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Intentional Design Practitioner Report

Proactive Engagement with the Intentional Design and I'm Here Approaches to Ensure Programming Responds to the Needs of the Most Vulnerable Adolescents in Gaziantep, Turkey

By Amy Ibold, Altunay Özatay, Omar Robles, Karen Scriven, Matt Streng, and Amie Wells

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About

The Intentional Design approach has been foundational to the Population Council's work since 2000, when on-the-ground programs to reach the most excluded girls in the poorest communities greatly expanded. This practitioner report is part of a series of 20 reports reflecting work in sites around the world from 2000 to 2020. The Intentional Design approach was implemented in these sites with nongovernmental and governmental partners who explored the question: Why invest in girls? Once that was understood, the Council offered learning tools to navigate the questions: Where do we work? With whom do we work? When, chronologically, in the girls' life cycles are the most crucial moments? Which content is meaningful and realistic and builds girls' protective assets? What does success look like for different segments of girls?

In 2013, the Girl Roster tool was added when it was clear that many partners lacked the technical and scientific resources to establish the "universe" of girls in the places they had selected to work. Intentional Design tools—with the Roster being the most known and catalytic learning aid—have been utilized in South and East Asia; the Middle East; Central, East, and West Africa; North America; Latin America; and the Caribbean.

The Roster has been adapted for use in an array of sociodemographic contexts including dispersed rural villages, poor urban neighborhoods, conflict zones, refugee camps, densely packed informal/migrant-receiving settlements, high-risk HIV zones, before and after epidemics, as a rebuilding tool, and in Native American reservation communities. In every context, the Roster provided a transformative opportunity to see girls' lives more systematically, drawing both quantitative and qualitative information. The efforts to estimate and segment the universe of girls has challenged initial assumptions about girls, families, safe and unsafe zones in communities, and the accessibility and relevance of services, even among those who felt they knew their community, including longstanding program staff. Across the board, practitioners report that on-the-ground application of the learning tools generates surprising and useful knowledge vital to shaping their work, assessing its reach, and articulating plans for expansion.

In the 20 reports that comprise this series, our partners share their experiences applying Intentional Design tools and principles. The reports represent just a few on-the-ground projects, but most of our partners report that the Intentional Design approach has taken root. We honor our partners for their honesty and dedication. They inspire us.
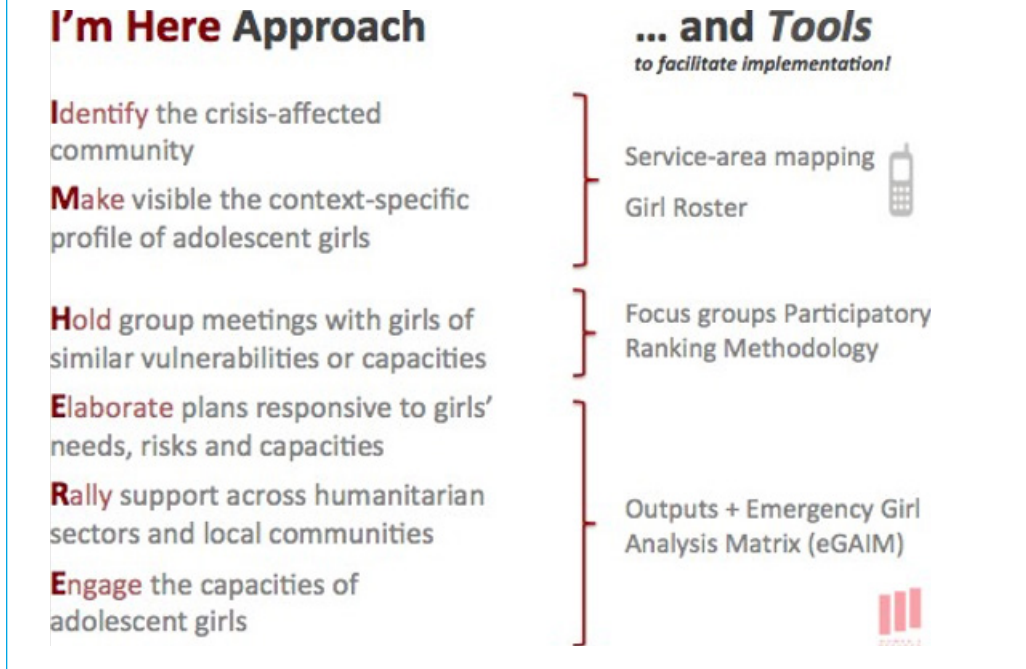
Judith Bruce and Sophie Soares

Authors, *Intentional Design: Reaching the Most Excluded Girls in the Poorest Communities—A Guide for Practitioners and Advocates*, from which these reports were excerpted.

Proactive Engagement with the Intentional Design and I'm Here Approaches to Ensure Programming Responds to the Needs of the Most Vulnerable Adolescents in Gaziantep, Turkey

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Findings and Decisions	Implementation Observations and Adaptations
• Among Syrian (largely refugees within the last 24 months) and Turkish (native-born) girls living within the catchment area around the Mercy Corps Community Information center, there were significant variations between each ethnic group's school-going status and language abilities. The vast majority of out-of-school girls in the community were Syrian, and virtually all were married or engaged (15–17-year-olds). None of the 53 very young married girls or married young women (on which information was available) were in school. • There was an ample supply of potential mentors, young women aged 18–24 years with the likely skills to become mentors. • Boys and girls both expressed psychosocial concerns but they identify them differently vis-à-vis context. Girls spoke much more about feeling isolated and shy and wanting more social contact, whereas boys solely referenced social activities and opportunities to play sports. • While including and honoring both Turkish and Arabic speakers, CBOs/civil society created more social cohesion among the refugee and host populations and encouraged access by both to the refugee service center. • Adolescent Syrian boys, like girls, needed more informal education including financial literacy, and boys needed dedicated content to foster "gender-equitable masculinities"—notions of masculinity that promote norms, attitudes, and patterns of behavior for boys and young men that help them develop more equitable attitudes that benefit girls and young women.	• The Girl Roster laid the foundation for segment-specific focus groups with adults, especially mothers, and boys and girls (segmented by age, ethnicity, and scholarship). • In focus group discussions (knowing that access issues were both geographic and social), adolescent girls and mothers were asked when girls would be most able to access the youth center. They responded: weekends, especially Saturdays.

FIGURE 1. I'M HERE APPROACH AND TOOLS TO FACILITATE IMPLEMENTATION

I'm Here Approach

Identify the crisis-affected community

Make visible the context-specific profile of adolescent girls

Hold group meetings with girls of similar vulnerabilities or capacities

Elaborate plans responsive to girls' needs, risks and capacities

Rally support across humanitarian sectors and local communities

Engage the capacities of adolescent girls

... and *Tools*
to facilitate implementation!

Service-area mapping
Girl Roster

Focus groups Participatory Ranking Methodology

Outputs + Emergency Girl Analysis Matrix (eGAIM)

Background | Why the Intentional Focus on Adolescents?

Mercy Corps opened a community information center in Gaziantep, Turkey, in 2015 that aimed to serve both the refugee and host communities. Its mission was to 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 was committed to ensuring that the center was responsive to the needs and protection risks of the diverse populations it served, including adolescent girls and boys. However, we knew 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 and access the services. Traditional outreach efforts miss the most vulnerable adolescents and youth who would most benefit from the services, as

well as the social cohesion that it can provide. Many adolescents, varying by age, gender, ethnicity, and marital status, have additional status-specific access barriers that must be considered, such as the day and time when services are offered, or the need to ensure an acceptable staff profile (e.g., 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 and partners were and are committed to changing the status quo. 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 is the center situated?

- What adjunct resources are available to adolescents? What portion of adolescents is in school versus out of school?

- How many adolescents work?

- Does vulnerability differ based on citizenship or sex? Additionally, how do adolescents with different challenges and capacities use different words to express their concerns and needs?

Answers to these questions matter. This report outlines key steps that Mercy Corps has taken to identify the adolescents in the Gaziantep community and to learn about their biggest vulnerabilities, needs, and capacities. The report reviews key outputs and findings for each step and then notes the key implications for programming gathered at the time.

The Intentional Design "I'm Here" Approach: What Mercy Corps Did To Be More Responsive to the Internal Heterogeneity of Adolescents in a Refugee Zone

In February 2015, Mercy Corps, with support from the Women's Refugee Commission (WRC) within the broad framework of the Girls in Emergencies Collaborative, implemented in Gaziantep the first door-to-door application of the I'm Here approach in an urban refugee setting (see Figure 1). Implementation included piloting the Population Council's Girl Roster in this context. Implementation took place within an estimated half-mile radius of the Mercy Corps Community Information center.

Within this area, the team completed a service-area mapping of facilities, while also mapping adolescent girls in the catchment area by their status—schooling, social, family, marital, child-bearing situations. Subsequent to this rostering, the team conducted targeted focus group discussions. The team applied the approach and generated key outputs to program design within four weeks. The three-step process is summarized as follows.

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

During this step, the implementation team used the My Tracks mobile application[1] 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 in the catchment area near the center?

Tailoring the Girl Roster to the context of Syrians and Turks in Gaziantep, additional questions recorded included: 1) the day of the week girls would mostly likely visit the center; 2) the respondents' citizenship; 3) boys' and young men's school enrollment and employment status; 4) if females older than 12 years were not only married or single, but also if they were engaged; and 5) the work status of girls and young women. In an effort to keep the questionnaire brief, the criterion for adding questions to the Roster was whether responses would yield significant actionable information and remain "nonsensitive."

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

Based on results from the Girl Roster, the implementation team facilitated targeted focus group discussions with specific segments (e.g., Syrian girls aged 10–14 out of school), using the Participatory Ranking Methodology (PRM) developed by Columbia University's Program on Forced Migration and Health for use in emergency contexts.

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[1] MyTracks no longer exists, but any fully functional GPS tracking application could supplant MyTracks.

FIGURE 2. COMMUNITY RESOURCE SCAN

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 Community Resource Scan (see Figure 2) visually captured the center's location in relation to two elements: the institutions that Mercy Corps might partner with and girls' locations. This information was used for the identification of where to refer program participants and how to strengthen content. 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 was a visual representation of the catchment area, including key service points and public spaces within it.

Key findings from this step include:

- 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 (Zone 2), across a high-traffic avenue along which the center is located.

- The high concentration of mechanic shops in Zone 1 that could become potential partnership opportunities that introduce adolescent girls and boys to the automotive industry (but could be unsafe—pending further study for girls).

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

In Stage 4, 1,317 households within an estimated half-mile radius of the center were interviewed (between 250 and 350 a day) (see Figure 3). The implementation team that systematically went through each community zone varied daily, ranging from three to five two-person groups. Within mixed-sex rostering pairs, one member spoke Arabic and one spoke Turkish.

During implementation, the team occasionally relied on three-person groups 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).
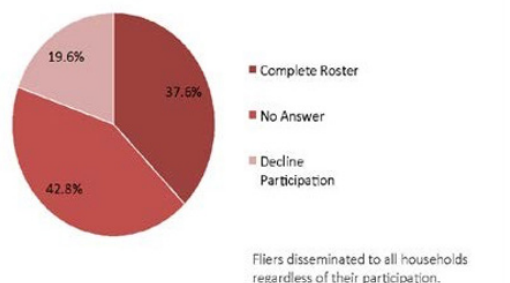
TABLE 1. GIRL ROSTER RESULTS FOR TURKISH POPULATION ONLY

Age group	Unmarried				Married/Or has a child		
	In School		Out of School		Has a child	Does not have a child	Total
	Living with both parents	Living with just one or neither parent	Living with both parents	Living with just one or neither parent			
6–9	37	0	1	0			38
10–14	48	4	1	0	0	0	53
15–17	29	2	3	0	0	1	35
18–20	19	2	3	0	6	2	32
TOTAL	133	8	8	0	6	3	158

TABLE 2. GIRL ROSTER RESULTS FOR SYRIAN POPULATION

Age group	Unmarried				Married/Or has a child		
	In School		Out of School		Has a child	Does not have a child	Total
	Living with both parents	Living with just one or neither parent	Living with both parents	Living with just one or neither parent			
6–9	20	2	58	7			87
10–14	50	9	35	8	0	0	102
15–17	26	11	13	3	5	10	68
18–20	12	1	11	1	22	7	54
TOTAL	108	23	117	19	27	17	311

FIGURE 3. STAGE 4 ROSTER PARTICIPATION OVERVIEW

19.6%
37.6%
42.8%

- Complete Roster
- No Answer
- Decline Participation

Fliers disseminated to all households regardless of their participation.
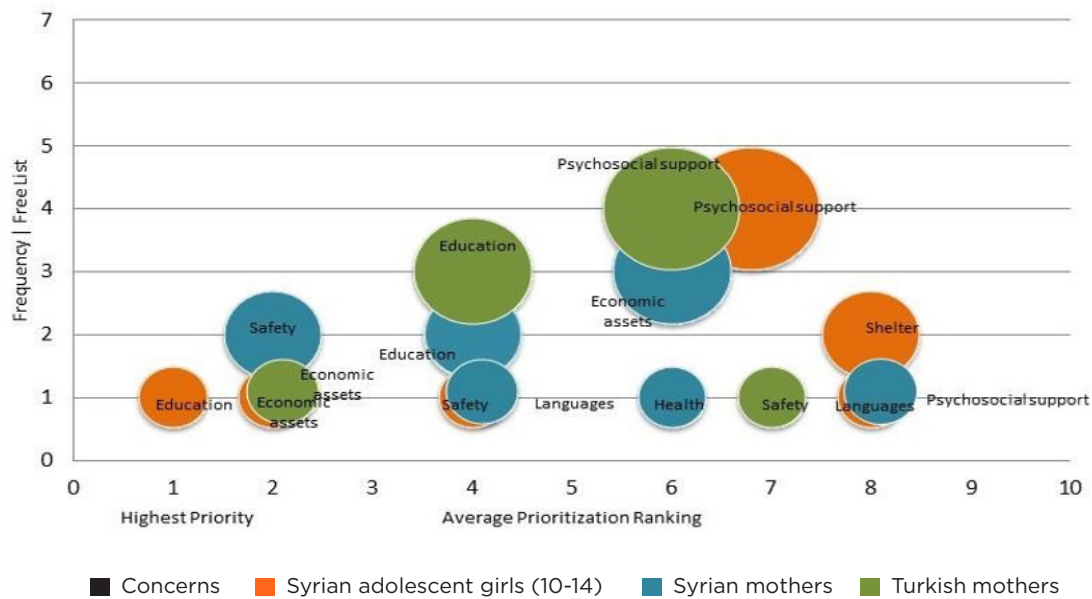
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After producing one table that collapsed results from Syrian and Turkish families, the implementation team chose to generate two tables, sorting adolescent girls' top-line vulnerabilities, needs, and capacities based upon their household nationality (see Tables 1 and 2).

Key findings from this step include:

- Significant differences between the profiles of Syrian and Turkish girls (6–17 years).

- For example:

  - Syrian girls accounted for 96.1% of out-of-school girls in the community. Among in-school girls, Syrians accounted for nearly half (49.6%).

FIGURE 4. PRIORITIZATION OF ADOLESCENT GIRLS' CONCERNS AS IDENTIFIED BY OUT-OF-SCHOOL SYRIAN ADOLESCENT GIRLS (10-14), SYRIAN MOTHERS, AND TURKISH MOTHERS. GAZIANTEP, TURKEY, FEBRUARY 2015

- 16 girls (15–17 years old) in the community were married or engaged—15 of these girls are Syrian and 11 of them (including the Turkish girl) did not yet have children.

- The number of married women (18–20 years old) was larger among Syrians as compared to Turkish girls—29 and 8, respectively.

- None of the married girls were attending school at the time they were rostered:

  - Of the 53 girls and young women who were married, available information on 40 of them revealed that none were in school and 31 were not adults.

  - More Syrian boys at every age category (6–17 years old) were out of school than attending school.

  - The ratio of boys who did not attend school but worked was higher in

late adolescence (15–17 years old) as compared to childhood (6–9 years old) or early/mid adolescence (10–14 years old).

- Adult respondents stated that girls in their households would access the center on weekends rather than weekdays, with a preference for Saturday over Sunday.

- Average number of entries was more than double for Saturday and Sunday, over weekdays.

STEP 3 | Key findings from the targeted focus groups with adolescents by gender and age, and mothers by ethnicity, to assist program design

Based on results from the Girl Roster, the implementation team facilitated targeted focus group discussions. In one day, the field team facilitated Participatory Ranking Methodology discussions with: Syrian out-of-school

adolescent girls (10–14 years old, n=10); Syrian mothers (n=11); out-of-school Syrian adolescent boys (10–14 years, n=7); and Turkish mothers (n=7) (see Figure 4).

Key findings from this step include:

- Out-of-school Syrian adolescent girls and boys asserted that education and economic support were priorities.

- While adolescent girls and boys both frequently referenced the need for psychosocial support, girls and boys self-expressed their 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.

- Girls' and boys' distinctive prioritizations, however, were not the only takeaway. 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.

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

The service map, the Girl Roster results, and the information generated from the focus group discussions enabled Mercy Corps to:

1. Modify outreach initiatives;

2. Build community partnerships;

3. Create or strengthen adolescent-friendly referrals;

4. 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 (in a high-density area) vulnerabilities of the population by age, gender, and ethnicity.

As the Mercy Corps team developed its operations and services, some program quantitative and qualitative information gathered during rostering in the follow-up focus groups suggested the following options. (Also see Box 1 for steps to create a safe space for girls.)

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, a more useful profile of adolescent girls who live near the center is revealed when information is sorted by citizenship.

  Specifically, Syrians accounted for a larger proportion of out-of-school girls. Turkish girls certainly had school-related concerns and needs; however, there were 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 the more often out-of-school 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 were 86 Syrian and Turkish young women 18–24 (54 Syrian, 32 Turkish) in the half-mile radius of the center who could serve as mentors, volunteers, or staff, and several women who lived near the center who had completed secondary school. Additionally, some already-married women could also support programs and outreach efforts.

- Partner with both Turkish and Syrian identified civil society organizations (CSOs) so the center becomes a liaison and valued resource for all ethnicities 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 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 was its ability to link community members to health and social services. In keeping with its commitment to safely 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 nonformal 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

The I'm Here and similar Intentional Design approach aligned with Mercy Corps' commitment to find and reach the most marginalized adolescents. In Gaziantep, the approach provided valuable insights into the diverse needs of Syrian and Turkish adolescent girls and their caregivers. In response, Mercy Corps expanded the offerings of its youth center to meet needs identified by girls and their caregivers, such as class offerings and open hours at the center. Following this initial

implementation, Mercy Corps conducted a second I'm Here approach implementation in Gaziantep that was inclusive of adolescent boys (using the Boy Matrix that was developed in Iraq with WRC and Mercy Corps in June 2015), and sought to illuminate the specific needs of married adolescent girls. Globally, Mercy Corps piloted the approach in Guatemala, Haiti, Iraq, Lebanon, Mali, Nigeria, Syria, and Yemen between 2016 and 2019. Mercy Corps also conducted a qualitative analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of I'm Here through semistructured interviews with teams that implemented the approach. Piloting the I'm Here approach illuminated the overall importance and effort it takes to find and reach adolescents in fragile settings. It was also documented that the I'm Here approach required a substantial amount of time and resources, making it difficult to employ in the first weeks or even months of an emergency. Mercy Corps continues to examine how to best implement the approach (i.e., integrate it into existing assessments, and create criteria for when it should be undertaken).

To learn more, please visit: https://www.mercycorps.org/.

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