



“The Most Vulnerable” Adolescents in Gaziantep

Proactive Research to Ensure Programming Responds to Their Needs | May 2015



Background | Why the intentional focus on adolescents?

Mercy Corps recently opened a community information center in Gaziantep, Turkey, that aims to serve both the refugee and host communities. Its mission: provide a safe and inclusive space to give credible information about services and to offer trainings, workshops, coordination meetings and community-centered activities for the diverse population of vulnerable people in Gaziantep.

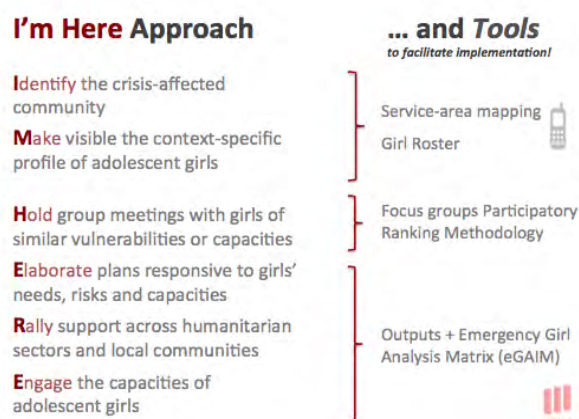
Mercy Corps is committed to ensuring that the center is responsive to the needs and protection risks of the diverse populations it serves, including adolescent girls and boys. However, we know from experience that opening a center or offering services in a designated location does not mean the intended population will ever use them. For example, adolescents from more advantaged households are more likely to learn of the services and thus more likely to access the center. Traditional outreach efforts miss the most vulnerable adolescents and youth who would most significantly benefit from the center’s information and services, as well as the social cohesion that it can provide. Many adolescents have additional access barriers that must be considered, such as the day and time when services are offered, or the need to ensure female staff are present for girl-focused activities. Too often, well intentioned efforts fail to provide the most-needed services to those most in need.

Mercy Corps is committed to changing the status quo. Ensuring we are reaching “the most vulnerable” requires giving this term context-specific meaning: Who lives in our community? How many adolescents? What ages and what sex? Within the community, where the center is situated? What resources are available to adolescents? What portion of adolescents is in, versus out of, school? How many adolescents work? And does vulnerability differ based on citizenship or sex? Additionally, how do adolescents with different vulnerabilities and capacities express their concerns and needs? Answers to these questions matter.

This document outlines key steps that Mercy Corps has taken to identify the adolescents in our community and to learn about their top-line vulnerabilities, needs, and capacities. The document reviews key outputs and findings for each step and then notes key implications for programming.

The Approach | What did Mercy Corps specifically do to be more responsive to adolescents?

In February 2015, Mercy Corps, with support from the Women’s Refugee Commission (WRC), implemented in Gaziantep the first door-to-door application of the *I’m Here Approach*¹ in an urban refugee setting. Implementation included piloting the Population Council mapping tool (*Girl Roster*) in this context. Implementation took place within an estimated half-mile radius of the center. Within this area, the team completed a service-area mapping and mapped the context-specific profile of adolescent girls’ vulnerabilities and capacities. The team also facilitated targeted focus group discussions. It applied the approach and generated key outputs within four weeks. The three-step process is summarized below.



STEP 1 | Identifying the community: What resources already exist within the community?

During this step, the implementation team used the *My Tracks* mobile application² to visually represent the local population in service-area mapping. The rationale for this action was to define with some specificity the community where the center is situated, with an emphasis on key services and public spaces within the community that exist within walking distance of where adolescent girls and boys live.

STEP 2 | Mapping the context-specific profile of girls: Who are the girls living near the center?

The implementation team used the *Girl Roster*, which involves a quick household survey that asks non-sensitive questions that: (1) make visible the most vulnerable adolescent girls who are often invisible to staff; (2) challenge practitioners’ assumptions about girls’ realities within communities they serve, and (3) generate the information base for more evidence-based and responsive programming for girls in the community.

The *Girl Roster* relies on mobile-based applications to collate information and to generate a table that outlines a basic, context-specific profile of adolescent girls within the community. Developed by the Population Council, the *Girl Roster* output divides age-segmented girls into discrete categories that capture their top-line vulnerabilities and capacities. Findings often surprise practitioners, as was the case for the field team in Gaziantep.

Tailoring the *Girl Roster* to the context of Syrians and Turkish in Gaziantep, additional questions recorded: (a) the day of the week girls would mostly likely visit the center; (b) the respondents’ citizenship; (c) boys’ and young men’s school enrollment and employment status; (d) if females older than 12 years old were not only married or single, but also if they were engaged; and (e) the work status of girls and young women. The criterion for adding questions to the programming tool is whether responses will yield actionable information.

¹ Robles, Omar; Katz, Rebecca; Rostagi, Sonia (2014). *I’m Here: Adolescent Girls in Emergencies*. New York: Women's Refugee Commission.

² *My Tracks* is a tracking application which uses a device’s GPS to collect data that can later be exported to an analytics platform.

STEP 3 | Holding targeted focus groups: What do girls & parents with similar experiences have to say?

Based on results from the *Girl Roster*, the implementation team facilitated targeted focus group discussions, relying on the Participatory Ranking Methodology developed by Columbia University's Program on Forced Migration and Health for use in emergency contexts.³⁴

Key Findings and Outputs | What kind of information came out of this approach?

This section outlines the key outputs and findings—many of which were unexpected—from the tools used in these three steps.

STEP 1 | Key Findings while identifying the community

The resource scan visually captured the center's location in relation to the institutions which Mercy Corps might partner with and refer program participants to. The information gathered using the mobile *My Tracks* application was helpful in determining where there were unused or underutilized facilities and services to which adolescents—girls in particular—may have rights, but not access. The main output from this activity is a visual representation of the catchment area, including key service points and public spaces within it.



Key findings from this step include:⁵

- The limited number of **public spaces** where children and adolescents can safely gather.
- The distance between where a majority of Syrians live (**Zone 1**) and where community resources are concentrated in **Zone 2**, across a high-traffic avenue along which the **center** is located.
- The **high concentration of mechanic shops**⁶ in Zone 1 that could become potential partnership opportunities that introduce adolescent girls and boys to the automotive industry.

³ For more information on Participatory Ranking Methodology, refer to: Ager, A., Stark, S., & Potts, A (2010). Participative Ranking Methodology: A Brief Guide: New York: Columbia University, Mailman School of Public Health, Program on Forced Migration and Health.

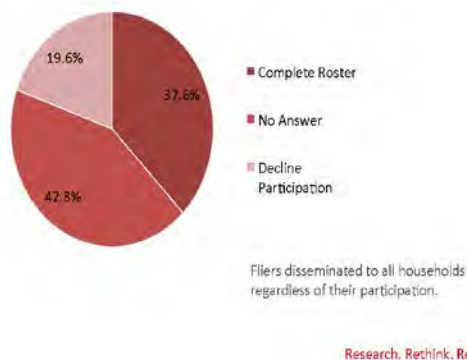
⁴ Convening only one focus group for each sub-population and having small numbers of participants within each focus group are limitations to generalizability; firm conclusions about *community priorities* are not feasible with this sample size. The validity, however, of participants' responses and prioritization is sound, and per the PRM methodology, the findings underscore similarities and differences that are relevant to program decision-making.

⁵ Colors in the bullets correspond with the summary visual output.

⁶ Mercy Corps staff referenced feeling uncomfortable in this area. Thus it's reasonable to assume that girls and their parents may similarly have reservations about girls' unaccompanied mobility through this area.

STEP 2 | Key Findings from mapping the context-specific profile of girls

1317 Households Reached



Within five days, the implementation team reached 1,317 households within an estimated half-mile radius of the center.⁷ The implementation team that systematically went through each community zone varied daily, ranging from 3 to 5 two-person groups. Within mixed-sex groups, one member spoke Arabic and one spoke Turkish.

During implementation, the team occasionally relied on three-person groups in order to provide additional security, e.g., when two individuals entered a narrow alley or an apartment building, one team member remained attentive to people entering and leaving the area.

After producing one table that collapsed results from Syrian and Turkish families, the implementation team chose to generate two tables, sorting adolescent girls' top-line vulnerabilities, needs and capacities based upon their household nationality.

TURKISH ONLY

Age Group	Unmarried				Married/ Or Has a Child		Total
	In School		Out Of School		Has A Child	Doesn't Have A Child	
	Living with both parents	Living with just one or neither parent	Living with both parents	Living with just one or neither parent			
06-09	37	0	1	0			38
10-14	48	4	1	0	0	0	53
15-17	29	2	3	0	0	1	35
18-24	19	2	3	0	6	2	32
Total	133	8	8	0	6	3	158

SYRIAN ONLY

Age Group	Unmarried				Married/ Or Has a Child		Total
	In School		Out Of School		Has A Child	Doesn't Have A Child	
	Living with both parents	Living with just one or neither parent	Living with both parents	Living with just one or neither parent			
06-09	20	2	58	7			87
10-14	50	9	35	8	0	0	102
15-17	26	11	13	3	5	10	68
18-24	12	1	11	1	22	7	54
Total	108	23	117	19	27	17	311

Key findings from this step include:

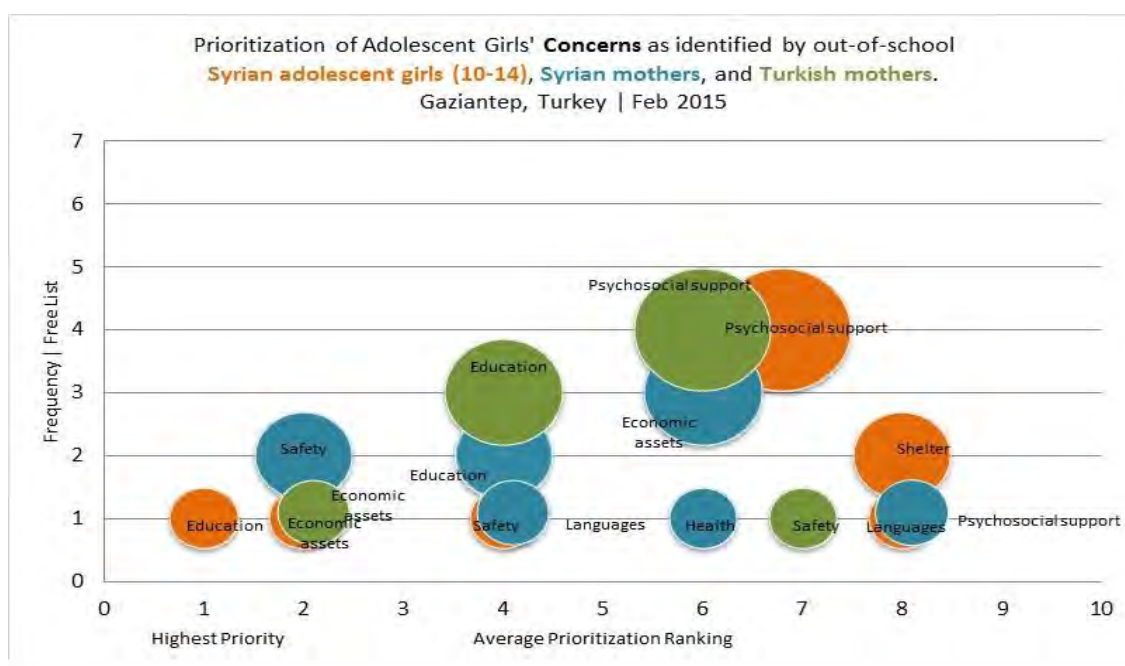
- Significant differences between the profile of Syrian and Turkish girls (6-17 yrs.)**
 For example:
 - Syrian girls account for 96.1% of out-of-school girls in the community. Among in-school girls, Syrians account for nearly half (49.6%).
 - Sixteen girls (15-17 yrs.) in the community are currently married or engaged—15 of these girls are Syrian and 11 of them (including the Turkish girl) do not yet have children.
 - The number of married women (18-24 yrs.) is larger among Syrians as compared to Turkish girls —29 and 8, respectively.
- None of the married girls are currently attending school**
 - Of the 53 girls and young women who are married, available data on 40 of them reveal that none are in school and 31 of these 40 married females are not adults.

⁷ Reached refers to an attempt to disseminate a flier and have a resident complete the Girl Roster.

- **More Syrian boys at every age category (6-17 yrs.) are out of school than attending school**
 - The ratio of boys who do not attend school but work is higher in late adolescence (15-17 yrs.) as compared to childhood (6-9 yrs.) or early/mid adolescence (10-14 years).
- **Adult respondents stated that girls in their households would access the center on weekends over weekdays, with a preference for Saturday over Sunday.**
 - Average number of entries is more than double for Saturday and Sunday, over weekdays.

STEP 3 | Key Findings from the targeted focus groups

Based on results from the Girl Roster, the implementation team facilitated targeted focus group discussions. In one day, the field team facilitated PRM discussions with:⁸ Syrian out-of-school adolescent girls (10-14yrs, n=10); Syrian mothers (n=11); out-of-school Syrian adolescent boys (10-14 yrs., n=7); Turkish mothers (n=7).



Key findings from this step include:

- **Syrian adolescent girls and boys who are out of school assert that education and economic support are priorities.**
- **Adolescent girls and boys reference a greater number of times their unique concerns related to psychosocial support, and girls and boys self-expressed their psychosocial concerns differently, e.g., girls referenced feeling isolated and shy and expressed a desire for more social activities with other girls and their parents, while boys solely referenced social activities, specifically opportunities to play sports.**
- **Prioritization, however, is not the only take-away.** Syrian girls and Turkish mothers, for example, referenced psychosocial support the greatest number of times. Girls expressed feeling isolated, wanting opportunities to interact with friends and parents away from the home, lacking an area to play and feeling shy. Mothers—Turkish and Syrian—referenced their daughters “introversion.”
- **Syrian and Turkish mothers noted the limited number of safe public spaces in the community.**

⁸ The team facilitated a PRM discussion with two fathers who chaperoned their family members to the focus groups. The team recorded their inputs. However, in keeping with the methodology and for reporting purposes, their responses are not outlined in this report.

Program considerations | How is Mercy Corps acting on these findings?

The service map, the *Girl Roster* results, and the focus group discussions generated information that will enable Mercy Corps to: modify outreach initiatives; build community partnerships; create or strengthen adolescent-friendly referrals; develop complementary programming to be more responsive to the profile of adolescent girls and boys in the community, with an emphasis on the tailored programs that take into account the area-specific vulnerabilities, needs and capacities of adolescent girls. As the Mercy Corps team develops its operations and services, some **program considerations** are:

For adolescent girls:

- **Design and modify asset-building programming to the unique profile of Syrian and Turkish adolescent girls who live around the center.** No population of adolescent girls is homogenous. However, the needs and capacities of adolescent girls who live near the center are considerably different when data are sorted by citizenship. Specifically, Syrians account for a larger proportion of out-of-school girls. Turkish girls certainly have school-related concerns and needs; however, there are differences in baseline needs and capacities between Syrian and Turkish girls. Parents and girls themselves—Syrian and Turkish—also referenced a need for psychosocial support and opportunities to interact with others. Mercy Corps should modify activities accordingly, e.g., focusing on participatory ways to build Syrian girls’ life skills and literacy competencies (in Arabic and Turkish), while addressing Turkish girls’ school-related curricula through similar methods. As the center works with Syrian and Turkish girls, the youth team can identify and build upon their common experiences, challenges and aspirations and then identify/frame services around common challenges and concerns expressed by Syrian and Turkish families. This also includes creating a feedback mechanism that engages and involves the Syrian and Turkish adolescent girls on programming.
- **Young women—Syrian and Turkish—could serve as mentors for girl-centered programming.** There are 86 Syrian and Turkish young women between the ages of 18 and 24 (54 Syrian, 32 Turkish) who could serve as mentors, volunteers, or staff, and several women who live near the center that have completed secondary school. Additionally, some already-married women could also support programs and outreach efforts.
- **Partner with civil society organizations (CSOs) within Turkish and Syrian communities so the center becomes a liaison and valued resource and avoids being labeled a resource for Syrians only.** The implementation team was previously familiar with several service-based organizations. The community mapping, however, brought several community-based organizations to staff’s attention. Mercy Corps could partner with select CSOs to coordinate community outreach or joint activities for adolescents. Since Turkish families were less engaged during activity implementation and these CSOs likely have built up capital and trust with the community, particularly with Turkish families, strategic partnerships could enable the center to recruit Turkish mentors and to promote social cohesion between Syrian and Turkish adolescents.
- **Verify that referral partners have the capacity to provide adolescent-friendly information and services to Syrians and Turks.** Central to the center’s mission is its ability to link community members to health and social services. In keeping with its commitment to safely

Creating a Safe Space for Girls

Mercy Corps has taken several steps to make its community center safe for girls, including:

- *Opening on Saturdays*
- *Creating girl-only activities and classes for adolescents*
- *Scheduling girls’ activities/classes at specific times or ensuring they are on separate floors from adults/boys when times overlap*
- *Ensuring the presence of female staff and volunteers with girls whenever they are present*
- *Offering transportation for girls under the age of 14*
- *Creating female-only prayer room and breastfeeding/relaxation room*

serve adolescent girls, Mercy Corps should research partners' capacity to deliver adolescent-friendly services that are void of stigma and discrimination. This action may require additional time and resources, including building key partners' capacity to deliver such services, e.g., health clinics.

For adolescent boys:

- **Create time and space for Syrian adolescent boys to convene in settings that (1) offer non-formal education; (2) promote gender-equitable masculinities; and (3) build their financial literacy.** *Girl Roster* results find that most boys are not attending school, and one-third of adolescent boys (10-17) are working and not attending school.

Conclusion

This research, which complements Mercy Corps' assessment on access to information and services in Gaziantep, provides invaluable insights into the needs of the most vulnerable adolescents around our new center, as well as in Gaziantep more generally. Mercy Corps anticipates continuing to use this approach and other innovative methods in the future, so that the center can support more individuals throughout the city.

ABOUT MERCY CORPS

Mercy Corps is a leading global humanitarian agency saving and improving lives in the world's toughest places. With a network of experienced professionals in more than 40 countries, we partner with local communities to put bold ideas into action to help people recover, overcome hardship and build better lives. Now, and for the future.



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