SITUATION OF REFUGEES LIVING IN DİYARBAKİR, BİSMİL
FIELD NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT

October, 2021
5. SOCIAL INCLUSION

The number of children at the age of 6 to 17 in the households is 183. Among them, 77 (65%) are living in Bismil. Since it's largely a rural settlement and work is performed in the field, focus group meetings and surveys are as follows. The findings from the analysis results of key individual interviews made in Bismil district who never obtained a temporary protection ID card or whose ID card is against expressing this problem.

This study aims to identify the socio-economic status of the Syrian individuals and children failing to attend school (5%). 87% of the respondents state that during the pandemic are the reduction of income (85%), loss of jobs (42%), being unable and rights and services and the problems they face under the COVID-19 pandemic under temporary protection living in the Bismil district of Diyarbakır, their access to

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The Dicle River passes through the district center and meets the geographical

INTRODUCTION

During the pandemic, while 33% of school-aged children had access to remote

Lack of financial means, peer bullying and language barrier have been cited

set up for the illiterate population and measures are taken to increase the

9% of the population doesn't know how to read and write; 40% are literate but

Education Information

The answers given during the key individual interviews to the question

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This report has been prepared by Support to Life within the scope of the project carried out as the implementing partner of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe and financed by the European Union Humanitarian Aid. This document covers humanitarian aid activities implemented with the financial assistance of the European Union. The views expressed herein should not be taken, in any way, to reflect the official opinion of the European Union, and the European Commission is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains.
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This study aims to identify the socio-economic status of the Syrian individuals under temporary protection living in the Bismil district of Diyarbakır, their access to rights and services and the problems they face under the COVID-19 pandemic conditions.

Bismil is the second district with the highest number of migrant residents after Bağlar, one of the central districts of Diyarbakır. In other words, Bismil is the rural district with the highest number of foreigners. Therefore it has been preferred for the needs assessment.

According to the main findings under the report, Bismil district is preferred by Syrian refugees due to its agricultural employment potential. Following agricultural labor, the busiest employment areas are construction work and waste collecting, respectively.

It is observed that there are also child labor in the lines of work such as agricultural labor and construction labor that create the highest employment. The employment potential in the district, which is viewed positively by adults, can become a threat that negatively affects schooling or school attendance for children at school age. Low education levels among parents, families working at similar jobs in Syria and insufficient awareness with regard to schooling are other factors that create this outcome. Consideration of crowded family population as an agricultural force among agricultural communities creates risks such as child labor and child marriage.

Interviews measuring awareness of individuals on the COVID-19 pandemic revealed that there is no problem with overall access to health services, that pandemic awareness is in place and it is known that vaccination is mandatory, that there are not many individuals in the family who got COVID-19, on the other hand there is a low tendency to get vaccinated. The negative outlook in the Bismil district regarding vaccination tendency matches the low disposition towards vaccination across Diyarbakır. The lack of means regarding hygiene measures for refugees doing physical work in agriculture and construction increases the spread of disease.

Another important finding from the study reveals that the refugees need legal consultation on matters such as work accidents and labor benefits. On the other hand, in particular the focus group conducted with women highlights the need for personal psychological counseling.
INTRODUCTION

This report addresses the socio-economic structures, working and living conditions, poverty and deprivations among refugee communities living in the Bismil District under the scope of the field works conducted by Support to Life Association in Diyarbakır and covers the field findings on the risks faced by them.

Diyarbakır is the 12th largest metropolis of Turkey with a population of 1.7 million people. Diyarbakır has a total of 17 districts, including four central districts (Bağlar, Kayapınar, Sur, Yenişehir). The central districts contain 65% of the population, corresponding to 1.1 million people. Apart from the central districts, the most populous districts are Ergani and Bismil, respectively. Bismil is the 5th district with the highest population.

Bismil is about 48 km to Diyarbakır provincial center, 41 km to Batman and 94 km to Mardin. Its distance to the city center puts Bismil at a disadvantage. The Diyarbakır-Batman road passing through the district center makes the district a transit passage route.

The district population is about 118,605 people according to 2020 data. After Bağlar, Bismil is the district with the highest number of refugees under temporary protection status in Diyarbakır. A large portion of the population (54%) comprises young people. The education status of 66% of the population is primary and secondary school and high school while 7% of the population has undergraduate and graduate degree.

The Dicle River passes through the district center and meets the geographical borders of various neighborhoods. Due to this advantage in irrigation, the district population’s main livelihood is growing agricultural crops (grain).

Bismil District’s Location in the Province and in the Region
THE STUDY’S METHOD

Refugees who are supported by the project activities of Support to Life Diyarbakır and residing in Bismil district are the target group of this study.

Under the scope of the field work, surveys were conducted with 118 randomly selected refugees, face-to-face focus group meetings were held with 12 key individuals, and face-to-face focus group meetings were held with two randomly selected groups of 20-24 year-olds and 32-64 year-olds.

The survey consists of 46 questions on individuals and households, children, livelihood, health and prior needs. The survey was supported by close-ended and open-ended questions. The field team reached the target group with phone calls and through mobile data collection method.

Phone calls and focus group meetings were made between June 26 and July 2, 2021. Focus group meetings were held with individuals aged 20-24 years and 32-64 years. As for interviews with key individuals, community leaders such as mukhtars, opinion leaders and heads of crowded households were interviewed.

Key individuals and focus group meeting participants were contacted through Support to Life Association outreach teams as well as volunteers residing in Bismil.

While qualitative research is the main method used in the study, findings from surveys were analyzed using basic quantitative methods (ratio assessments). As a major limitation, survey meetings could not be made on field and face to face due to the pandemic. However, while this may look like a disadvantage, the survey was completed in as early as seven days through mobile application.
FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The findings from the analysis results of key individual interviews made in the field, focus group meetings and surveys are as follows.

1. DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Bismil district is a residential area that receives periodic migration for seasonal agriculture from the other districts of Diyarbakır and surrounding, independent of the refugee phenomenon. In particular, northern districts of Diyarbakır such as Kulp, Silvan and Hani and the districts of Batman have migration activity to and from Bismil. In sociological terms, the Bismil district is open to migration due to seasonal agriculture and interaction with foreign communities. This has positive implications for the social inclusion of the Syrian community with that of the Bismil district.

While there is no statistical data, it is estimated that over 3,000 Syrian refugees live in Bismil. Since it’s largely a rural settlement and work is performed in agricultural areas, the requirement for the refugees to have temporary protection ID card and to keep their ID cards up to date is not that strict. It has been observed during our field works that there are relatively more people in Bismil district who never obtained a temporary protection ID card or whose ID card is not activated.

The survey has been conducted with a total of 118 people. Among them, 77 (65%) are men and 41 (35%) are women. The average age of the respondents is 34. The youngest respondent is 19 years old while the oldest respondent is 66. About 43% of the respondents have been living in Turkey for over 7 years and 30% have been living in the Bismil district of Diyarbakır for over 7 years. 49% of the remaining respondents have been living in Turkey for 3 to 7 years and 54% have been living in the Bismil district. The total number of persons living in the households is 658 and the average number of persons in a family is 6. The number of children at the age of 6 to 17 in the households is 183.
The individuals who took part in the survey reside in Akpinar, Fırat, Fatih, Sanayi and Dumlupınar Neighborhoods in the order of concentration. These neighborhoods are the central neighborhoods of the district and their populations vary due to seasonal agriculture.

The key individuals survey was conducted with a total of 12 persons. Among them, 10 (83%) are men and 2 (17%) are women. The average age of the respondents is 34. 75% of the respondents are of Syrian nationality while 25% are of Turkish nationality. The native language of 50% of the respondents is Kurdish while that of the remaining 50% is Arabic. About 83% of the respondents have been living in Turkey for over 7 years and 67% have been living in the Bismil district of Diyarbakır for over 7 years. 17% of the remaining respondents have been living in Turkey for 3 to 7 years and 16% of this 17% have been living in the Bismil district for 1 to 3 years.

2. ECONOMIC STATUS

In line with the agriculturally productive soil of the district, agricultural production has a large share in the district’s economy. At the same time, there is a trend and potential for agriculture-based industrial development with the influence of the agricultural production in the district. The refugees living in Bismil are capable of working in the seasonal agriculture and construction sector and of being employed in a significant portion of the year. Compared to other districts of Diyarbakır, Bismil is a settlement where individuals under temporary protection status have more regular income and can find more work.

It can be said the major factor in the preference of Bismil district by the refugees is the fact that the district economy is agriculture-based and has agricultural employment potential. Another site observation supporting this idea is that the refugees living in Diyarbakır lived for the most part in rural areas in Syria before the war and were engaged in agricultural activities.

Agricultural labor is an employment area where said community is relatively experienced and are not required to be registered since they work on a daily fee basis. Also, in socio-economic terms, the fact that the refugees prefer to live in rural areas as opposed to urban areas is a field observation suggesting that the refugee clustering in Bismil is not a coincidence.

According to survey data, there are two main reasons why Bismil is preferred as a settlement. The first is that they can find work in Bismil (58%), and the second is that their relatives live in Bismil (38%).

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Households’ livelihood is provided 93% by men over 18 years old and 7% by boys under 18 years old. The professions of the persons providing the livelihood for the households are 64% workers, 23% farmers, 10% paper and waste material workers. Their professions prior to coming to Turkey were 64% worker, 8% farmer, 4% merchant and 4% civil servant.

49% of the respondents provide their livelihood by working in agricultural areas on a daily fee basis and 44% work in construction and structure works for a daily fee. 16% of the remaining respondents work in other work areas (collecting cardboard, working as guard, hairdresser, working at a cafe or a farm), 3% work as merchants and 1% live through social assistance.

As work areas such as agricultural labor and construction labor do not require registered employment and the workers are not excluded from The Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) since they are not registered, these work areas are more attractive for the Syrian refugees.

Of the households, 31% live by 1,000 - 1,500 TL, 29% live by 1,500 - 2,000 TL, 25% 2,000 TL and above and 10% live by 500 - 1,000 TL per month. The monthly expenditures of these households are 51% 2,000 TL and above, 26% 1,500 - 2,000 TL and 17% 1,000 - 1,500 TL, respectively. 58% of the respondents receive some kind of aid or social assistance. These aids are 90% The Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) and 8% Social and Economic Support Service (SED).

It is understood from the answers to the survey questions regarding household income that over 60% of the respondents have an income that is lower than the monthly net minimum wage (TL 2,826.90). 51% of the families surveyed stated a monthly expense of over 2,000 TL. In the answers to survey questions regarding satisfaction with life quality, 75% of the respondents defined the house/place they live as “in bad shape” while 20% defined it as “in good condition”. It is understood that while families have employment opportunities overall, they struggle with insufficient income and economic difficulties and are not satisfied with their life quality.

Among the families surveyed, the family’s livelihood is provided by children are in 7% of the families, and it is provided by adults in 93% of the families. It might be optimistic to assume that children do not contribute to family livelihood in the 93% portion of the families where family livelihood is undertaken by adults. Considering that the target group is primarily engaged in agricultural labor, it is quite likely that people under 18 years of age still have to work even if the household is headed by an adult.
In the focus group meetings, the respondents mentioned that there are old household heads and female household heads in their surroundings and that these persons are having difficulties in providing the livelihood of their families.

58% of the respondents receive social assistance, and it should be evaluated whether the 42% group not receiving social assistance applied for social assistance or whether it is knowledgeable about social assistance. At this evaluation stage, it should be noted that a group of 1% of the respondents live solely through social assistance. In the key individual interviews, 50% of the respondents stated that there has been no regular or one-off assistance for refugees during the pandemic while 40% stated there indeed has been such assistance and that it contained food parcel, hygiene parcel and cash assistance.

### 3. EDUCATION

According to general data regarding the district’s education status, about 9% of the population doesn’t know how to read and write; 40% are literate but have not graduated from any school and about 13% are primary school graduates. On the other hand, the proportion of illiterate women is much higher than illiterate men. Therefore, it is important that literacy classes are set up for the illiterate population and measures are taken to increase the level of schooling after primary school.

82% of the respondents are primary, secondary or high school graduates. 3% of the remaining respondents have undergraduate degree while 15% have not been involved in any education. There are children at school age who are unable to attend school in 23% of the households taking part in the survey. Lack of financial means, peer bullying and language barrier have been cited as the main reasons for not attending school. The main reasons specified in the ‘other’ option are lack of schools in the village and the distance of the village to schools.

During the pandemic, while 33% of school-aged children had access to remote education, 29% could not have that access. Lack of TV and internet (61%), and siblings in similar age groups being unable to use the Education Information Network (EBA) effectively (27%) are among the reasons for being unable to have access to remote education. 16% of the respondents stated they did not want to answer and the remaining 22% cited economic reasons.

Another significant finding from the survey and focus group studies is the need for Turkish language classes for adults. “Language barrier” has been a major topic in the surveys and interviews where factors preventing access to services were asked.
4. HEALTH, INFECTIOUS DISEASES AND COVID-19

Tepe Entegre State Hospital, 12 Family Healthcare Centers, 6 Healthcare Centers and an Anti-Malaria Unit offer services in Bismil.

In the survey, 7% of the respondents stated there are individuals with disabilities in the household. 4% of the individuals with disabilities (five persons) are adults and 3% (four persons) are children. It was stated that two of the adults have disability report while the other three individuals do not have disability report. It was stated that two of the children have disability report while the other two do not have disability report. In the focus group meetings, the participants stated they cannot have access to medical devices due to lack of financial means.

69% of the participants stated they do not have any difficulties in having access to health services in Turkey for themselves or for the other individuals in the household. In the key individual interviews, the participants stated 25% of the Syrian individuals in their surroundings have issues with access to health services. Typical problems encountered are language barrier, mistreatment by public officials and being unable to make appointment due to the pandemic.

13% of the respondent households had COVID-19 during the pandemic. This ratio matches the key individual interviews. 59% of the respondents stated they know who can be vaccinated for COVID-19. 85% of the respondent households have family members that have not been vaccinated for COVID-19. Moreover, 51% of these households have family members who did not have their COVID-19 vaccinations despite being eligible. 79% of the respondents state that they use masks and disinfectants daily, while 20% state they do not have the financial means to obtain those items or they do not use them because they don’t consider them necessary.

Some of the main problems faced by the respondents during the COVID-19 pandemic are the reduction of income (85%), loss of jobs (42%), being unable to pay rent (35%), being under stress (24%), their children starting to work (5%) and children failing to attend school (5%). 87% of the respondents state that they did not receive regular or one-off assistance during the pandemic while 13% state they received cash assistance, hygiene parcel and food parcel.

The answers given during the key individual interviews to the question regarding how much the Syrian individuals were affected by the pandemic (Table 1) underscore issues such as difficulties regarding livelihoods and children dropping out of school and having started working.
According to Social Solidarity and Assistance Foundation data from April, 2019, 330 households and 2032 persons use the The Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) in Bismil. The meetings held reveal that the ESSN support is not sufficient for meeting the financial needs. On the other hand, in the focus group discussions, a female participant stated that she had a new child in order to meet the requirement of ‘to have a minimum of 3 children’, which is one of the ESSN criteria; It also suggests that this criterion may increase the tendency to have children.

Since Bismil district experiences internal migration due to seasonal agriculture, it is considered that the district has sociological familiarity with the terms ‘migration’ and ‘migrant’. Apart from the Syrian community, local groups can be seen who come from the other districts of Diyarbakır and Batman to work in seasonal agriculture and live in the tent areas during summer.

The fact that Syrian refugees prefer the district for work is not considered strange by the host community and can be seen as an opportunity to meet the seasonal worker demand of the district.

Needs assessment and field observations show that there is no social inclusion issue other than individual cases. The fact that the 67% group from the key individual interviews have been living in Bismil for 7 years or longer can be interpreted as meaning that there is no social inclusion issue in the district. Respondents from the focus group meetings state that they did not encounter any incident that threatens their families and their surroundings but they are constantly being subject to discriminatory language.
The number of children at the age of 6 to 17 in the households is 183. 181 children were born during the period when the beneficiaries taking part in the survey lived in Turkey and on average 2 children were born as prorated to the number of households.

Another major field observation regarding the refugee population in Bismil district is that child labor and failure to attend school are at high levels. 16% of the participating households stated there are children in the family under 18 years of age who work. It was also found that 23% of the households have children at school age who do not attend school. It is understood according to field observations that about 40% of the respondents have children in the family who do not attend school and has to work. Evaluations of the beneficiaries taking part in both focus group meetings also verify the existence of the child labor issue.

In the key individual interviews, 50% of the participants stated there are children in their surroundings under the age of 18 who work and that these children are Syrian. 58% of the participants stated there are children at the age of 6 to 18 who do not attend school. The reasons for not attending school are 42% having to work due to insufficient financial means, 25% language barrier, 17% long distance to school and 8% peer bullying. Moreover, 67% of the children could not have access to remote education during the Pandemic. The main reason for the children being unable to have access to remote education is lack of TV and internet.

While the content of the “Combating Child Labor Project” conducted by Support to Life in Diyarbakır since 2018 covers the entire province, the central districts are rather the focus of the project and relatively less work is conducted in rural districts such as Bismil where the issue is observed at high levels. This does not arise from ignoring the Bismil district. It is because the issue is of great magnitude in the central districts of Diyarbakır as well. It is important that in future periods, the team structure to be set up under the project is configured at a scope and capacity that can cover both central and rural districts. During the focus group meetings, the participants stated that gender-based or domestic violence are common, but that social prejudice and norms work against expressing this problem.
7. PRIOR NEEDS

Participants prioritized their needs as 86% cash assistance, 53% services for finding jobs, 49% food support, 19% in kind support (such as clothing and household goods), 19% services for having a profession (vocational training courses). According to key individual interviews, a 17% segment expressed their need for access to education and health services. Moreover, supports for official processes such as identity registration and change of address and services regarding the education of children were cited among their needs as well.

For adults, Turkish language classes can be cited as a prominent need.
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There are overall no legal obstacles for the ID registration of and access to services for the Syrian refugees living in Bismil. However, access to basic services can be challenging due to low level of education, distance of the rural area to services, and the restrictions brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Awareness about Turkey’s legal legislation (marriage, divorce, birth and other civil rights) is low due to reasons such as providing livelihood by working for a daily fee in the rural area, residing in areas that are close to agricultural sites and heavy socialization within the confines of the community. It is observed that issues such as child labor, child marriage and not attending school are quite common in the community due to lack of knowledge and traditional habits. It is understood therefore that the target group needs to be informed on social issues. With regard to providing knowledge, unique methods can be developed and volunteer mechanism can be reinforced for the district since the target group lives in the rural area.

It appears that despite access to employment opportunities in sectors such as agriculture and construction, most individuals are not satisfied with their quality of life. There is no need for work permit since there is no requirement for employment registration in lines of work such as agricultural labor and herding. Whether this legal legislation provided employment opportunities for the group or, unforeseeably, exposed them to exploitation of labor should be addressed and reevaluated using the “Regulatory Impact Analysis Method”.

The answers to survey questions on access to health services and pandemic revealed important conclusions such as that about 70% of them can have access to health services, 60% is knowledgeable about the vaccination requirement and 85% are not vaccinated despite being required to do so. Survey findings match the overall negative picture in the vaccination performance observed in Diyarbakır.

It was stated that interpreter support was needed in access to health services in particular, and problems might occur in access to services due to language barrier, that the Turkish language classes opened for adults in the area in the past were good and that they need to be opened again. Opening A1-A2 level Turkish language classes for adults in collaboration with the District Public Training Center may support community access and the sociocultural cohesion of the target group.
Another important conclusion is that refugees do not know where to get personal psychological counseling support. It is important to make psychological counseling service widespread and inform the refugees on how to utilize it.

Another issue that appears with regard to children in the surveys and focus group meetings is child marriage. The statement “child marriages were not this common back when in Syria” from the group during the focus group meetings for the 20-24 age group is one to be reflected on. It is possible that economic difficulties triggered this situation. Marriages at early age are not exclusively observed in refugee communities, and may be observed between the host community and the refugee community. The fact that the refugee community is at a vast economic disadvantage may have led to a process that is exploited by the host community who is somehow socio-culturally familiar with child marriages. Marriage between individuals from the host community with relatively better economic status and girls from the refugee community who is at a vast economic disadvantage turns the issue into a more chronic and complex socio-economic problem. Conducting long-term works to prevent child labor and child marriage is crucial for child protection. Collaborations with the District Social Service Center and Youth Centers may allow tackling child marriage better.

Since child labor and obstacles on children’s access to education are high-level issues, working closely with the District Directorate of National Education and mukhtars on the schools located in the rural neighborhoods of the district in particular may help reduce the problem. Since Diyarbakır was added to the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP), which aims to eliminate the issue with refugee children being away from education and being unable to follow the curriculum due to language barrier, effective collaboration can be built as an opportunity with the Public Training Center in the process of children going back to school.

It was stated that while participants frequently encounter work accidents due to the sectors they mostly work in, they do not know their rights and obligations regarding those situations. This reveals the regional need for legal counseling and group information on legal matters. The target group’s need for legal counseling and legal information is prominent and these project activities need to be conducted using more proactive and inclusive methods.