

Temporary shelters in the earthquake zone in Turkey:

An assessment of spatial conditions and child services from a girl-centered design approach

Executive Summary

Between March 9-12, 2023, with funding from Empower, Suna'nın Kızları (Suna's Girls) made a field visit to Hatay, Kahramanmaraş, Adıyaman, and Gaziantep, which were among the provinces most affected by the earthquakes on February 6, 2023. The purpose of the field visit was to examine the shelters in the earthquake zones from a **girl-centered design approach** for making observations about the situation of girls and making their particular needs visible.

What is girl-centered design?

Girl-centered design is the process of thinking about, designing, and implementing how spaces, programs, and activities can be developed for and with girls based on child safety and child participation. It is applied to ensure that all girls have access to programs, spaces, and activities and that these activities reach girls in the relevant target group.

The February 6, 2023 earthquakes directly affected more than 9 million people in 11 provinces and nearly 5 million children, including 4 million school-age children. As of March 13, 2023, more than 433 thousand tents and 21 thousand containers have been set up in the region; 354 tent cities are operating. The findings and assessments compiled in this report are based on our observations in 7 tent cities and 5 container cities and on our interviews with experts and with girls above the age of 13 we met over 4 days. Therefore, instead of generalizations and inferences about the situation in the disaster area, it contains findings made in a limited area.

The prominent findings of the report, including a child-focused evaluation of spatial conditions, findings on children's services, and recommendations for girl-centered design, are as follows:

- **Conditions in temporary shelters, especially in tent cities, are changing rapidly. There are deep differences in the infrastructure conditions and organization of shelters.** With the transition to container cities, which are planned as longer-term living spaces, conditions, and services can be expected to standardize and provide more qualified services.
- The porous borders of temporary shelters and the fact that tents for children's services are located far away from household units require adult accompaniment and pose a security risk, especially for young children.
- While the design of the containers offers a quick and long-term solution to the need for emergency shelter, it does not provide enough suitable spaces for children. Household units remain small in proportion to the population and children do not have enough space within the household. Under these conditions, it is of great importance that common areas, including the streets where household units open up, are designed to take into account the safety of children.



Playground built by NGOs working in the field



Gaziantep Nurdağı Tek Yürek Square Tent Area

In addition to the spatial assessment of temporary shelters, the prominent findings from our interviews with girls above the age of 13 are as follows:

- **Children state that they do not do much during the day and that there is nothing to do in the shelters.** There are no activities specific to this age group in the areas. Girls say that they spend most of the day "pacing around the area", and waiting in line for "laundry, toilets, and food". Since the shelters are inadequately equipped in proportion to the population, long queues may form when basic needs, including food, are met.
- **Women and girls we talked to in temporary shelters reported even heavier care burdens than before.** Children frequently stated that they take care of their younger siblings and cousins. Mothers can also request the support of older daughters to meet the care burden of the household.
- **Ensuring cleanliness and hygiene conditions** in temporary shelters stands out as an important basic need not only in terms of health but also in terms of living in a dignified manner and ensuring well-being.
- One of the most fundamental regulations regarding the right to education for children affected by the earthquake is the suspension of the obligation to attend school. As a result of this regulation, education services in tent and container cities are mostly limited to studies for high school and university exams. Thus, **access to education and attendance is left almost entirely to the individual efforts of children.**
- Although there are often spaces for psychosocial work in temporary shelters, **there is no specific space for the 13-18 age group.**

Creating inclusive common areas for children over the age of 13, improving and standardizing the equipment and safety of shelters, and making arrangements for access to various services, including education, are among the issues that should be prioritized to ensure the well-being of all children, especially girls, in temporary shelters. While realizing these, it remains critical to establish standard regulations on child protection to eliminate the risks of neglect and abuse and to ensure child participation in all processes.

