). According to Bloch, employed refugees integrate into

the host society more easily than the ones who do not work (Bloch, 2002) and not being able to work is the single most effective barrier that poses a challenge to the successful integration of the refugees (Phillimore & Goodson, 2006).

In many countries today, refugees have the lowest rate of employment among the other migrant groups (Ott, 2013; Tanay & Peschner, 2017). Upon the initial arrival to the host countries, refugees generally start at a lower employment level and compared to the labor migrants, their integration into the labor market is often more difficult (Danso, 2002) and takes more time (Bevelander, 2016). In searching for reasons behind this situation, the academic research generally focuses on two elements (Vroome & Van Tubergen, 2010): the lack of skill of refugees (Friedberg, 2000; Chiswick & Miller, 2001) and the lack of social ties within the host communities that would provide job opportunities through social networks (Portes, 2000; Van Tubergen, 2006; Kanas & Van Tubergen, 2009).

Tanay and Peschner's study shows that as the longevity of the staying period at a country increases, the unemployment rate of the refugees declines (Tanay & Peschner, 2017). The reason behind this might be the fact that as the refugees continue to stay in a country and struggle to integrate into a society, they develop work skills and social networks with the host community that might benefit them in entering into the country's labor market (Mihalcioiu, 2016).

Studies also show that immigrant or refugee women are less likely to participate in the labor force in comparison to the local women, immigrant or refugee men and of course the local men (Tastsoglu, 2005; Tanay & Peschner, 2017). The difference between the refugee women and their male counterparts in participating into the labor market shows that the integration is actually a gendered process (Hansen, 2004; Tastsoglu, 2005; Pavlish, 2007; Pittaway, 2009). Therefore, taking

gender into consideration is a must, if one desires to come up with measures and policies that will enable refugee women to integrate into society successfully (Sansone, 2016). Fewer job opportunities, usually restricted to low-paid and insecure sectors such as domestic service sectors, are available for refugee women (Sansone, 2016). On the other hand, others argue that having to stay in a new country and necessity for economic integration may actually create a potential for new and empowering opportunities for refugee women, despite their initial disadvantaged position (Goodson & Phillimore, 2008; McPherson, 2010).

Racism and prejudices of the host country's employers towards the refugees is another factor that has significant negative impact on refugee integration (Danson, 2002; Røe, 2011; Sienkiewicz, 2013; Smit, 2015). In his study on Ethiopian and Somali refugees living in Canada, Danson (2002) finds that more than half of the refugees report perceived discrimination based on race, ethnicity, gender or religion, as the biggest obstacle they face in integrating into the country. This discriminative attitude towards refugees is often fueled by the media outlets of the host country that make reports propagating xenophobic sentiments, causing refugees to feel unwanted and eventually leading to a dysfunctional integration (Danson, 2002).

Language barrier comes up as another major challenge for refugees in their integration (Chhangani, 1995; Van Tubergen, 2006; Sienkiewicz, 2013; Smit, 2015). The studies suggest that knowing the language of the host country makes it easier for refugees to integrate into society and creates the feeling of "belonging" (Danson, 2002; Smit, 2015). When refugees do not speak the language of the host community, they may feel isolated and gradually stop trying to integrate (Kunz, 1981). According to Kunz (1981), language is also one of the factors that determines whether the refugees and host society are culturally compatible with each other and state that

similar cultures have similar languages, it is easier for refugees who share similar cultures to integrate. The host community also becomes more welcoming towards the refugees who can speak their language, which makes the language a key factor that actually makes it easier to accomplish other domains of integration as well, including employment (Smit, 2015). More women refugees face language as a barrier than men (Danso, 2002). However, refugees often gain language skills quickly as their host countries demand (Phillimore & Cheung, 2014).

The country of origin is also another important determinant in the integration to the labor market for refugees in general and female refugees in particular (Lundbor, 2013). Refugees from the countries that already have low female labor force participation are expected to have lower rates of employment in host countries as well (Barslund, et al., 2017). Besides, coming from a country that has close cultural connections with the host community eases the integration (Castles, 1998) including integration into the labor market.

As mentioned above, the lack of skills is listed as one of the main reasons behind refugees' failure in labor market integration (Friedberg, 2000; Chiswick & Miller, 2001). However, some studies also show that although a refugee woman is skilled in her country of origin, in the host country, she may still fail to participate in the upper segments of the labor market and even fail to enter into the labor market at all (Danso, 2002; Riano, Y. & Baghdadi, N., 2007; Røe, 2011). On this point, Røe (2011) states that this is the result of the host community's perception about refugees as people who are not good enough for their society.

Refugees' lack of experience in host country's labor market is also considered as one of the main reasons behind poor labor market integration outcomes (Danso, 2002) since this makes them somewhat invisible in the labor market

(Mihalcioiu, 2016). Thus, prior work experience in the host country is essential for refugees to have successful labor market integration (Vroome & Van Tubergen, 2010).

Besides, the refugees who had relatively high-status in their country of origin are more likely to establish professionally based businesses compared to others (Gold, 2014). According to Kofman and Raghuram's study on immigrant women's employment in the health care sector, migrants' integration into the skill demanding labor markets changes the perception of the migrants in the eyes of the locals of the host country positively (Kofman & Raghuram, 2006). According to Mihalcioiu (2016), however, it is still quite hard for women refugees to be employed as skilled labors, even in the sectors that women, in particular, are preferred, such as social services.

When the refugee women overcome the obstacles that prevent them from entering into the labor force, the study shows that they use what they earn to enhance their autonomy in the household (Pessar, 1995). Although the labor force participation rate of refugee women is generally quite low, those who manage to enter are actually quite successful in their survival within the market (Lundbor, 2013). Actually, once they are settled in, the refugee women not only integrate into labor market and society but also become active and try to make conditions better for the future refugees that will come to the host country (Hunt, 2008).

Having social bonds in the host country is known to be a factor that eases the integration period, especially when it comes to finding jobs (Putnam, 2000). The same rule applies for refugee women as well, since when there is an ethnic community of their own in the host country, the refugee women's chances to be integrated into the labor market increases thanks to the ethnic and cultural social

networks (Portes, 2000; Van Tubergen, 2006; Pittaway, 2009; Vroome & Van Tubergen, 2010). Making use of these social bonds, refugee women tend to participate in the ethnic economy through self-employment, which makes them depend even more on these social bonds in order to improve their economic opportunities (Gold, 2014). Similar to having a social network through an ethnic community, having personal contacts within the host community is another significant determinant that facilitates refugee women's employment. In some studies, it is even considered to be the most effective factor that increases the probability of finding employment and way to reach well-paid positions (Yu et al., 2012).

The marital status is also quite influential in shaping refugee women's prospects of labor market integration. Whether a woman migrated alone or is accompanied by her husband also affects the woman's labor market integration in the post-migration period. Women who migrate independently are actually more likely to work in the host community, while the married ones are less likely to be employed (Toma, 2016). Besides, refugee women with children, especially with children under the age of six, are less likely to participate in the labor market (Yu et al., 2012). In addition to marital status and having children or not, the family context of migration actually has a major influence on the occupational status of the refugee women, regardless of their skills (Toma, 2016). Actually, different forms of family migration are associated with different levels of employment (Toma, 2016).

### 3.5 The role of humanitarian actors in refugees' employment

Integration policies of host governments as well as programs of humanitarian organizations have the ability to shape how and to what extent abovementioned

determinants of the refugee women's employment will hamper a particular group of refugee women's chances of employment. Due to the lack of integration policies of the Turkish government in the case of Syrian refugees, here I will focus specifically on the role of humanitarian actors in facilitating the employment integration of refugee women.

Humanitarian actors have always been one of the main actors that have taken an active role in responding to humanitarian crises, aiming to assist survival of refugees in the host countries (Zetter, R., 1996). However, traditionally, this humanitarian response of humanitarian actors towards refugees have been conducted in a style from top to bottom, meaning that it was regarded as an act of helping the poor (Wallace, 1993). This approach has been criticized in the literature as it fails to offer sustainable solutions and serve long term integration. As a result, a reassessment of the humanitarian responses started to take place (Culberson et al., 2016).

At the center of this reassessment of process, there was the change within the settlement preferences of the refugees, which shifted the focus of relief actions from camps to urban areas (Culberson et al., 2016). The UNHCR recognized this shift in 2009 and released a guidance on integrating refugees to the urban areas (UNHCR, 2009), while the humanitarian assistance movement towards refugees were mostly targeting the camps. Yet, the fact that the high majority of refugees in the world were no longer living in camps (Brown et al., 2017) finally changed the perspective of humanitarian agencies, motivating the UNHCR to continue its releases of guidance for refugees in urban places (UNHCR, 2011) as can also be seen in Figure 1. Following this paradigm shift in the humanitarian sector, it was discovered that

working with urban refugees was not something that the humanitarian organizations had expertise on (Morand et al., 2012).

Some studies argued that refugees who live in urban areas actually do not need the assistance of the humanitarian actors as much as those residing in the camps (Zetter & Deikun, 2010; UNHCR, 2011; Morand et al., 2012; Culberson et al., 2016). The reason why such a conclusion was reached was the assumption that there are many alternative actors to humanitarian actors in urban areas that are in a better place to fulfill the needs of the refugees such as the public authorities, municipalities and community groups (Culberson et al., 2016). Thus, when they settle in the urban areas, refugees become able to benefit from the services that are provided to the locals, they can go to schools and hospitals and find jobs (Macchiavello 2004; Crisp et al. 2012). Thanks to the availability of services in urban settings, refugees are expected to become self-reliant and more easily integrate into the society (UNHCR, 2009; Zetter & Deikun, 2010; UNHCR, 2011; Morand et al., 2012). Whereas in the camps, the humanitarian actors are the main actors providing the basic services to the refugees, which makes their presence a must for the refugees and their survival (Jacobsen, 2006; Kobia & Cranfield, 2009; Landau & Amit, 2014) and makes it harder for refugees to be self-reliant and integrate into the host society.

For the other scholars, however, these assumptions actually overlook the many challenges that the urban refugees face and thus reach the misleading conclusion of degrading the importance of humanitarian actors in the lives of urban refugees. Some of the challenges that the urban refugees face are the governmental restrictions over employment, limited and overcrowded shelters and discrimination (Landau, 2008; Buscher 2013; Crisp 2014; Brandt 2017). In fact, in face of these challenges, the humanitarian response towards the urban refugees was found



insufficient (Brown et al., 2017; Brandt & Earle, 2018). To the point that, it is harder for urban refugees to receive humanitarian assistance even if the humanitarian actors are willing to provide, because they are more dispersed (UNHCR, 2012). Because of this, many urban refugees are not able to receive vocational training, which limits their livelihood opportunities (Zetter & Ruaudel, 2016). In addition, many urban refugees actually settle in the cities after staying at camps for a time, which makes it harder to make a clear-cut distinction between the two groups in terms of their needs and challenges (Buscher, 2011).

Taking urban refugees as the new target group, the humanitarian actors' main concern has become integrating refugees into the host communities. With such purpose, the developmental approaches are replacing the traditional, relief-oriented ones (Zetter, 1996), meaning that the humanitarian actors are linking their responses to the host-country's development plans to integrate the refugees into the economy of the host country in the medium term (Culberson et al. 2016). By this way, the long-term plans for urban refugees replaced the large-scale projects of repatriation that were usually designed for refugees living in camps (Omata, 2012). That is to say, a bridge has been formed between the humanitarian and the development approaches (Ramalingam & Knox Clark, 2012), the former one is known for its emphasis on emergency actions while the latter one is designed for the long-term economic and human development plans (Buchanan & Maxwell, 1994). The UN's Refugee Response and Resilience Plan (3RP) (3RP, 2015) that was launched back in 2015 for the Syrian refugees is one of the first examples of such combination of humanitarian and developmental approaches.

These two approaches, humanitarian and development, operate with different timeframes, which causes a major difference of their handling the situations. While

the humanitarian approach is designed to fulfill urgent short-term needs, the developmental approach prioritizes investments for long-term sustainability (Culberson et al., 2016). However, although these two approaches seem to be placed at the different ends of the spectrum, in reality, since many humanitarian crises are lasting for long and some features of the development approach such as building infrastructure need immediate action, they complete each other (Culberson et al., 2016). The emphasis is especially on the long-term solutions to the humanitarian crisis since the majority of refugees are protracted refugees that tend to last more than 20 years (Milner & Loescher, 2011) without any certain path or sustainable solution (Crisp 2014; Crawford et al. 2015).

At the center of this new approach that seeks durable solutions lies the concept of self-reliance that refers to refugees taking care of themselves by involved in economic activities (Omata 2012, Global Humanitarian Assistance 2015). Yet, the key to achieve self-reliance is to have the legal right to work (Crisp et al. 2012), which has much influence on refugees' well-being as lacking the access to healthcare or education, which are listed as the fundamental human rights of refugees in 1951 Refugee Convention (Brown et al., 2018). According to Jacobsen (2014), as long as they are allowed to work legally, refugees would have the ability to recover what they have lost through displacement and would be able to fulfill their basic needs (Jacobsen et al., 2014).

However, even if they have the legal work permit, refugees may still need humanitarian actor assistance, especially when it comes to vocational training and income generating projects (Brown et al., 2018). Addressing this need, livelihood activities became one of the main priorities of the humanitarian actors, as the UNHCR also determined livelihoods as one of seven global strategic priorities in

2011 (Azorbo, 2011). Humanitarian movement now precedes the de facto integration of the refugees while finding short-term action plans inappropriate (Crisp 2004; Meyer 2006). The supporters of this humanitarian approach also underline that there is the need to take a broader socio-economic context into consideration while providing livelihood activities (Metcalf-Hough, 2015) and enhance the economic opportunities that refugees have found themselves via more direct livelihood interventions (Crawford et al., 2015). Yet, still, such intervention is weakly implemented on the ground (Azorbo, 2011) as most humanitarian actor activities focus on individual needs of refugees rather than addressing the wider economic atmosphere (Brandt & Earle, 2018).

A number of challenges to the success of livelihood activities were identified in the literature. Vocational training programs for refugees may fail to enhance their employment level, especially when they are not provided in accordance with the jobs that are available for the refugees (Yu et al., 2012). Similarly, cash transfers for the refugees may also create a reverse effect by decreasing the employment level of refugees (Yu et al., 2012). Besides, employment opportunities in the public sector are found as one of the most effective ways for refugees to find a job (Yu et al., 2012), as they enable refugees to form social links with state officials (Putnam, 2000).

### 3.6 Refugee women and humanitarian actors

Humanitarian actors tend sometimes fail to reach women refugees, while in reality women have the need to access the humanitarian actor services from food supply to income-generating activities at least as much as men (Wallace, 1993). Many refugee women have the responsibility to provide for their families. Some of them have become the head of their households due to the absence of their husbands, who tend

to be in military, seeking for employment in other countries or were killed during the conflict or disaster (Schultz, 1994). While refugees in general are already being excluded from the decision making process of the humanitarian actors, the refugee women are constituting some of the most disadvantaged groups within the refugee community as they are almost completely eliminated from the policy planning process (Wallace, 1993). That is to say, their special condition and needs are still waiting to be fully understood by the humanitarian community (Schultz, 1994), which can only be achieved through adopting gender-sensitive policies and placing special interest to listening to refugee women while increasing their access to the basic needs (Wallace, 1993).

These requirements have been taken into consideration by the humanitarian actors in the late 1980s and the early 1990s (Forbes Martin & Copeland, 1988) as the UNHCR in 1990 (UNHCR, 1990) released a guideline for working with the refugee women that can be seen in Figure 3, stressing their rights and needs. According to the aforementioned approach that brings together developmental and humanitarian approaches, the programs of humanitarian actors for the refugee women should be designed in a way that encourage self-reliance. However, in order to achieve that, these programs should take the cultural background of the refugee women into the account as well as their legal rights. For instance, if the refugee women are coming from a country where traditionally it is not welcomed for a woman to work, than the income-generating activities of the humanitarian actors can start from occupations that are considered 'appropriate for women' in their previous cultural contexts (Schultz, 1994). For example, many refugee women tend to work in the health care

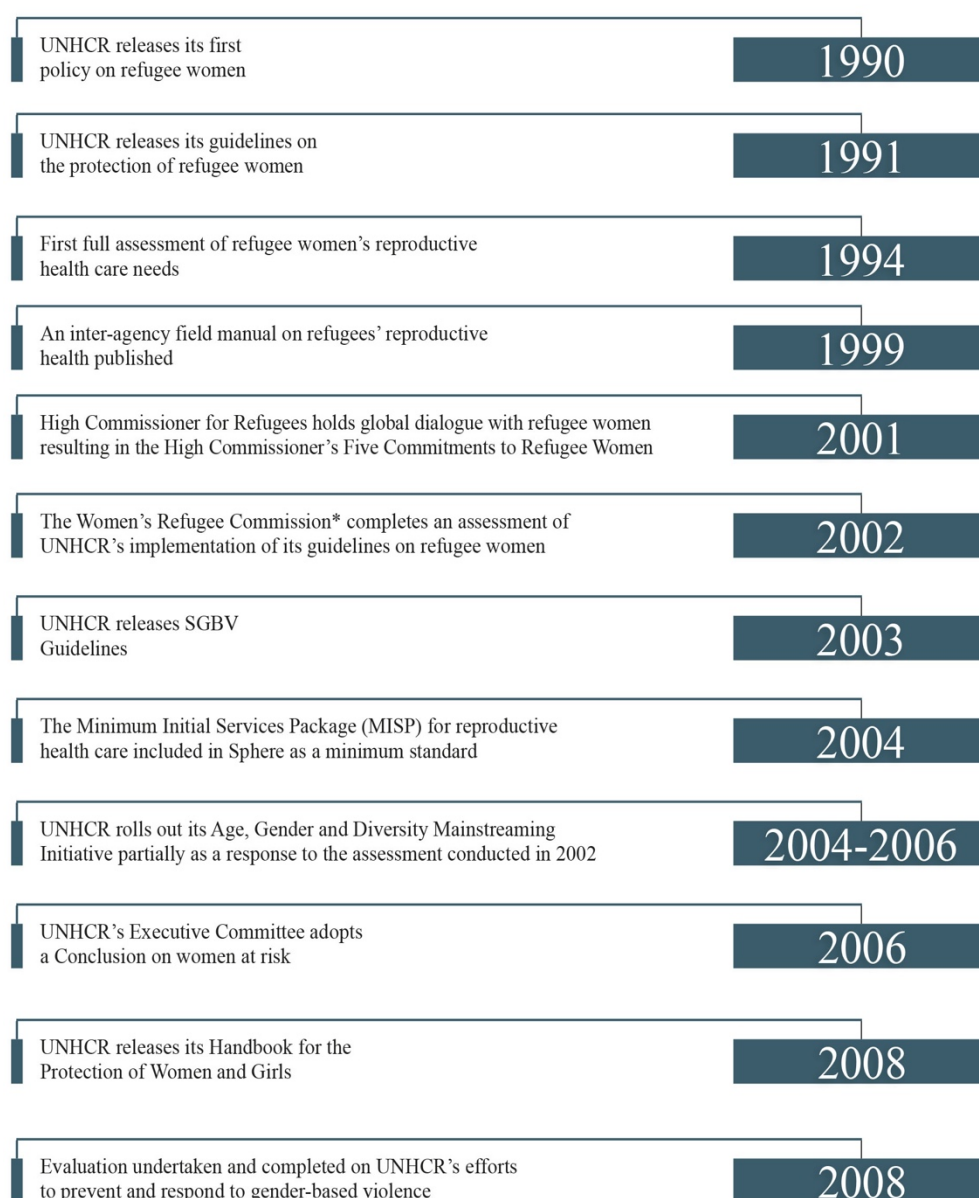


Figure 3. Key benchmarks in Policy and Protection Developments for Refugee Women

Source: (Buscher, 2010)

sector since traditionally women are regarded as more suitable to be involved with the health-related issues (Schultz, 1994). Although it is costly to invest in refugee women in such a way, its benefits exceed these setbacks as self-reliance enables refugee women to provide their own needs, which, in the end, eases the responsibilities of humanitarian actors over the refugee women (Schultz, 1994).

In accordance with the issue, UN expresses that the aim is to reach the gender equality and the way to achieve is to have gender mainstreaming in the humanitarian field (Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, 2002). It is defined as the process of “assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels” (Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, 2002). Gender mainstreaming tries to ensure that the opportunities for closing the gender gap are being provided and the policies of the humanitarian actors are being determined by taking the gender inequalities into consideration (IASC Working Group, 2018). If a humanitarian action to employ gender mainstreaming approach, it should enable the participants, both men and women, to have self-reliance (IASC Working Group, 2018). In line with Sphere project, which was founded as a global movement back in 1997 to improve the humanitarian field’s standards of quality, gender should receive particular attention in order to properly achieve four main principles of a humanitarian work that are humanity, impartiality, independence and neutrality (Sphere Project, 2014). Yet, it should also be mentioned that having gender mainstreaming in the statistics and data of the humanitarian actors is also quite significant since it implies that the policies of them are being formed by taking the gender mainstreaming into the consideration (Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, 2002). All data collection and analysis process should be carried out in a way to incorporate gender-based factors. One of the main ways to achieve this aim is to have a disaggregation of data by sex, which shows that the humanitarian actor has been paying attention to the gender and gender-related issues (Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, 2002).

For instance, in Sweden, gender mainstreaming is regarded as the main perspective in humanitarian assistance. The country sees itself obliged to address gender equality and take the issue as one of its main responsibilities (Mazurna, D.; Maxwell, D., 2016). For instance, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), which is a Swedish government's agency that has an aim to prevent poverty around the globe, takes the gender mainstreaming at its core and determines three steps to achieve it (SIDA, 2015). First, one needs to make a gender analysis and see the state of the gender inequality in a specific case, then, it should identify how to achieve the expected results. Lastly, one should implement three of the following main approaches, which are integration of gender equality, targeting specific groups and having dialogue with partners (SIDA, 2015). The agency sees the gender mainstreaming as the responsibility of all and an international approach that needs expertise (SIDA, 2015).

According to Olivius (2016), however, although the humanitarian field is filled with texts and guidelines on how to treat refugee women and encourage gender mainstreaming within their policies, the humanitarian actors are not very successful in putting these rhetoric to practice for the most part, mostly because of the lack of a consensus over what constitutes being gender sensitive in the humanitarian field (Olivius, 2016).

Olivius (2016) defines three approaches to explain diversity of humanitarian actor approaches to gender in humanitarian field: the Basic Needs Approach, the Instrumentalist Approach and the Modernization Approach (Olivius, 2016). The basic needs approach sees women as a vulnerable group and aims to provide women with their basic needs. This approach pays regard to gender mainstreaming through determining beneficiary quotes, by serving equal number of men and women while

also making sure that women have the equal opportunity to reach the services (Olivius, 2016). The instrumentalist approach, on the other hand, sees women as critical humanitarian partners and considers that a crisis has different effects on men and women and that is why the responses to men and women should be different. According to this approach, women are crucial actors who enable the humanitarian activity to reach success, especially in areas such as hygiene and water (Olivius, 2016). Lastly, the modernization approach suggests that gender is a result of structural relations of power that is traditionally embedded within the societies and sees gender inequality as a result of underdevelopment (Olivius, 2016).

### 3.7 Conclusion

Refugee women, due to their refugee status, encounter obstacles in their participation into the labor force in the host country that are similar to refugee men. For example, discrimination is one factor that has a negative effect on refugee women's labor market integration. Refugees' country of origin also plays a significant role in their prospects of labor market integration. In addition, sharing the same language is one of the most influential factors that fastens and eases the integration process for refugee women. Even if one does not speak the language of the host country, as the longevity of the staying period in that country increases the possibility of learning the language, which also increases the chances of integrating into the labor market as well. The time spent in the host country is also effective in improving refugee women's labor market skills, which is significant because the lack of skill often emerges as a critical reason behind failing of refugee women in their labor market participation. Having social bonds is also an essential factor that makes it all easier for refugees in general, and refugee women in particular in overcoming the



difficulties of integrating into the labor market. The impact of vocational training programs on refugee employment is mixed.

The determinants of female refugees' labor force participation, however, are more complex than men's due to the role of gender in shaping women's and men's experiences differently in the post-migration period (Gonzalez-Ferrer, 2011). The literature shows that for a refugee woman who desires to take part in the host country's labor market; there are multiple challenges to be overcome. These challenges include gender inequalities in accessing job opportunities that are available within the labor market. Besides, womanhood also bears a collection of socially constructed responsibilities, mostly in the form of unpaid domestic and care work that create another challenge for refugee women to overcome.

Most refugees today live in urban settings, which also altered the humanitarian response framework. As urban refugees are more dispersed in the urban areas, humanitarian organizations face difficulties in reaching them (UNHCR, 2012). Besides, fulfilling the basic needs is no longer perceived enough in the mainstream humanitarian response framework (Meyer, 2006). The new humanitarian response framework brings together humanitarian and development objectives and stresses the importance of long-term integration of refugees into host communities and empowerment of refugees to become self-reliant in the medium term. Thus, the humanitarian organizations have to come up with projects and activities that would facilitate a long-term development plan for the refugees, particularly the refugee women. As the projects and activities that are targeting refugees, including the woman refugees, started to spread among the humanitarian actors, gender sensitive approaches have become mainstream in the Humanitarian response frameworks. However, despite the presence of gender sensitivity within the rhetoric of these

approaches, the implementation is still yet to be sufficient till this way. The approaches of the humanitarian actors also differentiated from each other in terms of their application of the gender mainstreaming. Olivius (2016) creates three categories to define these differences. according to her categorization, the humanitarian actors that grasp the Basic Needs Approach are mainly concerned with providing refugee women with their basic needs while the Instrumentalist Approach acknowledges that a crisis cause different effects on men and women and thus they should be responded in accordance with that. The Modernization Approach, on the other hand, dives deeper into the issue and sees gender inequality as a socially embedded problem that is the result of lack of development in a society.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE ANALYSIS OF HUMANITARIAN ACTORS' PROGRAMS FOR SYRIAN REFUGEES IN TURKEY FROM THE GENDER EQUALITY PERSPECTIVE

#### 4.1 Introduction

Humanitarian organizations' disregard of refugee women was heavily criticized in the 1990s (Amnesty International USA, 1991; Wallace, 1993). Despite the existence of international humanitarian guidelines on how to target the refugee women and show special interest to their specific conditions and needs, it was found that these guidelines do not go beyond the words and have no place in real actions of the humanitarian actors (Amnesty International USA, 1991).

Through a documentary analysis, this thesis examines how and to what extent humanitarian actors in Turkey mainstreamed or incorporated gender into their activities that support the refugees', especially woman refugees', in their participation into the Turkish labor market including income generating activities such as vocational training courses as well as providing employment consultancy services to the refugees.

Almost three decades later after the gender-based criticisms against humanitarian actors, gender-blindness of humanitarian response is still observed as a problem in the humanitarian response to Syria crisis within Turkish borders since most services of the organizations are gender-blind (Durable Solutions Platform & IGAM, 2019). According to UN Women and ASAM (UN Women & ASAM, 2018), so far, only seven percent of women has benefited from the vocational training of the humanitarian actors and among this seven percent, most women received training in the field of hairdressing, followed by needlework (UN Women & ASAM, 2018)

which largely failed to provide opportunities for refugee women to have formal employment. Nevertheless, given the heterogeneity of humanitarian actors in Turkey, the abovementioned overall analysis might have missed the diverse approaches of these actors to refugee women's employment.

Based on this assumption, the chapter analyzes how five prominent humanitarian actors in Turkey serving Syrian refugees particularly through their community centers, which can be seen on Figure 4, approach refugee women's employment. The chapter relies on documentary analysis of the following data sources: annual reports of humanitarian actors, websites and projects documents published between 2016 and 2018. The year 2016 was selected as the starting point for this research, as it was the year when refugee's right to work was formally recognized in Turkey.

In this chapter, I'm analyzing the documents of five prominent humanitarian actors in Turkey: Yuva Association, Support to Life Association, Turkish Red Crescent, Association for Solidarity with Asylum-Seekers and Migrants (ASAM) and UN Agencies. Each of these humanitarian actors have their own separate sections and each section is based on these actors' livelihood response to Syrian woman refugees. By analyzing the documents and websites of each of these actors in the section, the chapter aims to give an overall understanding of whether or not they have gender mainstreaming in their responses or are they gender blind instead. The sections also give information on the background of the each humanitarian actors, from their foundation dates to how many workers do they allocate to the livelihood projects. Although the first four section are focusing on individual humanitarian actors, the fifth one is composed of all the UN Agencies, including UNDP, UNHCR, IOM and ILO since most of their projects are interrelated with each other.

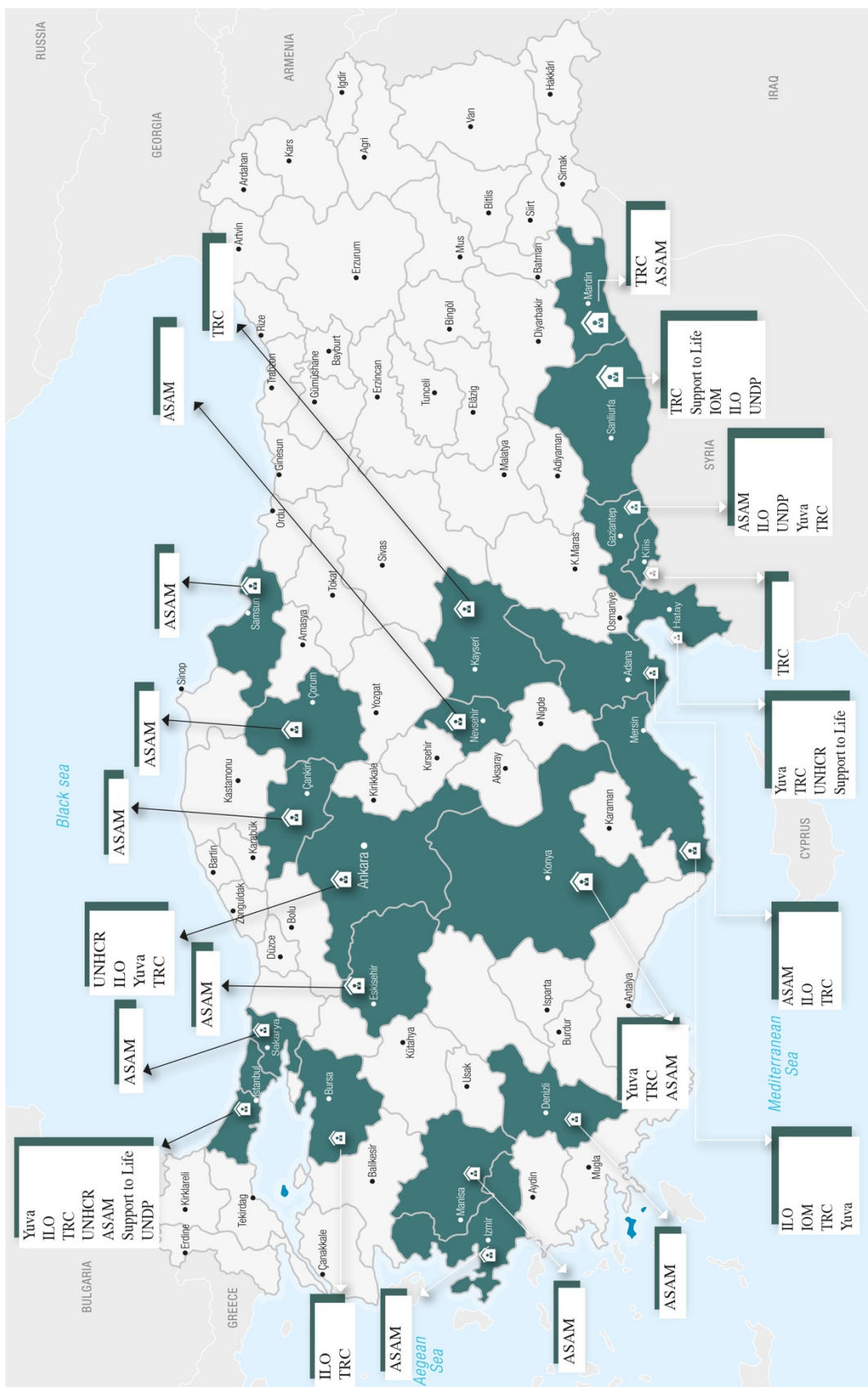


Figure 4. Community centers of humanitarian actors

Source: (UNHCR, 2018)

## 4.2 Yuva Association

Yuva is an Istanbul-based humanitarian association that was founded in 2010. The association's aim is to assist to form a life that is respectful to the rights of all the beings as well as the generations to come. Yuva's main target is to come up with a holistic sustainable solution, which is seen as an approach that is key to achieve success, to the problems in many areas ranging from environmental to educational and social while empowering individuals at the same time. In order to reach this aim, the association covers various issues from ecology to the eradication of poverty. The core values of the nine years-old association are sustainability, respect, human rights and the rights of nature, active citizenship and diversity. The Yuva Association has offices in Istanbul, Ankara, Konya Mersin, Hatay, and Gaziantep. It has 120 employees as of 2019 and 153 volunteers. The association has many national and international partners, including the UNHCR, EU and Sabanci Foundation.

According to the 2017 Annual Report (Yuva Association, 2018), Yuva Association carried out livelihood projects for the refugees. The livelihood projects served 1584 beneficiaries so far. These projects mainly included job trainings that take place in the form of workshops where refugees learn how to make jewelry, accessories, textile products, and shoes. Through these workshops, the Syrian refugees both get training and earn money.

Another livelihood activity is dedicated to increasing the labor market participation of the Syrian refugees. Yuva assists Syrian refugees to get work permits, which is mandatory for them to be able to take up formal jobs in Turkey. The association also gives vocational and language training that are in accordance with the guidance on registration to the Turkish Employment Agency (ISKUR) to increase the chances of refugees to have a job. Yuva also provides vocational

consultancy to the refugees through its two Vocational Training and Community Centers in Mersin province and Hatay province's Kırıkhan district. Vocational training courses are also offered in the association's office in Istanbul's Umraniye office.

Apart from these activities, Yuva runs the Human Development Program, which is designated to create employment for and empower the Syrian refugees. The program, which was first launched in 2013, offers workshops in Istanbul, Hatay, Gaziantep, Konya, and Mersin, serving 30.000 beneficiaries each year.

Lastly, Yuva carries out the Cash for Work Project in which it is collaborating with GIZ – German International Cooperation Agency to provide means of subsistence to Syrian refugees. The project takes place in Hatay, Gaziantep, Mersin, and Istanbul where the refugees are provided jobs at municipal parks, gardens or cleaning. Started in 2016, the project provided employment for 720 refugees in total so far.

The Cash for Work project stands out among other livelihood projects of the association since it puts special effort on increasing the participation of women refugees. With this goal, in Mersin, the association opens a mobile nursery in order to attract women refugees with children to benefit from the project. When it comes to concerning gender mainstreaming in its livelihoods activities, Cash for Work seems to be the only project of Yuva that mentions women refugees' employment specifically and take concrete action in order to increase their participation in the labor market. Still, it is not being specified by Yuva how many of the beneficiaries of this project were women and to what extent this support enabled women to get employment.

Yuva shares some stories of its beneficiaries, including the refugee women. While some stories are being told by the Yuva's workers, the others are written through first-person interpreting, meaning that they are the direct words of refugees. One of the stories belongs to 32 years old Salma who was living with her two children and mother-in-law in Mersin province. Salma, whose husband was still in Syria when this story was written, became one of the first participants of Yuva's Cash for Work project. Despite having doubts in mind as a woman who has no working experience and coming from a culture where traditionally women are not part of the working life, Salma started to work as a sanitation worker in the municipality of Mersin's Toroslar district.

The story stated that the first working experience Salma has ever had is the one that she started at Home Textile Decoration Workshop in one of the vocational training centers, in which she imprints a drawing onto embroidery. The first embroidery of hers, however, became a house.

At the point where words leave themselves toward feelings inside the human at some point, that warm home of the past and memories of Salma in her hands, the home she fits in the walls, where she took shelter in this geography, her home in the middle of her memories refreshed in her mind during her life simply stands there. Before being able to ask where Salma's home is, Salma's home in her palms looks at us. (STL Worker, 2018)

Another story belongs to 44 years old Hiven Osman, who is the mother of two children. Hiven's husband left her following the eruption of the civil-war in Syria. Before long, she received the news of her husband's death, which marked the beginning of her journey to Turkey. Settling in Mersin, Hiven built a new life with the support of her neighbors. She started to work as well, going to daily gardening jobs, working 14 hours a day. When the owners of the garden does not pay to her,



she quitted her job found another at a factory. However, when her mother died and there is no one left to take care of her children, Hiven had to stay at home and quit her job once again. Living on aids from the Turkish Red Crescent for a while, Hiven's path crossed with Yuva's Cash for Work project. She started to work at the culture center of the Mersin municipality under the scope of the project. According to Yuva worker's remarks who delivers us this story. This job which Hiven also is able to bring her children alongside with her, "energizes her life." The story also gives place to Hiven's own words, who explains the benefits of Yuva's project to her life as follows:

Before starting to this job, I had seen very bad sides of the people of this country; however, I entered in close relation with local people at the place at which I work this much for the first time. My Turkish friend, who is a project worker at the place at which I work, brought vacuum cleaner and items from her house to me. I obtained some clothing for me and my kids from the Charity Bazaar in the Culture Center. Everybody in the center helped me; officials bought a refrigerator for my home. (Gungor, 2018)

Hiven also expressed that she made social circle here and made many friends.

Above all, I am able to keep up my home and look after my children with the money I earn. Thanks to my own earning, I stand on my own legs and do not need anybody. Thanks to the project, I made an honorable life reaching a social life and standing on my own legs and being able to take care of my children and leading an honorable life are very good. I feel myself strong. (Gungor, 2018)

The other stories are consisting from direct quotes of the refugees themselves. The first one is the story of Judi Nekar from Aleppo. Being in Turkey for four years, Nekar first settled in Gaziantep but then moved to Nizip. Still living in a camp when this story was written, Nekar expressed that she is working at a municipality school where she teaches Syrian children Turkish. After work, she said, she is going to

Yuva's community center to study for TOEFL and learn how to paint. Necar describes the contribution of going to a community center to her life as follows:

My interests expanded since I started coming here. And I have also met very nice people. The more you meet new people the more you learn. For instance for me it was only computer classes at first but then I attended TOEFL and now I'm also learning to paint. I didn't know much about it when I first started but I'm learning bit by bit. That is to say, you can discover new things within yourself every day. And this place has done exactly that for me. (Necar, 2017)

Even the presence of these stories show that Yuva puts special interest to the lives and livelihood of the Syrian refugee women and aims to make them and its own work for them more visible. In other words, Yuva is aiming to show the accomplishments of the organization through the stories of the refugee women who have managed to have a presence in Turkish labor market thanks to the efforts of Yuva. However, Yuva does not go beyond the individual stories of the refugee women and regard them as a sub-group of its beneficiaries by recording data specific to them, their participation in the projects and their outcome when it comes to livelihoods projects. Still, it is worth mentioning that Yuva, as an humanitarian actor, enables Syrian refugee women with places that they can come together and build a social network of their own in Turkey, a valuable asset for the integration process.

#### 4.3 Support to Life Association (STL)

Founded in 2005, STL first started to provide humanitarian services to refugees in 2012, in Hatay province. With the principles of neutrality, accountability, independence, impartiality and humanity, the STL works in the areas of emergency support and assistance, child protection in seasonal agriculture and capacity building. The STL first starts with the emergency assistance program to the victims of the

Bam Earthquake in Iran. Then, the actor continues its humanitarian response activities in abroad with the Kashmir Earthquake in Pakistan until 2008, when they have launched their first community center in Tarlabasi, Istanbul. Today, the STL has many national and international cooperations and currently has 293 workers. Including the first community center that was opened for the refugees in Hatay, the association currently has four community centers in Istanbul, Hatay, and Sanliurfa provinces. In 2016, with the recognition of the Syrian refugees' right to work in Turkey, STL launched its livelihood projects providing vocational training and language education to the refugees. As a result of the livelihood activities of STL, 505 refugees attended vocational training.

In a 2016 report on the vulnerabilities of the Syrian refugees (Support to Life Association, 2016), which presents data including its gender breakdown, the association presents unemployment as the biggest problem for the Syrian refugees including the Syrian refugee women. The 2018 report (Support to Life Association, 2018) is dedicated to the empowerment of the women refugees. However, this report focuses on women's access to justice services and does not deal with employment related issues.

According to the 2017 Annual Report (Support to Life Association, 2017), the association reached 28.153 refugees. However, gender breakdown of this figure is not available. A similar situation is also valid for the beneficiaries of the community centers since the STL provides the total number -18,476- without specifying the number of women beneficiaries. This report states that in 2017, in Adana, Hatay, Mersin, Sanliurfa, and İstanbul, the STL conducted several projects regarding the livelihoods in which 563 people benefited. In addition to these, 43 people received vocational training in various areas. Again, in order to encourage

labor market integration of refugees, the association provided Turkish language courses to 72 people and aided 76 Syrian refugees to get work permission.

Supporting the entrepreneurial activities of refugees is another way that the STL aims to increase the refugee employment. For example, 22 Syrian refugees are provided with necessary equipment, such as sewing machine and products for a hairdresser, in order for them to establish their own business. (Support to Life Association, 2017)

STL also has activities in cooperation with UN. Under the scope of these activities, STL provides vocational trainings to the youth between the age of 18-24 in Istanbul in order to increase their chances of finding an employment (3RP, 2018). It also provides vocational training courses in Mardin, from gastronomy to hair styling and carpet weaving, reaching 50 beneficiaries in total (3RP, 2018). The organization also plans to develop this project in 2019, by bringing 60 women who have already received gastronomy and carpet weaving classes together and establishing a livelihood platform (3RP, 2018).

Despite the invisibility of women in the STL's reports, the STL seems to adopt a feminist perspective that it reflects on its blog. In the blog named "Hayata Destek Blog" (Support to Life Association, 2019), there are various articles on feminism and the STL's opinion about it, especially regarding the Syrian refugee women and their struggle to survive. For instance, there is an article published on March 8 (Support to Life Association, 2019), which suggests that the survival struggle of the Syrian refugee women is no different from the struggle that working women who went on strike for their rights in 1857. An excerpt below from the Hayata Destek blog exemplifies this point:

We are touching the lives of the women who are leaving within an atmosphere that is full of abuse and rape, who are the victims of domestic violence, who are forced to get married in a very early age, who were not being sent to the school, who are being treated with prejudices since other women (who assume that they will steal their husbands) hates them, who cannot work, who cannot be free, who are in the disadvantageous position not only because of their genders but also because of their status as refugees. (Support to Life Association, 2019)

As the quote above suggests, the STL presents Syrian refugee women's problems in a comprehensive manner with special references to the gender-based challenges they face including obstacles against their employment. In addition, the blog post goes even further and draws a correspondence between the women working for the STL and the Syrian refugee women by emphasizing their "sameness" as women who share similar problems and fight for the similar goals.

There are also life stories of some Syrian refugee women beneficiaries on the website of the association. Most of these stories can be referred as "success stories" since they present stories where the women have been able to survive in Turkey and have been integrated into the labor market thanks to the STL's support. One of them is a refugee woman named Halima (Support to Life Association, 2019). Halima applies to STL first to receive vocational training. Once a tailor in Syria, Halima was lacking any equipment that she needed to do her job when she first arrived in Hatay. Yet, when she participated in needlecraft workshop of the STL, she became the assistant of the tutor thanks to her previous experience in the field. After completing the course, Halima started a home-based work with a sewing machine that was granted by the STL and became able to earn a living.

Havva and her husband are also presented as examples of how the STL succeeds in supporting the livelihoods of refugees (Support to Life Association, 2019). After migrating to Hatay, both Havva and her husband remained unemployed,

seeking for a job. Meanwhile, Havva applied to bakery course of the association and completed the course with a certificate. Afterward, together with her husband, she opened a small bakery, establishing her own business.

The success stories that the STL presents, however, not always refers to a successful woman who smoothly climb the stairs of success one by one. The stories also mention the women who has troubles in their experiences but deals with these problems through solidarity with others, particularly the other refugee women. The story of Edibe is an example for that. Edibe was an entrepreneur woman who established her own business, selling her handcrafted products to earn a livelihood. Inspired by Edibe's journey in the business world, the STL invited her to deliver her experience to other Syrian refugee women (Support to Life Association, 2019). As a result, Edibe shared her experiences with the Syrian refugee women in Hatay. However, at one point of the discussion between Edibe and the other refugee women, the course of events take a strange turn since it comes to the surface that Edibe had some trouble in paying rent of her shop. The women immediately showed solidarity and sold their own handcrafted products to help Edibe to pay her one-month rent. Some refugee women even took orders from the customers of Edibe's shop and started to sell their own products in there. In the end, Edibe, who was supposed to be an inspirational figure for the refugee women, inspired them to show solidarity instead by uniting their forces to contribute to a fellow refugee woman's success story.

The 2017 annual report (Support to Life Association, 2017) also includes similar life stories of Syrian refugee women. One of them, Rana, shares her story as follows:

It has been more than a year since I've arrived in Turkey with my two children. We were in good condition in Syria, having a palmy life. In here [Turkey] I've felt as if I was lost. Was nervous. I was first hesitant to participate in the course. However, I'm glad that I did. Gastronomy course has become beneficial for me in every respect. I've acquired a profession, started to leave the house, made friends, re-built my self-conscious, got rid of my fears. Now I want to open a small place [store], earn my own money and send my daughter to school. (Support to Life Association, 2017).

The documents and data of the STL shows us that although the organization grasps a feminist rhetoric in its approach to refugees, there is no reflection of this rhetoric in the outcomes of their activities, especially when it comes to livelihood projects. That is to say, only way the refugee women are present in STL is as individual stories as they are not regarded as a separate sub-division of the livelihood beneficiaries. It can also be said that STL is mediating for Syrian refugee women to come together and build a social network in Turkey, which can be beneficial for these women's integration process in the country.

#### 4.4 Turkish Red Crescent (TRC)

As the oldest and largest humanitarian organization in Turkey, Turkish Red Crescent is a part of International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. It is founded in 1868 and although have changed its names several times in the meantime, it works as a semi-governmental organization since then, which differentiates it from the humanitarian actors such as Yuva, STL and ASAM. The humanitarian actor is involved in various activities including disaster management, blood services, international services, social services, and first aid. It even produces its own mineral water to use the revenues in humanitarian activities. TRC has branches in the all-81 provinces of Turkey.

TRC pursues its activities for Syrian refugees under the umbrella of its Migration and Refugee Services branch. The branch runs 15 community centers in Şanlıurfa, İstanbul (both Anatolian and European Sides), Konya, Ankara, Kilis, Bursa, İzmir, Adana, Mersin, Gaziantep, Hatay, Kayseri, Kahramanmaraş and Mardin. As of February 2019, 426 people were working for the TRC's activities for Syrian refugees.

In its February 2019 report entitled Syria Crisis Humanitarian Relief Operation Report (Turkish Red Crescent Migration Services Directorate, 2019), the Red Crescent summarizes all its services for the Syrian refugee both within and outside of Turkey. Although lacking specific projects aiming at the empowerment of Syrian refugee women, the report specifies the gender breakdown of beneficiaries of its European Union-funded Kızılaykart Emergency Social Safety Net Programme (ESSN), which is a nationwide cash assistance program for those under temporary protection.

On the website of its community centers (Kizilay, 2018), the livelihood activities that are being held are mentioned as the orientation to the work/employment and occupational and skill courses. While no detail was provided on the orientation to the work/employment, for the skill courses it is mentioned that they include hairdressing, tailoring, Turkish language, wood painting, computer, jewelry design, elderly and patient care, welding technician and cook courses (Kizilay, 2018). Nevertheless, no gender breakdown in the figures about livelihood activities was available. Despite giving a detailed analysis of the activities that were held within the community centers, the report only mentions the total number of beneficiaries of these livelihood programs, which is 26.910.



TRC also collaborates with state and private actors in its community center activities. For instance, TRC undertook the project entitled “Merhaba Umut” (Hello Hope) application that it collaborated with TURKCELL, a mobile phone operator. As part of this project, TRC teaches Turkish language to the Syrian refugees via a smart phone app (Kizilay, 2018).

The 2018 report on the activities in community center in Ankara mentions that although the main group targeted is the overall refugees, the disadvantaged sub-groups within the refugee community, such as the women, have the priority (Karatas et al., 2018). The report provides a survey (Karatas et al., 2018) on 109 Syrian refugees, 84 of whom were women, on their satisfaction with the community center itself. 74 percent of the participants were unemployed back in Syria while in Turkey, 89 percent are unemployed (Karatas et al., 2018). Among those who were employed back in Syria, 26.2 percent of women and out of these women, 12 percent of them were occupied with the jobs that required higher education (Karatas et al., 2018). However, the report reveals that 80 percent of the women who were employed back in their hometowns have become unemployed following the migration to Turkey (Karatas et al., 2018).

The documents and data of the TRC shows us that refugee women are visible for the organization when it comes to certain projects while in others they are totally invisible as no data are recorded for them. That is to say, the refugee women are only visible as beneficiaries for the Cash for Work project in TRC’s activities while when it comes to livelihood activities they are not present as a sub-group of the beneficiaries.

#### 4.5 Association for Solidarity with Asylum-Seekers and Migrants (ASAM)

ASAM is founded in 1995 as a non-governmental organization in Ankara and since then aims to offer solutions to the problems that refugees and asylum seekers face in Turkey. This is a unique aspect of ASAM compared to the other actors that are being studied in this thesis since it is specifically responding to the migrants and refugees and do not get involved with other areas of activities. The core values that shape ASAM's approach to the refugees are equality, impartiality, neutrality, integrity, trustworthiness, commitment and accountability. The association has 80 offices in 48 provinces of the country. Two of these offices are life skills development centers while 17 of them are safe spaces for women and girls. One of them (in Gaziantep) is designed as a women solidarity center in cooperation with the UN agencies, named SADA Women Empowerment and Solidarity Centre. However, most are Multi-Service Support Centers that function as the community centers of the association.

ASAM conducted a study entitled The Project of Needs Assessment for Syrian Women under Temporary Protection in Turkey examining the participation of Syrian girls and women to social life, their income generation activities and their coping mechanisms. Conducted in Hatay, Adana, Gaziantep, Şanlıurfa, İstanbul, Konya and İzmir, the project's main aim is to increase the level of integration between the refugee women and the locals. The needs assessment report (UN Women & ASAM, 2018) that was released following this project reveals that only 15 percent of women work in jobs that enable them to earn their own money. One of the reasons why Syrian refugee women are having trouble in access to employment and services, the report states, is the fact that 70 percent of them lack Turkish language skills. Besides, the report expresses that only seven percent of women received vocational training. Among this seven percent, most women received training in the

field of hairdressing, followed by needlework. The report expresses that these trainings that women participated closely correspond to the traditional gender roles. In addition, the report finds that these trainings largely failed to providing opportunities for refugee women to have formal employment. The report also touches upon the gender-based challenges that Syrian refugee women have to face, such as limited access to education and heavy care responsibilities. The report also expresses that there are 21 points in Turkey which provide employment assistance for the Syrian refugee women.

ASAM carried out livelihood projects such as the Cash for Work in Adana and Gaziantep provinces alongside with Yuva. The aim of the Cash for Work, which was initiated back in 2016 when the work permits are being allowed for the Syrian refugees for the first time, was to provide Syrian refugees with formal jobs (ASAM, 2017). As part of this project, Syrian refugees had the chance to work in Gaziantep and Adana municipalities as municipal workers (ASAM, 2017). The project ended in 2017 without any data on the outcomes of the refugee women.

ASAM also carried out a study entitled the Assessment of Livelihood Opportunities of Syrians Project. The study found that many Syrian refugees are employed in the informal sector (ASAM, 2017). However, no report was released following the study, leaving the audience in dark when it comes to the result of it.

Life Skills Development Centers, located in Istanbul and Adana, which are supported by the U.S. Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM), provide life skill trainings for the refugees (ASAM, 2017). This means that in the centers, the refugees are provided with vocational trainings and the refugees who received these trainings are assisted to be employed in the sectors that are in relation with their trainings (ASAM, 2016). The centers also aim to reach out to the already

employed refugees and provide them language classes and vocational trainings in the evening or weekend classes (ASAM, 2016). According to the data available as of October 2018 (3RP, 2018), 3.226 refugees received vocational and language training courses at these centers, 50.7 percent of whom were women. In the first term of the center, 35 vocational training courses that were provided to 758 beneficiaries, 307 of whom received vocational guidance, from CV writing to interview techniques, while 111 beneficiaries have been provided with employment (3RP, 2018).

In 2016, the organization came up with a project named Enhancing the Protection Mechanisms for International Protection Applicants in Turkey in cooperation with the European Union, as part of which ASAM provided vocational training courses to the refugees (ASAM, 2017). Many livelihood activities of the association, however, revolves around the Multi-Service Support Centers as there are vocational courses, language courses and consultancy services provided as well as activities that are being organized to strengthen the relationship between the Turkish and Syrian communities. Some of the courses that are provided within these centers are listed as English, Turkish and Arabic language courses, trainings on computer and art and lastly vocational trainings (ASAM, 2017).

Although ASAM does not share the stories of its beneficiaries publicly, it uses its social media account to share the stories of its beneficiaries that were published by various media outlets (Genis, 2019; IHA, 2019; Akman, 2019) or UN Agencies (UNFPA, 2019). Refugee women, once again, is only visible in these stories as part of the communication strategy of the ASAM. For instance, Nur Omar, a refugee woman resides in Gaziantep with six children shares her experiences in SADA with the UN Women as follows:

Initially I had lots of trouble because I did not understand the language, but my neighbors were very helpful. And, eventually, my Syrian friends and I heard about the SADA Women Empowerment and Solidarity Centre and we went there together. (UN Women, 2018)

Expressing that she, as a former hair-dresser herself back in Syria, has received hairdressing courses and received a certificate for that, Omar adds that she also received courses on other fields that she had no clue about before, such as the computer (UN Women, 2018). Omar further stated, “The SADA Centre has helped me start a new life and I would say that the Centre is my family – I feel like I have many sisters here,” (UN Women, 2018).

Besides, we know that ASAM not only organizes refugee women meetings (Sevinc, 2019), women football tournaments (Hurriyet, 2019) and woman empowerment seminars, particularly on early marriages, domestic violence and issues such as healthy diet and hygiene (ASAM, 2019; ASAM, 2019) but also meetings and seminars that aim to inform women on the livelihood activities, especially on the refugees’ economic rights and work permits (UIGM, 2019; UIGM, 2019)

These stories and activities reveal that ASAM is bringing the refugee women together through its projects and assist them to build a social network in Turkey. Still, this is all we can learn from the available data of the organization when it comes to livelihood activities for the Syrian woman refugees as it fails to provide the necessary data regarding their women beneficiaries, which leaves the audience empty-handed in terms of the gendered outcomes of the association’s activities.

#### 4.6 UN agencies (UNHCR, UNDP, IOM, and ILO)

UN agencies, particularly the UNHCR, the UNDP, the IOM and the ILO, are also very active on the ground in terms of serving the Syrian refugees. While these four UN and UN-affiliated organizations constitute a heterogeneous group in terms of their mandates, discourses and priorities, for the purposes of this thesis, I preferred to group them together as they share the broader UN framework.

The shared UN humanitarian response framework relies on The Turkey Refugee and Resilience Response Plan (3RP) that includes support for the public sector capacity building. The project is designed to assist the Turkish Government in responding to the refugee crisis. According to project's 2017-2018 report (UN, 2017-2018), in 2017, 5.27 million dollars of funding have been provided to the government institutions which have the responsibility to create jobs, providing access to economic opportunities and agricultural development. As part of the project, refugees also are provided with vocational trainings, technical trainings and language courses. There are also ten vocational education and training centers that are operating under the project, the latest of which was opened in Gaziantep. Through this project, more than 18.000 refugees received training while 1.400 of them were being employed.

Under the scope of the 3RP project, UN agencies work in cooperation with international and local humanitarian actors in Turkey. The 2018 newsletter (3RP, 2018) that presents the activities of these humanitarian actors show that while the works of some organizations are documented with a separate emphasis on women refugees, the others fail in mentioning them as a sub-group of their beneficiaries. For instance. Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED), an organization that operates in Mersin, is expressed to provide tailoring vocational

trainings for 71 women (3RP, 2018). However, for instance, although Maram Foundation Relief & Development is also mentioned for providing vocational trainings to women such as cooking and hairdressing classes, a similar method of data collecting is not present in its records (3RP, 2018). This shows UN does not make it mandatory for the humanitarian actors it cooperates with to make a record on the refugee women and leaves the issue at their initiative.

The UNHCR has been active in Turkey since 1960, with an agreement that is signed with the Turkish government on 2016; the relationship between the two sides was formalized and strengthened their cooperation. The agency currently has an office in Ankara and actively operates in İstanbul, İzmir, Gaziantep, Hatay, Şanlıurfa and Van.

With an aim to ensure well-being of the refugees, UNHCR aims at enabling refugees to integrate into the host country's economy. The principles of the livelihood stance of organization are outlined in the UNHCR's Global Strategy for Livelihoods (2019-2023) (UNHCR, 2019) as protection, diversity, equality and sustainability. In line with these principles, the organization provides vocational and language training courses for the refugees. The agency emphasizes that these courses are designed in accordance with the market needs of the Turkish economy in order to increase the chance of employment. Apart from these courses, the UNHCR also supports refugee entrepreneurs with necessary means to establish their own businesses, including providing access to finance.

According to 2018 report (UNHCR, 2018), the UNHCR has been working closely with ISKUR to support refugee employment. So far, 2500 refugees are employed through the UNHCR and ISKUR cooperation. In addition, almost 1090

refugees are supported to obtain work permits while 1200 others received counseling on employment and entrepreneurship.

The UNHCR also undertakes the Entrepreneurship Support Programme of UNHCR, which operates in İstanbul, Şanlıurfa, Hatay, Gaziantep, Adana, Mersin, Kilis, Mardin, Bursa, İzmir, Adıyaman, Konya, Ankara and Kayseri provinces since 2016 and reached 1110 beneficiaries in 2018. The main aim of the programme is to encourage refugee entrepreneurs through providing trainings that are designed for one to form her own business. Despite giving all the numbers regarding the beneficiaries, the UNHCR does not specify how many of the refugees they have reached through these programs were woman, meaning that it does not disaggregate its data by sex.

Nevertheless, one UNHCR project conducted with the Izmir governorate differentiates itself from other projects in this respect. As part of this project, the first Textile Machine Operator Training and Harmonization Centre was launched in the Karabağlar district of Izmir, which provided vocational training and Turkish language courses for 85 refugees, half of whom were women. In order to encourage the women's participation, the project includes a children's day-care. As a result of this project, 20 percent of the participants were employed in textile industry. The existence of this project shows that the humanitarian actors should not be handled as a single entity that follows the same pattern in every projects of theirs. In other words, while UNHCR fails to determine a target for the women refugees and even mention them in most of its projects, it is not true to handle the humanitarian actor basing on this majority since its stance may differ from project to projects. Karabaglar project shows us that it can also have activities that pay regard to Syrian refugee women's employment. It also once again reveals the importance of the



presence of the daycare support in women's employment as its existence eases for women to participate in labor market. In order to have a more comprehensive understanding of the project, which singles out from the others by its way of grasping gender mainstreaming and achieving success in the end, I have reached to a worker of Izmir Governorate, who took part in the formation of the project. According to this public official's account, the success of the project lays in the process of determining the participants:

The applications have been received through a consultant. The applicants have been interviewed and the ones who passed the interview for being fitting into the criteria have been accepted to the course. The criteria of inclusion was to being in real need of this course, and motivation to undertake a job if given an opportunity. Having face-to-face interaction enabled us to analyze the applicants properly and thanks to this, we have been able to pick the right participants. I think this was the key to the success of this project.

This means that there was not a random selection in the participants as in many other projects where anyone willing to participate in the course is being allowed. Only those motivated to undertake job opportunities were included in the project. Besides, the project was in cooperation with the Shirt-makers Association of Izmir, who provided job opportunities to the participants and enabled the projects sustainability by making refugees achieve self-reliance.

The UNDP carries out the Syria Crisis Response and Resilience Programme's Employment and Skills Development Project (UNDP, 2018). The project has two components. The first component focuses on supporting Syrian refugees in entering into the labor market and works with ISKUR in doing so (UNDP, 2019). The second component's aim is to support entrepreneurs and increase the competitiveness of medium-sized enterprises (UNDP, 2019). The project targets creating at least 2,000

jobs in Ankara (UNDP, 2018). Yet, how much of it is designated for women or have been occupied by women is unknown.

The IOM, on the other hand, which has been operating in Turkey since 1991, has 900 staff and presence in 15 different provinces of the country. Its first initiative regarding Syrian refugees' livelihood is a joint project with ILO in which both aim to support labor market integration of the refugees. The project entitled the Entrepreneurship Training Programme operates in eight provinces and trains the refugees to come up with innovative business ideas. Besides, according to the Refugee Response Operations Nov-2018-Jan-2019 report (IOM, 2019), IOM provides livelihood activities for refugees (from entrepreneurial loans and training workshops) in 6 provinces and served 40,800 beneficiaries with that purpose so far. Yet, how much of these beneficiaries were women is not specified. The organization also has a job replacement project with the support of the PRM that has already placed 50 beneficiaries to their jobs and aims to place 150 others in the future (3RP, 2018).

Documentary analysis demonstrates that the reports published by the UN agencies lacks gender mainstreaming for the most part. Once again, how many beneficiaries were women was not specified in these reports. One exception to this was the 3RP Livelihoods and Employment Data Analysis 2017 (UNDP, UNHCR, 2017), which specified that 46 percent of the Syrian refugees in Turkey who are at the working age and need employment are women. This analysis also express that as part of livelihoods projects, 6.267 refugees have been reached so far, half of whom were women. Finally, limited attempts of the UN agencies to incorporate gender equality framework into the humanitarian response framework can be observed. As an illustration, the project partners of 3RP approached the Ministry of Labor and

Social Security and provided gender equality training to the officials of the ministry in various fields. The reports on 3RP also highlight the role of Syrian refugee women in certain areas such as agriculture and food production. “Syrian women are performing essential roles in agriculture and food production such as sowing, weeding, harvesting, and caring for animals,” (Bastien, 2018) says the 3RP report to point at the importance of the women refugees in the agriculture sector, adding that this is crucial since the agriculture accounts to the 21 percent of the labor market of the country (Bastien, 2018).

The ILO started to operate in Turkey in 1952. Based in Ankara, the ILO defines its main aim as to enabling both women and men to have an opportunity to achieve a decent work. In terms of responding the refugee crisis, the ILO has a five-year plan, starting from 2017 that is designed to provide refugees with decent work opportunities. As part of this plan, the ILO provides vocational training and language education in 13 centers. In 2017, 5.971 beneficiaries benefited from these courses. The organization supports 70 different vocational training courses in total (3RP, 2018). Some other livelihood projects of the ILO are the Job Creation and Entrepreneurship Opportunities for Syrians under Temporary Protection and Host Communities in Turkey and Improving Labor Market Integration of Syrian Refugees and Host Communities in Turkey, which have reached 12.600 and 11.600 refugees so far, respectively. The ILO fails to provide data on the gender breakdown of the beneficiaries.

The organization, however, carries out particular projects aiming at increased refugee women employment. For instance, the organization forms the first Syrian-Turkish Women Cooperative in 2017 in order to support formal employment. It also opened a women-only center in Gaziantep providing livelihood opportunities as well

as vocational and language trainings. At the center, the ILO reached 747 Syrian refugee women (ILO, 2018). “The objective is to enable women and girls using the center to have stronger self-confidence and skills and access various training and job placement programmes in Gaziantep,” (ILO, 2018) ILO says regarding the center.

There is also the Strengthening the Resilience of Syrian Women and Girls and Host Communities in Turkey project, which has been a joint project between ILO, UN Women and ASAM that aims to social and economic wellbeing of Syrian refugee women. According to ILO (ILO, 2018), the project aims to stabilize the social and economic stability in Syrian refugee women’s life. It provides vocational courses as well as technical training ones while also initiating income generating activities. It also provides a distinct role model system that aims to empower refugee women through mentoring of successful figures from within their community. The project is being operated in Gaziantep and so far has reached 3.280 women and girls (ILO, 2018). With all these information regarding ILO’s work for refugee women’s employment, it can be said that rather than the gender mainstreaming, the humanitarian actor has gender-specific project. This fact may suggest that ILO handles gender issue as an exceptional case and creates projects that are designed specifically to target it, rather than grasping an overall approach that is based on gender mainstreaming.

#### 4.7 Conclusion

The examination of the reports and websites of the humanitarian actors shows that all organizations aim to support refugees' integration to the labor market. In order to reach this overall objective, they come up with concrete actions. They all have community centers in multiple provinces of the country that provide vocational training courses, language courses and consultancy services.

Considering that there are more than 1.5 million Syrian woman refugees in Turkey (Ministry of Interior Directorate General for Migration Management, 2019), more than 20 percent of whom are at the working age (Ministry of Interior Directorate General for Migration Management, 2019), only 15 percent participates into the labor market (Durable Solutions Platform & IGAM, 2019). Besides, the fact that only very few number of woman refugees received work permits (General Directorate of International Labour Force, 2017) despite having same rights with their male counterparts show that most working Syrian refugee women work in informal jobs.

Documentary analysis that this thesis provides demonstrate that humanitarian actors mostly fail to take gender dimension into consideration in shaping their livelihood programs. For instance, only a few of the humanitarian actors (Yuva Association and Karabaglar project of UNHCR) provides childcare service for the refugee women in order to make easier for them to participate to the any training courses. This is a remarkable problem considering that the failure of the state in providing care support poses the main obstacle against women's employment in Turkey in general (Akkan & Serim, 2018). Both Yuva's and UNHCR's projects that provide nursery are proved to be successful in employing the women, showing that if the humanitarian actors take the issue of determinants of female employment

seriously and design their projects in accordance with that, they can reach meaningful outcomes. The UNHCR's project also shows that, while a humanitarian actor may exclude an important feature such as childcare in many of its projects, it can include it at another, proving that the humanitarian actors should not be treated as solid bodies that apply same formula to everything they do. It also raises yet another question by asking if having a selective motivated group of refugees instead of a random one leads to a more successful project or not.

Besides, none of the selected humanitarian actors records and/or announces their number of beneficiaries in accordance with the gender. From that point on, we can claim that there is no gender mainstreaming in the livelihood activities of the humanitarian actors, since disaggregating the data by sex is one of the main factors that shows the actor's approach to gender mainstreaming, and the gender framework of the humanitarian actors does not include the employment. This fact, surprisingly, does not vary in accordance with the humanitarian actors' distinct features such as having links with the state, being an international organization or a non-governmental organization. Since the humanitarian actors do not organize their data related to the livelihood activities according to gender, it can be said that this approach cause the leaving out of gender-specific issues, eventually leading the organizations to be gender-blind. Moreover, considering the key role these organizations play in Syria response within Turkish borders, this gender-blindness can well be attributed to the overall response framework with respect to livelihood activities. However, it should also be noted that, as the Figure 5 shows clearly, the overall number of refugees that the humanitarian actors reach for their livelihood projects is already quite low, regardless of gender. The case of ILO, however, shows us that although there is lack of gender mainstreaming, there can still be gender-

specific projects. That is to say, a humanitarian actor may be gender blind in its overall approach to the refugees and still handle the gender-related issues as “exception” and design projects that specifically targets these issues.

Organizations	Active in Turkey since...	Based in...	Number of community centers	Number of livelihood beneficiaries	Gender breakdown
<b>Yuva Association</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>Istanbul</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>30,000</b>	<b>None</b>
<b>Support to Life Association</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>Istanbul</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>18,476</b>	<b>None</b>
<b>TRC</b>	<b>1868</b>	<b>Ankara</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>26,910</b>	<b>None</b>
<b>ASAM</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>Ankara</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>Partial</b>
<b>UN Agencies (UNDP, UNHCR, IOM, ILO)</b>	<b>1960</b>	<b>Ankara</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>66,867</b>	<b>Partial</b>

Figure 5. Analyzed organizations

Source: Compiled by the author from the documents of the aforementioned humanitarian actors

Refugee women and their relations to the labor market only comes up as part of the humanitarian actors’ communication strategies. Despite failing to provide any numbers on its women beneficiaries, STL, for example, through its blog, sheds light on women refugees’ employment experiences. Yuva Association and ASAM also share the stories of some of its woman beneficiaries within its reports, with a similar rhetoric to the posts of Support to Life. This shows that woman refugees can be visible in humanitarian actors’ works only through their “individual stories.” These

stories, however, prove another thing as well: They show us that the humanitarian actors are actually quite valuable in enabling Syrian refugee women to build social networks in Turkey as they are being brought together through various activities and projects. It should also be noted that these “success stories” of the beneficiaries of the humanitarian actors represent the triumph of the humanitarian field’s livelihood activities while showing these refugees as “model” beneficiaries (Nawyn, 2011). Through this framing of refugees as model beneficiaries, humanitarian actors aim to show off their own success in responding to the humanitarian crisis despite lacking the data that would support this claim (Nawyn, 2011).

Still, despite ignoring gender in general when it comes to the livelihood activities, there seems to be a tendency among humanitarian actors to consider gender as a variable when it comes only to gender-related problems such as domestic violence and early age marriages. In other words, the humanitarian actors only takes gender into consideration when it comes to the issues that might violate the basic rights of women and cause a physical harm to them. All the humanitarian actors that have been analyzed refer to gender and gender-related issues/problems that refugees face without any exception. Nevertheless, their gender framework fails to include women’s right to employment. As a response to these issues, most of them highlight the women empowerment and have projects or activities that would encourage women refugees to be more “powerful.” However, these activities and projects mostly based on informing the women refugees on their legal rights. Yet, almost none carries out gender mainstreaming when it comes to integrating women into the labor market and facilitate their empowerment through this way.

Evaluating all these five humanitarian actors in terms of their fitting into the categorization of Olivius shows that most of them fit in between the Basic Needs



Approach and the Instrumentalist Approach. The reason why I have come up with such a conclusion is the fact that all the five organizations aim and seem to become successful in fulfilling the basic needs of the Syrian refugee women. In addition, they express through their activities that they have the willing to go beyond basic needs programs. However, none of them reaches to a point that they fully address gender inequalities in access to formal education. Support to Life, for instance, show concretely through its blog stories that as an association it puts special emphasis on women refugees and their employment. Yet, when it comes to the collection of the data and the activities themselves, it fails in targeting the Syrian refugee women in its livelihood projects. Same thing goes for the other organizations as well. However, we can treat Yuva and UN a bit more differently at this point since -at least anecdotally- they go as far as to provide childcare service at some of their projects, recognizing the determinants of female labor force participation and addressing gender inequalities in access to formal jobs.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

The traditional form of humanitarian response was basically a form of helping the needy (Wallace, 1993). However, humanitarian response took a new shift by incorporating a more developmentalist approach since the 1990s (Buchanan & Maxwell, 1994). Merging of humanitarianism and developmentalism extended the scope of humanitarian response to include labor market integration of those affected by human made disasters and protracted crises.

The mandate of humanitarian actors are no longer limited to emergency relief but instead include contributing to sustainable solutions to the problems of the refugees and assist their journey of being self-sufficient. As a result, the humanitarian response is now trying to come up with long-term developmental plans for the refugees that will integrate them into the host community (Buchanan & Maxwell, 1994). The reason why such a shift has occurred is the fact that the survival strategies of the refugees in the host communities have changed. Refugees no longer stay in the camps or tent cities but instead reside in provinces and city centers, hence become urban refugees (Culberson et al., 2016). This radical change affects all aspects of being a refugee. The needs of the urban refugees are not same with the needs of the refugees in the camps, which leads humanitarian actors to change their approach towards them as well, grasping new policies to ease their adaptation and support their survival.

This change took place all over the world, including Turkey, where the effects of such alteration became much more visible when the Syrian crisis emerged and affected Turkey in the last decade. Although there are 13 temporary shelters that

are located in southeastern part of Turkey, only 136.985 Syrian refugees out of 3.603.088 live in the camps while others spread all over the country (Ministry of Interior Directorate General for Migration Management, 2019). This creates a challenge for the humanitarian organizations in Turkey since, as in most other urban refugee cases, the disperse refugee population is harder to reach, making more difficult for the humanitarian action to reach and response to the refugee needs (UNHCR, 2012), including the ones that are related to their livelihoods.

Humanitarian organizations including those in Turkey operate in contexts where refugees usually face, such as the governmental restrictions over employment, limited and overcrowded shelters and discrimination (Landau & Amit, 2014; Brandt & Earle, 2018).

For this particular thesis, the restrictions over refugee employment is particularly important. Although it is regarded as if having the work permit is enough for the refugees to be self-sufficient (Jacobsen, 2006), for the most of the cases, humanitarian actor assistance is still needed for various reasons (Brown et al., 2017). In the case of Turkey, for instance, although in theory work permits are granted for the Syrian refugees, both men and women, the number of refugees who actually got their work permit and participate in the economy via these permits is still quite low. The biggest reasons are limited demand for Syrian workers in the formal sector and the complex procedure that creates burdens for both employers and jobseekers. This complex nature of the receiving the work permission process is one of the big gaps the humanitarian actors have the responsibility to fulfill in Turkey, which leads them to put priority into their livelihood activities.

However, when it comes to the woman refugees, new layers of challenges come to surface. Although often neglected, refugee women are in need of taking part

in livelihood activities not less than refugee men, especially considering the fact that many refugee women are actually the head of their households and carry the burden of being the breadwinner (Wallace, 1993). Yet, still, it is not extraordinary to see that women refugees are often overlooked by the humanitarian organizations as a group that needs to be addressed exclusively in livelihood programming while their self-reliance should have been encouraged within their activities.

In light of these, this study contributes to the abovementioned literature through a qualitative study of documents produced by humanitarian actors serving the refugee community in Turkey. In doing so, the study explores the ways in which humanitarian actors perceive and present issues with respect to Syrian refugee women's employment.

Although most humanitarian actors in Turkey acknowledges the importance of gender mainstreaming in their general discourses, this acknowledgement is not reflected in their discourses on livelihood programs. This finding is in line with Olivius's (2016) previous conclusion that expresses that despite the discursive emphasis upon gender mainstreaming in humanitarian guidelines, it is hard to see a proper reflection of these on programming discourses and practices (Olivius, 2016). The humanitarian organizations in Turkey seems to suffer from a similar problem in the sense that their discourses as reflected in their reports and on their websites often underline the importance of women's empowerment as well as gender equality. However, in practice, they fail to mainstream gender perspective into their discourses on their livelihood activities. Besides, the refugee women are mostly invisible in the data of the humanitarian actors, meaning that there is no gender breakdown in their documents. Although this is one of the main findings that prove the humanitarian actors' failure in approaching the refugee women by taking gender mainstreaming

into consideration, it is important to mention that most international donors who make almost all the aforementioned livelihood projects possible, do not demand such an approach from the humanitarian actors. Turkey's 2016 Refugee Deal with the EU is a great example for this attitude of the international donors. According to the deal (European Council, 2016), the EU is supposed to € 3 billion to Turkey initially for it to be used for the Syrian refugees in the country which is supposed to be followed by a second set of € 3 billion while Turkey does its own part of preventing refugees from crossing to Europe. Yet, although explaining the responsibilities of both parties on the issue in detail, the deal does not openly address gender inequality and does not openly present any specific demand on Syrian refugee women, their employment, and visibility in the usage of this funding.

Still, while these findings does not suggest that these humanitarian organizations also fail to incorporate a gender approach into other program areas (e.g. protection), it however demonstrates that their gender frameworks do not adequately cover women's right to work and livelihood programs. In fact, although there are many livelihood activities that are designed for the refugees, there are not many efforts on how to increase the Syrian women refugees' labor force participation, which is one of the key points in integration process and eventually the self-reliance. That is to say, humanitarian response in Turkey focuses more on supporting refugee women with basic needs programs, protection programs, informing refugee women about their rights and help them to come together and rebuild social networks.

Previous literature on the role of humanitarian actors in supporting refugee women's employment and humanitarian actors' approach towards the refugee women and their employment is limited and remained theoretical (Wallace, 1993;

Schultz, 1994; Olivius, 2016). This thesis contributes to this literature by examining how humanitarian actors see and explain refugee women's employment in their livelihood programs in a specific humanitarian response context.

There are also studies on the problems that refugee women face in Turkey (e.g. CTDC, 2015; Demir & Moiz, 2016; UN Women & ASAM, 2018), but none of them put humanitarian organizations into their focus. Lastly, humanitarian actor activities towards Syrian refugees in Turkey were also explored in general (e.g. Sozer, 2017; Yilmaz, 2018; Sunata & Tosun, 2018). Yet, they do not take gender lens in analyzing the role of humanitarian actors in humanitarian response to Syria crisis in Turkey.

This situation shows that there is the need to elaborate the studies on Syrian refugee women in Turkey further, especially when it comes to their labor force participation. This lack of interest towards the refugee women's integration into the Turkish economy might end up with their failure in their economic integration and strengthening the gender inequality in women's labor force participation in Turkey.

When all these findings are considered, it can be said that the humanitarian actors in Turkey are mostly fits into the somewhere between the category of Basic Needs Approach to the category of Instrumentalist Approach, according to Olivius' (2016) categorization of humanitarian response to women refugees. Although gender mainstreaming lacks in the approaches of the humanitarian actors to livelihood programs, they, at least in their overall discourses, mostly acknowledge that the experiences of female refugees and male refugees differ and refugee women are more disadvantageous. Yet, this acknowledgement is not reflected in their approach to livelihood programs, the reflection of this acknowledgement in programs is more obvious in their discourses on basic needs programs. Thus, humanitarian actors in

Turkey goes beyond Basic Needs Approach in their overall discourses but cannot quite fulfill the requirements of the Instrumentalist Approach since their response towards refugee women in livelihood programs is quite inadequate.

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