

PROJECT TEAM

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The Project Report, Infographics and Policy Briefs are available to download on the project website: <https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/research/resilient-refugee-women> and through our partner's links as follows:

Project Report:

Arabic: <http://haqqi.info/ar/haqqi/research/poverty-alleviation-and-women-refugees-middle-east>

English: <http://haqqi.info/en/haqqi/research/poverty-alleviation-and-women-refugees-middle-east>

Infographic:

Arabic: <http://haqqi.info/ar/haqqi/media/poverty-alleviation-and-women-refugees-middle-east-%E2%80%93-jordan>

English: <http://haqqi.info/en/haqqi/media/poverty-alleviation-and-women-refugees-middle-east-%E2%80%93-jordan>

Policy Brief:

Arabic: <http://haqqi.info/ar/haqqi/research/policy-brief-poverty-alleviation-and-women-refugees-middle-east>

English: <http://haqqi.info/en/haqqi/research/policy-brief-poverty-alleviation-and-women-refugees-middle-east>

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## PROJECT PARTNERS:



Haydn Green Institute  
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## ABOUT THE PROJECT

In previous research, the project investigators (Al-Dajani and Marlow, 2013; 2014) documented the empowerment effects that entrepreneurship has on displaced Palestinian women in Jordan, leading not only to poverty alleviation but also, elevated social positioning within a patriarchal context characterised by gender inequality. Through low profile informal micro-entrepreneurship, these displaced women created sustainable avenues for improving the overall well-being of their families and acted as role models for others in their community outside the remit of support and advice agencies. Within this project, we explore if, and how, Arab refugee women create sustainable community-based solutions to poverty alleviation in their host nations of Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. We do so as there remains little analysis regarding the efficacy of such efforts or indeed, how they offer alternative pathways away from a persistent cycle of poverty and ongoing dependence on charitable organisations and international aid agencies. Mixed methods were used to collect data from key stakeholders, such as representatives of NGOs and charitable foundations and Iraqi, Palestinian and Syrian refugee women living in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey.

## SIGNIFICANCE

Turkey is home to the world's largest refugee population due in large part to the massive migration of refugees from Syria that have arrived in the country since the beginning of the conflict.<sup>1</sup> As of February 2019, Turkey is home to more than 3.6 million refugees, of which 90.7% are Syrian, 4.3% are Afghan, 3.6% are Iraqi, and 1.4% are of other nationalities.<sup>2</sup>

In 2014, Turkey established the Temporary Protection Regulation (TPR), which manages the rights and procedures for refugees in the country.<sup>3</sup> Individuals registered under the TPR have access to legal residence and rights to healthcare services, education, and social assistance. However, registered individuals must obtain work permits in cooperation with employers. As a result, the majority of those under TPR are excluded from the formal labor market.

## CHALLENGES FOR THE ARAB REFUGEE WOMEN IN TURKEY

The refugee women interviewed in Turkey shed light on a number of challenges related to their entrepreneurship. Women reported that they earned

an average of \$580 USD in a typical month (1.9 times the minimum wage in Turkey). However, income ranged from as little as \$33 USD to \$5,074 USD per month. This finding suggested that entrepreneurial activities among refugee women in Turkey are diverse. Women also reported income insecurity – in some months, their income was high while in other months, they earned very little. Women in Turkey were also the most likely to report that their business had closed since 2017 (11.6%, compared to 5.0% in Lebanon and 4.8% in Jordan).

The majority of the women refugee entrepreneurs in Turkey report that their businesses are not registered (65.8%). While previous research suggests that informal entrepreneurship can serve as a “launch pad for entrepreneurial business ventures”<sup>4</sup> and may not confer benefits for those with home-based micro-businesses, without formal registration, entrepreneurs lack important access to financing from banking institutions and legally-enforceable contracts.<sup>5</sup>

While some women had received encouragement from NGOs to open their businesses, two-thirds (67.4%) reported that it was somewhat difficult or very difficult for them to access supports from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and microfinance organizations (MFOs). Virtually

none of the women interviewed in Turkey reported that NGO support and MFO support had led to changes in their business (2.3% and 11.6% respectively). Similarly, few of the women reported that enterprise support (9.7%) and financial support for their business (7.2%) was helpful.

*“My husband and kids are annoyed with my work because I cannot do household chores because I have the responsibility to my work.”*

Syrian Refugee Woman  
Entrepreneur in Turkey

Many of the interviewed women remain responsible for most or all household chores and childcare responsibilities. Only 4.8% of the surveyed women reported that childcare was accessed and helpful to them. Some women reported that childcare responsibilities prevented them from working outside their homes or expanding their enterprises, and a few women reported that their work obligations had become a source of tension with their spouses or family members.

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE ARAB REFUGEE WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN TURKEY

Through stakeholder engagement and the dissemination events held in April 2019, the multilateral stakeholders deliberated upon the overall results of this project and informed the policy recommendations and action pathways for supporting Arab refugee women. Presented here are the overarching recommendations emerging from this study and relevant for the Turkish context:

### Access to NGO and MFO Support

- NGOs and MFOs should consider means to provide support for refugee women entrepreneurs and can consider including entrepreneurship training (on topics such as accounting, business practices, and marketing) in vocational skills programs in Turkey. As many refugee women entrepreneurs operate micro-businesses that are home-based, direct outreach and a system of referrals may be adopted to connect these women with the services they need.

### Access to Childcare

- Socially and culturally appropriate childcare support is needed to reduce the burden of responsibility on women refugee entrepreneurs. Such support should be developed in consultation with the potential beneficiaries and may include NGO childcare facilities and neighbourhood-based networks to share childcare responsibilities.

### Monitoring and Further Research

- Given the current economic and political challenges facing Turkey and refugee women entrepreneurs in the country, monitoring and further research is recommended in order to assess resilience strategies during economic recession and periods of political uncertainty.

### Business Registration

- While business registration may not confer large benefits for those operating home-based microbusinesses, support for business registration for refugee women entrepreneurs with larger businesses should be considered. Reducing costs for business registration, conducting awareness activities focusing on the legal rights for business registration, and legal counselling could increase awareness of the benefits of business registration, and increase the number of refugee women who register their enterprises.

<sup>1</sup>UNHCR. “Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Turkey.” Last modified 2019. <https://www.unhcr.org/tr/en/refugees-and-asylum-seekers-in-turkey>

<sup>2</sup>UNHCR. “UNHCR Turkey: Key Facts and Figures”, Last modified January 2019. <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/68123>

<sup>3</sup>Government of the Republic of Turkey. “Temporary Protection Regulation” 22 October 2014. [http://www.goc.gov.tr/files/\\_dokuman28.pdf](http://www.goc.gov.tr/files/_dokuman28.pdf)

<sup>4</sup>Williams, C. C. (2005). Formalising the informal economy: The case for local initiatives. *Local Government Studies*, 31(3), 335-349

<sup>5</sup>Sebestyen G. et al (2018). Establishing the formal economic identity of Syrian refugees in Turkey: The case of Gaziantep. *Journal of Turkish Social Sciences Research*, 3(2): 71-87.