



# REFUGEE PROTECTION INTERNATIONAL

## Protection and Self-Reliance Program

**The Need:** Among the 12.2 million civilians displaced by Syria's protracted armed conflict, many seek improved protection and self-reliance before all else. Their savings depleted and with aid dwindling, refugees are eager to transition from charity to (self-) employment. Yet, too often they lack the legal documentation, proof of degree equivalency, or language/vocational skills needed.

Lack of documentation also obstructs access to education and health care. Yet, 79% of Syrian refugees born in Lebanon have not completed the 4-step birth registration process, while 75% of female-headed Syrian households lack legal residency (UN, 2018). The situation in Turkey is similar as Syrians struggle to access work permits, and in some cases, temporary protection status.



In some southern Turkish provinces, only 8% of surveyed Syrian women have received language training, vocational training and/or employment (UN Women, 2018). As a result, 1 in 4 Syrian households in Turkey have their children work to support family income (Support to Life). In Lebanon, similar hardship is fueling a rise in early marriage (29% of Syrian girls aged 15-19), physical discipline (used by 59% of surveyed Syrians) and sexual and gender-based violence (93% of cases reported occurred after displacement) (UN, 2018). In Syria, civilians struggle for psychosocial well-being after witnessing the tragedy of war, loss, and displacement.

Frontline host countries are making strides to address these issues but face a social tipping point over the strain on their economies. Now more than ever, international aid and private sector partnership is needed to bolster the uptake and sustainability of such efforts, be they Turkey's landmark work permit regulation for registered Syrians or Lebanon's loosened restrictions on Syrian access to birth registration and residency permits.

**Programming Focus:** We support our refugee-led nonprofit partners with project design, grants, monitoring, and technical and logistic support, as needed, to carry out the following activities:

- Facilitate access to the legal documents needed to legitimize stay, work, and access basic services
- Provide job readiness and livelihoods support to refugee women and encourage demand for their skills
- Secure access to transitional social support and specialized protection services

**Impact:** RPI and its partners have met 14,630 protection and self-reliance needs of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Turkey, Syria, and Lebanon. Supported services have included: information, accompaniment, and financial support with accessing birth registration and temporary protection status; case management and referrals to providers of legal aid, medical/disability services, education, relief, and shelter; psychosocial support and mental health sessions; vocational, skills, and language training for women; and refugee-made soap for handwashing. Our featured local charity partners registered in Turkey/Lebanon include: Basmeh and Zeitooneh, Union of Relief and Development Associations (URDA), and Kids Paradise.

*Refugee Protection International, Inc is  
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*Hear directly from refugee  
participants in our joint video:  
<https://refugeeprotection.org/portfolio/birth-registration-support/>*

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**Our Approach:** We strive for locally-driven and efficient aid, by supporting and raising the visibility of remarkable refugee-led nonprofits on the frontlines. Our joint project designs integrate gender and vulnerability analysis, a rights-based approach, and urban focus.

Our projects focus on more than relief aid by also supporting refugees to access documentation, employment and public social support systems. Listening to women, we encourage our partners to address multi-faceted barriers to labor force entry. Looking forward, we aim to engage and support U.S. and E.U. brands in encouraging host country suppliers and subcontractors to formally recruit refugee workers.



**Personal Impact Stories:** In Eastern Ghouta, **Syria**, 12-year old orphan Abdul-Aziz refused to talk after losing his entire family in an air raid. Pulled from the rubble, Abdul-Aziz was invited to participate in an RPI-supported psychosocial support program held underground for safety. With the dedicated attention of local NGO staff, this 12-year old boy emerged from seclusion and re-engaged with his peers. 180 children participated in total, many having hidden from aerial attacks in their families' basements without light or sanitation for weeks on end. Elsewhere in Syria, RPI supported its Turkey-based partner Olive Branch to provide vocational/skills training to 59 women in nursing, first aid, sewing, and psychosocial support.

In 2017, a Syrian orphan named Mohamad A. was brought to RPI's partner in Sanliurfa, **Turkey**, with an amputated leg and devastating mouth injuries sustained during shelling in Syria. At the time, Sanliurfa only issued temporary protection to children 6 or under, pregnant women and the elderly. Without this status, Mohamad could not obtain the treatment he needed. With RPI's support, local NGO Basmeh and Zeitooneh secured third party coverage for his urgent dental repairs. This 2-year program reached 6,715 Syrians, supporting families such as that of Ahmed A., to secure temporary protection status and school enrollment.

Following an RPI-supported birth registration project for 220 Syrian refugees in 2019, a mother in **Lebanon** went on video to share the project's impact: "I am grateful. Now my children are officially registered and able to join schools and benefit from other services." RPI is happy to be expanding this project with NGO URDA.

In a project co-designed between RPI and refugee-led partner Kids Paradise in Turkey, 296 Syrian women and children participated in integrated self-reliance and social assistance activities and 5,261 refugees received refugee-made soap and COVID-19 guidance. This project was completed in urban Antakya in 2020.

We are humbled by the selfless work done by our frontline partners, all of which would not be possible without the extraordinary contributions of our committed giving partners.



*RPI-supported counseling projects (left, center)*



*RPI-supported psychosocial project (right)*