2021- 2022
ZEYTİN AĞACI DERNEĞİ
SMALL PROJECTS ISTANBUL

“The Project: Strengthening the wellbeing of the refugee community through participatory mechanisms during COVID-19” June 2021-2022
Small Projects Istanbul (registered as Zeytin Ağacı Derneği), has been working closely with the refugee population in Istanbul since its establishment in 2015. The community, which has been continuously growing, has more than 800 members at the moment. Communication among these members is maintained through a WhatsApp group which is used to get information, share questions and have discussions with each other. Every weekend, a topic to be discussed is determined by the “Community Outreach Team” in the “Weekend Discussions” activity in order for the members to share their opinions with active participation.

The strong communication between Small Projects Istanbul and its community, with the support of The Black Sea Trust Foundation, has continued with practices involving Syrian and other refugees who are under Temporary Protection as “The Project of Strengthening the wellbeing of the Refugee Community through participatory mechanisms during Covid-19”. This project aims to tackle the services and rights of the SPI’s refugee community (including law, health, education, employment, social aid services, public health) from the perspective of the issues and hurdles raised by COVID-19. The Project will be implemented between June 2021-2022.

Activities Included in the Project
- Community Informing Activities
- Activities Involving the Preservation of Well-being
- Community Council Meetings
- Children Council Meetings
- Individual Protection Practices

Community Council Studies
The purpose of the Community Council is to strengthen the feeling of solidarity among the refugee community and to create a space for them to share the problems they face. By creating feedback mechanisms through the participatory approach of a Community Council, it is believed that services provided by NGOs, other institutions and public institutions can be improved.

What Was Achieved in the First Community Council Meeting?
The first research on the Community Council started in August 2021. During the period until February 2022, council members held seven meetings. In total, 30 different community members attended these meetings.
When we look at the distribution of the Community Council members according to their age, gender and ethnicity:

- attendance between the ages of 25-59 is the highest (28 members)
- attendance by women is the majority (27 women compared with 2 men).
- attendance by ethnicity - Syrians are the highest (26 attenders).

With Arabic-Turkish translation, the Community Access Manager was the facilitator and topics were discussed such as non-governmental organizations and their purposes, advocacy, volunteerism, democratic participation and Community Councils and their purposes. Other Community and Refugee Councils that do similar work in Turkey were also studied. With the participation of the council members, the topics were determined to be discussed at each meeting. Lastly, Small Projects Istanbul Community Council research areas and the methods to be used to increase the visibility of these studies were evaluated. It was decided that the results of the Community Council activities should be reported, including community informing activities, verbal and written feedback that was taken at the end of the activities (which involves the preservation of well-being), as well as the problems Council members have faced in their lives and suggested solutions.
The community members’ expectations from public institutions and non-governmental organizations regarding their needs in the activities carried out within the scope of the “The Project of Strengthening the wellbeing of the Refugee Community through participatory mechanisms during Covid-19” (Community Informing Activities and Activities Involving the Preservation of Well-being) and in terms of the weekly activities “Weekend Discussion” are as follows:

Access to education can be defined as

- Solving the situation of being registered in a different province and not having an identity card for the registration process of schools and other educational institutions (such as İSMEK).
- Facilitating foreign university students through the support of educational loans or scholarships that they can pay after graduation.
- In schools, educators direct children to high schools and universities according to their competencies and wishes.
- Non-governmental organizations abolish the age limit for educational scholarships.
- Having advanced Turkish and speaking courses in institutions such as Public Education Centers,
- In Turkish courses such as İSMEK. Public Education Center, trainers should be both Arabic and Turkish speaking.

Legal Issues can be defined as

- Facilitating arrangements for visiting family members living in other countries or living in Syria and receiving visitors.
- Changing the inability to receive social assistance if subscriptions such as electricity, water, natural gas are not registered to the user name.
- Re-regulating the termination of the Social Cohesion Assistance (Kızılaykart) depending on the work permit.
- Persons with Temporary Protection legal status must reside in the province where they are registered. However, enabling people whose legal status is Temporary Protection to change the province on the identity card with documents proving that the person has lived in another city for 3 years.

Access to Health can be defined as

- Increasing the number of migrant health centers
- Increasing the number of health personnel in polyclinics such as ophthalmology, otolaryngology, orthopedics, dentistry and cardiology.
- In governmental hospitals, there are problems in the follow-up of patients who have been transferred between departments by doctors. Providing a facilitating coordination mechanism for patient follow-up among doctors.
- Having an expert translator who knows medical terms in order to prevent wrong or incomplete treatment in hospitals.
Public Services can be defined as

- Developing the ALO 157 Foreigners Communication Line as a line where mostly foreigners can convey their requests, problems and complaints to the relevant units via voice surveys.
- Encouraging participation in language courses by increasing childcare and economic support aids to facilitate participation.
- Non-governmental organizations should have translation offices to which refugee communities can apply in case of need.

Social Cohesion Processes can be defined as

- Turkish people should also be included in social cohesion efforts; conveying the reasons why refugees come to Turkey and the difficulty of living conditions here for refugees.
- Organizing awareness-raising campaigns focused on developing positive ideas about Syrians and foreigners.
- Making social media broadcasts where refugees are introduced and cultures are shared with famous youtubers.
- Municipalities need to organize activities such as tea events where foreigners can practice speaking and socialize with Turkish people.
From August of 2021, the activities of the Zeytin Ağacı Derneği Children’s Council started. In the Children’s Council, the aim is for children to learn about their rights, have their skills developed and their confidence and advocacy supported.

The Children’s Council Meeting Count Between October 2021-January 2022: 10

Total Number of Kids Who Attended the Children Council Meetings: 25
Distribution of the Children Council attenders by age and gender:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Total Number</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* 24 attendees were Syrian; 1 was Iraqi (12-year-old boy).

In this report, notes from the council work that was held with children will be shared.

Responses received from children when they were asked "what is participation?"
- “When you ask us something, raising your finger is participation. For example, if you are talking to someone, if I intervene, it will be participation.” (Age 13)
- “When the teacher says something in class, he asks if you agree. If we do, it is participation.” (Age 11)
- “You are telling us something and you are asking us our opinion. This is participation. I also listen and respond”. (Age 13)

Responses received from children when they were asked “Can you participate in school?”
- “Some do not listen to us because we are children. They don’t ask for our opinion outside.” (Age 12)
- “They give us nicknames without ever listening to us, our teachers do this.” (Age 12)
- “Maths is very difficult and I don’t understand it. I cannot participate in the class.” (Age 12)
Responses received from children when they were asked “at what ages and in which fields can you participate and why?”
- “For example, going to school alone; you should be between 11-12 years old. Because at that age, our self-confidence is higher.” (Age 11)
- “Eating alone can start at age 7. At the age of 7 we are more grown up and we can do it ourselves.” (Age 13)
- “Choosing clothes must start at age 17. We can feel more comfortable. We understand better what we want.” (Age 11)
- “Choosing clothes could start at age 10. Our minds are more open when we are young. We have nothing else to think about. We can choose when we are little.” (Age 12)
- “I think choosing clothes must start at age 13-14. At this age, we understand what suits us and we can choose for ourselves.” (Age 13)
- “Voting starts at age 18. Because we know everything at that age. We know our rights.” (Age 13)
- “Cooking food can start at age 20. We will be grown up, we know what to cook and what to put in it. We can’t do it at age 12.” (Age 12)
- “Going out alone with my friends should start at age 13-14. We can gather our self-confidence and go out by ourselves. We can protect ourselves.” (Age 12)
- “Driving is permitted over the age of 18, that’s what it should be. Adults can drive better.” (Age 12)
- “Looking after your siblings starts at age 10. We’re becoming grown up and we can look after them.” (Age 11)
- “Moving out to your own place can happen after the age of 18. Because the person knows his/her responsibility and gains enough experience from his/her parents. That’s enough for him/her.” (Age 12)
- “Using a phone can happen at age 14. Because I will be grown up. I’m 13 years old and I can’t use a phone right now.” (13 years)

Responses received from children when they were asked “What do you think about your expectations from your family members and their expectations of you?”
- “My mother and father expect me to finish a good university. Since it was my father’s dream, this is what he expects from me. He could not study. My expectation is for example, surprises. I like it when they surprise me.” (Age 12)
- “My mother expects me to study and be successful. I expect my mother to cook and pray for me. My father wants me to be a good boy and have a good job.” (Age 13)
- “My parents expect me to be a doctor. But there is a problem because I don’t want to. I want to be an interior designer. Maybe they will change their minds in the future. I don’t expect anything from them, they already do everything.” (Age 12)
- “I don’t expect anything from my mother. My father expects me to be the first in everything. He wants me to be the first in school, in competitions, in everything in the world. It’s driving me crazy. I expect my siblings to be quiet. My mother asks me to take care of the house and do the cleaning every day.” (Age 13)
- “I have no expectations. Their expectation is that I study like my friends. To have a good job. I have computer engineering in mind.” (Age 12)
- “My family expects me to clean the house. And they want me to be a History teacher because there are many teachers in the family. I want money from my brothers (laughs..) they don’t have money (laughs..) But I want money from my mother and father. I’m cleaning so much, there must be a reward. Even if they give me a penny, it’s okay.” (Age 11)
- “My expectation from my father is to be with me. I have no expectations from my mother.” (Age 13)
Responses received from children when they were asked “Are you aware of your rights and what do you think needs to change in the family/home?”
- “I think it’s good like that.” (Age 12)
- “Everything is alright like that teacher.” (Age 13)
- “Sometimes my brothers misbehave. I get angry, I usually try to be patient, but sometimes I can’t. I would like to change this. I wish I wasn’t angry at all, but it’s not always possible.” (Age 13)
- “Sometimes I get angry with my siblings. I wish this would change. I wish I had never had my siblings.” (Age 11)
- “For example, when there is a problem, they always go to the older sibling. It would be nice if this changed, but I’m used to it now. This is how it has to be.” (Age 13)

Responses received from children when they were asked “What is World Child Rights Day and why does it exist?”
- “It’s there for the children.” (Age 13)
- “For example, there is teacher’s day, there is mother’s day. There is such a day for children too, so that children can be happy.” (Age 13)
- “It exists to investigate children who have no rights and to give them more rights.” (Age 13)
- “How do they learn that children are tortured?” (Age 13)
- “Neighbors can call the police.” (Age 13)
- “There are places where there is no-one. The child can call himself or go to the police himself.” (Age 13)

Responses received from children after they watched the International Child Rights Ambassadors Association’s (ICHILD) Convention on the Rights of the Child Animated Film. They were asked “What caught your attention most in the video?”
- “Every child has a few rights and wishes and the government is building schools, all children have the right to attend these schools.” (Age 13)
- “The thing I hear most is the right to education and the right to play.” (Age 13)
- “Growing up in an equal and beautiful environment.” (Age 13)
- “Our opinions should not be disrespectful to the opinions of others.” (Age 13)
- “No one can take us anywhere without our permission and our family’s permission.” (Age 11)
- “No one can forcefully break our passwords.” (Age 13)
- “No one can get involved in family quarrels.” (Age 13)
- “No one can touch our private parts.” (Age 12)
- “No one can inflict violence on us.” (Age 12)
- “They cannot violate our privacy.” (Age 13)
- “All children have the right to health.” (Age 13)
- “All children have the right to protection.” (Age 12)
- “All children have the right to grow and develop.” (Age 12)
- “All children have the right to identity and citizenship.” (Age 13)
- “All children have the right to socialize.” (Age 12)
- “All children have the right to a name. They are born with a name.” (Age 12)
- “Every living thing has the right to live.” (Age 12)
- “We have the right to remain silent.” (Age 11)
- “We have the right to freedom.” (Age 12)

Responses received from children when they were asked “If you had a magic wand, what would you change?”
- “I would like to end wars. I would like to feed hungry children.” (Age 14)
- “I would like to change all the privileges in the world. Let’s all be human and equal.” (Age 13)
- “I would like to protect nature and green. No fires.” (Age 11)
- “I would like to change bad people.” (Age 13)
- “I want everyone to love each other. Let the whole world love each other.” (Age 12)
- “No one should lose their loved ones. I wouldn’t want to lose our relatives.” (Age 13)
- “Some children can’t afford to go to university. I would like to help them. Everyone should be able to study.” (12 years)
- “I wish my father and brother were with me.” (Age 13)
- “I wish children were not kidnapped. I would also like to travel the whole world.” (Age 12)
- “I would like to go to space.” (Age 13)
- “I want to make a game or an app. I love IT and applications. I’m good with the computer.” (Age 12)
- “I wish my father and brother would come.” (Age 12)

Responses received from children after they watched a short film from Bilgi University Child Studies Unit’s (ÇOÇA) “Growing in a Changing World: The Digital World, Climate Crisis and Pandemic Through Children’s Eyes”. They were asked “what did you experience during the pandemic?”
- “We couldn’t leave the house, it wasn’t happening. There was no school. It went very badly. First there was Eba, then zoom. It was hard at first, but then it got easier.” (Age 13)
- “I never liked the pandemic. The only good thing was being with the family.” (Age 14)
- “We had internet problems the most. We are 4 siblings, it was very difficult for us.” (Age 12)
- “We couldn’t get into Zoom. Going to bed and getting up every day was always the same.” (Age 13)
- “Distance education is very difficult. It became very different. Some students were lying, I think that’s a negative thing. The internet is a problem.” (Age 13)
- “I felt sorry for schools in the pandemic, but it was also good sometimes, because my father was at home.” (Age 12)
- “It was bad at first, then it got better. Actually, we’re used to it. Corona had its good sides, though. We spent time with our family.” (Age 12)
- “I think everyone has become more addicted to the internet.” (Age 13)

Responses received from children when they were asked about “What should the four basic principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child be?”
- “Survival, the ability to maintain children’s lives.” (Age 11)
- “Getting an Education” (Age 11)
- “Right to health, right to food” (Age 12)
- “The Right to Share Your Opinions” (Age 11)
- “The right to education, the right to be equal” (Age 13)
- “Rights to shelter, play and education” (Age 12)
- “Right to grow and develop” (Age 13)
- “Rights to education, health and housing” (Age 12)
- “Free thought” (Age 12)
- “The right to do what we want, live and play” (Age 13)

Responses received from children when they were asked “Do you think there are barriers to children’s access to their rights and if so, what are they?”
- “Inequality. Every child has different living conditions. This is inequality.” (Age 13)
- “Not everyone can have the same money, the same house, the same car. Another life, another family. These affect children a lot.” (Age 12)
- “Asia - Europe, Black - White discrimination is made on every issue.” (Age 12)
- “As a child, I may be hesitant to present my opinions. I may also feel unimportant.” (Age 11)
- “First of all, the lack of confidence in oneself, and then the fear of other people’s opinions.” (Age 12)
- “Even though children say what they want, grown-ups object.” (Age 13)
- “Adults always say we are experienced.” (Age 12)
- “I try to talk to my father but he doesn’t listen to me, he always wants me to study.” (Age 12)
- “Good things are not seen at all, but bad things are. For example, I study and pray but they never see this, I pick up my phone and they see it right away.” (Age 13)
Responses received from children when they were asked "Who do you think is protecting the rights of children?"
- "Family" (Age 13)
- "The state and the constitution" (Age 11)
- "Our relatives" (Age 13)
- "I think all adults are... because they are the ones who accept and sign." (Age 13)
- "Our family" (Age 12)

Responses received from children after they watched the "Children’s Rights" video on "Şubadap Çocuk" youtube channel and they were asked "How did the video make you feel?"
- "I think they made such a song because no one respects children's rights. " (Age 12)
- "Children have not given up their rights and they want their rights. It was a very good video." (Age 13)
- "Some people don't value children's rights. It's a good song for them." (Age 13)
- "I felt worthless." (Age 13)
- "We feel unimportant." (Age 12)
- "We always feel unimportant." (Age 12)
- "I think a song like this was made because our rights were violated and because it asks where are my rights in the song." (Age 11)
- "People should value children's rights. For example, I don’t feel a lack in this regard, but I think the family is also very important." (Age 13)
- "For example, the Maths teacher wants everyone to fail. If you break something, even by mistake, he wants to kick you out of school." (Age 12)
- "We are experiencing the same thing." (Age 11)
- "My friend's pen had fallen under my desk. I bent down to give the pen to my friend. Then the teacher threw a pencil at my face and it went into my eyes. They were swollen and blood came out. I went to the principal and then the teacher’s attitude changed towards me. It's always been good." (Age 13)

Responses received from children when they were asked “What kind of problems did you face about your rights in 2021?”
- "We have relatives in Adana. I always wanted to go to them. Then COVID-19 started, I couldn't go. We used to go once a year. We couldn't go on this holiday either.” (Age 13)
- "The problem I have the most is that teachers distinguish between Syrians and Turks." (Age 12)
- "I always had problems at school. They discriminate. Usually the biggest problem is the teachers."(Age 12)
- "I always had trouble with my school grades. I work hard but I get low grades. I’m getting stressed. My mom gets angry when I get low grades, so this might be the reason for my stress."(Age 12)

Responses received from children when they were asked “What do you expect from 2022?”
- "I want to be more successful and I want COVID-19 to end.” (12 years)
- "I want my stress to go away and to get accepted into a good high school. "(Age 12)
- "In 2022, I want all teachers who discriminate to leave the school. And I want COVID-19 to end.” (Age 12)
- "Let COVID-19 really end, I don't want a mask anymore. I don't want to socially distance anymore. We go home, even in the middle of class, when someone is sick” (Age 13)
The Community Council and Children’s Council will continue their activities. Activity notes will be shared with periodic reports during the project (June 2021-2022)