



# I'M HERE

## A Summary of Mercy Corps' Youth Needs Assessment in Gaziantep, Turkey

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### Introduction

Mercy Corps' programming in Gaziantep, launched in 2014, focuses on the dissemination of accurate and contextualized information on services available to vulnerable refugee and host communities, as well as the creation of safe and inclusive spaces that offer women and youth aged 5 to 25 years old, with opportunities to develop their skills, socialize, and relieve stress.

As a learning organization, Mercy Corps is committed to continuously assessing community needs to ensure programming remains responsive to the needs of those we serve, including adolescents and youth. A first series of complementary assessments took place in 2014-2015, using mixed methods. In April – May 2016, Mercy Corps conducted its second *I'm Here* assessment to better understand the needs of adolescents and married youth under the age of 25 in particular.

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## Assessment Objectives

In 2015, Mercy Corps conducted a localized needs assessment in urban Gaziantep to map the profiles of vulnerable adolescents alongside the services and resources that are available to them in their communities. The findings of the 2015 *I'm Here* assessment went on to inform the scope of Mercy Corps' youth activities and the physical design of our community information center.

With an eye towards inclusive programming, Mercy Corps conducted a second needs assessment in 2016 to re-examine the needs of the most vulnerable refugee and host community youth. Target groups included:

- Boys and girls between the ages of 15 and 18
- Married girls and young women between the ages of 19 and 25

## Research Methodology

The *I'm Here* approach refers to a series of steps and complementary field tools that help humanitarian actors safely link adolescent girls to life-saving information, services, and resources from the start of an emergency and beyond. In line with this approach, Mercy Corps' needs assessment:

- » Leveraged GPS technology to identify and map existing services
- » Conducted mobile data collection to rapidly produce a context-specific profile of girls, boys, men, and women in the targeted area(s)
- » Sought to identify the needs, priorities, protection concerns, and proposed solutions from adolescents themselves

The field team identified two neighborhoods in urban Gaziantep, Dumlupinar and Kara Kabir, for service mapping and household surveys. Both neighborhoods have a high concentration of Syrian residents living alongside the host community. Mercy Corps staff identified these as 'vulnerable' neighborhoods based on the profiles of former and current program participants who reside in these areas. Direct observation of living and working conditions in Dumlupinar and Kara Kabir also indicate that both Syrian and Turkish residents are generally low-income residents.



*Results of the service mapping exercise, which identified local resources in the targeted neighborhoods of Kara Kabir (top) and Dumlupinar (bottom)*

The field team canvassed 1,884 households in the targeted neighborhoods in April 2016 to collect information through a mobile data survey. A total of 327 families (155 Syrian and 172 Turkish households) chose to participate in the survey, representing 17% of total households reached. The remaining 83% of households were either not at home when the research team knocked on their door or chose not to participate.

To identify qualitative concerns, priorities, and proposed solutions from the target group themselves, the research team invited Syrian and Turkish women respondents to attend focus group discussions (FGDs). Fifteen Syrian girls and women aged 15-25 attended the focus group discussions; Turkish women invited to the FGDs did not attend.

## Findings

### Profiles of Syrian and Turkish Boys (15-18)

Adolescent boys (ages 15-17) from both communities face low school enrollment rates and limited access to information on services. 70 percent of Syrian boys surveyed are not enrolled in school; 33 percent of Turkish boys living in the same neighborhoods are also not attending school.

Figures from the household survey reveal that the majority of working Syrian boys (64 percent) spend their free time in the home. They are therefore not accessing available services such as social activities or non-formal educational opportunities. Isolation in the home and the workplace likely contributes to the reported lack of information about available services in this group (18 percent).

### Profiles of Syrian and Turkish Girls (15-18)

Syrian Girls (15-18)	% Out of School	% Working	% Know about services
Single (61% of respondents)	58%	28%	19%
Married (25% of respondents)	67%	11%	22%

While approximately one-fifth of Syrian girls surveyed know about available services, the majority report that they cannot access these services due to the Turkish language barrier. In focus group discussions, girls expressed several concerns that impact their

ability to access services, such as concerns over their personal safety, feelings of isolation, and a lack of support networks in their communities to assist them in accessing services under the temporary protection regime.

Turkish Girls (15-18)	% Out of School	% Working	% Know about services
Single (92% of all respondents)	27%	26%	66%
Married (7% of all respondents)	Data not available	0%	80%

Vulnerable Turkish girls report higher rates of knowledge about services as compared to Syrian peers, however a majority of respondents indicated that they struggle to access these services. The primary barrier cited were

financial reasons, which may include 'hidden costs' such as transportation fees.

## Profiles of Syrian and Turkish Women (19-25)

In focus group discussions, Syrian women stated that a major barrier for accessing services is needing permission from their caregivers or husbands. Mothers face challenges in accessing services as in many cases they cannot identify a person to provide temporary childcare. Common concerns of both married and single women include physical security, livelihoods and income, legal status, and the language barrier with the host community.

Syrian Women (19-25)	% Know about services
Single (61% of respondents)	20%
Married (31% of respondents)	23%

### Turkish Women (19-25) % Know about services

Single (44% of respondents)	80%
Married (50% of respondents)	44%

Turkish women in this age group were invited to participate in FGDs, however none of the participants attended the discussions as anticipated. As a result, the assessment produced limited data on their service needs and barriers to access.

# Recommendations

The assessment uncovered continued high levels of information and service needs among vulnerable youth in Gaziantep. Boys, girls, men, and women face unique challenges that limit their awareness of, and access to, services that are available to them within their communities. The research team recommends the following programmatic interventions:

- Extend Mercy Corps' current information dissemination work to design targeted information and outreach strategy for vulnerable groups:
  - Adolescent boys and girls: Information to help them understand their rights and how to access available services
  - Young women and married girls: Information on safety issues, health, pregnancy, birth, new babies, and other gender-related legal issues
  - Families: Information to support daily life and intercultural understanding, such as information on community traditions, habits, and maps of the city
- Expand adolescent leadership programs, to empower boys and girls to learn new skills and prioritize intercultural activities that bring youth together.
- Address the childcare barrier that prevents mothers from accessing information and services.
- Design intercultural activities and social events where women can share their experience/stories in a safe place with other women, including Turkish language and Arabic literacy courses.
- Design family-oriented activities to promote the inclusion of household members with greater limitations on access to information and services.

## Conclusion

Mercy Corps has prioritized the inclusion of invisible and underserved groups in its programming. The *I'm Here* assessment, conducted alongside an assessment of information needs, places youth at the center of rights-based, asset-building programming to support service access for refugees and host communities in Turkey.

Mercy Corps has initiated new and revised program activities in response to the findings of this assessment, including a project specifically designed to work with young married women. This project incorporates extensive outreach to local community leaders and male family members.

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### About Mercy Corps

Mercy Corps is a leading global organization powered by the belief that a better world is possible. In disaster, in hardship, in more than 40 countries around the world, we partner to put bold solutions into action — helping people triumph over adversity and build stronger communities from within. Now, and for the future.



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