

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



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A PROJECT OF THE GERMAN MARSHALL FUND

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 SPI (Zeytin Ağacı Derneği), has been working closely with the refugee population in Istanbul since its establishment in 2015. The community has been continuously growing, currently reaching more than 800 members. Through an online group, these members maintain communication, get information, share questions and have discussions with each other. Every weekend, a topic to be discussed in the “Weekend Discussions” coordinated by the Community Outreach team online sharing platform by the interests and recommendations of community members, encouraging active participation and sharing.

The strong communication between Small Projects Istanbul and its community, with the support of **The Black Sea Trust Foundation**, has continued active citizenship focus 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 Assistance

Community Council Studies

The purpose of the Community Council is to strengthen solidarity and social mechanisms for the local refugee community by creating a shared space for them to intercommunicate their remarks and recommendations concerning the challenges they face. Within this space, community leaders volunteer their time to discuss and make visible the social issues and events concerning their community.

It is believed that there could be an improvement of the services provided by NGOs, public and other institutions regarding inclusiveness, thanks to the participatory processes and feedback opportunities of the Community Council work.



What Was Achieved in the First Community Council Meeting?

The first research on the Community Council started in August 2021. During the period until April 2022, council members held four meetings.

Facilitated by the social worker and community focal points with Arabic-Turkish translation, topics such as non-governmental organizations, Community Councils and their purposes, advocacy, volunteerism, and democratic participation were discussed. Other Communities and Refugee Councils that do similar work in Turkey were also studied. And the topics to be examined at each meeting were decided, with the participation of the council members. Lastly, Small Projects Istanbul Community Council research areas and the methods needed 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 taken at the end of the activities (which involves the preservation of well-being) as well as the problems and suggested solutions faced by the Council members.



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COMMUNITY COUNCIL ACTIVITIES RECOMMENDATION REPORT

FEBRUARY – MARCH 2022 TERM

The outputs of the Community Council studies, which started in August 2021, were published as two reports. March was determined as the Community Solidarity Month, and the activities carried out during this month were managed by our community council members. In these activities, our council members conveyed the council's work, purpose and reports to the community, which were later held for discussion. This report shares the results of the Community Solidarity Month activities conducted by the council members.

Access to education can be defined as:

- Facilitating of foreign students and parents to access the complaints and feedback mechanisms in schools,
- Encouraging participation in education by facilitating arrangements about the high participation fee for the Foreign Student Exam and the validity period of the exam being one year,
- Making budget-friendly practices in school bus fees,
- Organizing more frequent programs by keeping the training programs shorter in courses such as İSMEK, Public Education Center,
- Providing financial or material support in education levels where material use is high, such as kindergarten,
- Free courses and additional classes in the primary school period,
- Having a separate education program for children with high academic success or special talents,
- Increasing reimbursed scholarship opportunities for university students

Legal Issues can be defined as:

- Facilitating the process of obtaining a road permit for foreigners,
- Arranging appointment systems for ID update and address registration processes
- Access to health can be defined as:
 - Family Health Centers and Immigrant Health Centers inform and remind families about the vaccination period for children,
 - The appointment system in Immigrant Health Centers does not work regularly; renewal of the appointment system to solve the difficulties experienced in getting an appointment,
 - Stricter control of both the wages and service quality of private clinics by the State,
 - Health system to provide more affordable services for foreigners residing in Turkey with a residence permit



Public Services can be defined as:

- Non-governmental organizations to carry out more in-depth studies with foreigners and follow up their needs regularly,
- Creation of employment areas for single women and people over 50 years of age

Social Cohesion Processes can be defined as:

- Conducting more regular reviews and checks of hate speech against foreigners on social media channels such as Youtube; imposing sanctions on discriminatory speech,
- More dissemination of activities and opportunities for the foreign community to strengthen relations with the Turkish people,
- Municipalities organize activities to increase interaction between children on special days such as holidays.

ZEYTİN AĞACI DERNEĞİ

(SMALL PROJECTS ISTANBUL)

CHILDREN'S COUNCIL ACTIVITIES RECOMMENDATION REPORT

FEBRUARY – MARCH 2022 TERM

In 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 have their confidence and advocacy supported.

The Children's Council Meeting count between August 2021 - March 2022: 14

Total Number of Kids who Attended the Children's Council Meetings: 40

Distribution of the Children's Council attenders by age and gender:

	Girls	Boys	Total Number
Age 11	8	3	11
Age 12	8	8	16
Age 13	5	3	8
Age 14	2	3	5
Total Number	23	17	40

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

This report shares notes from the council work held with children.

With the help of children a study was carried out to create slogans that would give short messages to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Responses received from children when they were asked: "What is a slogan?"

- "It could be something like opening the door of happiness" (Age 12)
- "I think it's to write something on the news" (Age 13)
- "It can convey or explain something" (Age 12)
- "To be able to easily remember and repeat something we have thought" (Age 12)
- "Finding the easy part of a difficult situation" (Age 11)
- "Announcement" (Age 11)
- "To say something briefly" (Age 12)
- "Phrases that direct people to do something" (Age 11)



Responses received from children when they were asked: "What do you think is the most important article of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child for you?"

- "Children's Rights should be known by everyone. Because if everyone knows about children's rights, it will be heard and spread further" (Age 12)
- "Life, survival and development" (Age 13)
- "Freedom of Religion and Thought is very important for a child to express himself/ herself freely. Freedom of expression is also given to all people" (Age 12)
- "Freedom of religion and thought, and making rights real" (Age 12)
- "Sharing one's feelings freely" (Age 11)
- "I think the most important article is that children's rights should be known by everyone" (Age 11)
- "Freedom of religion and thought and children's rights should be known by everyone, these are the most important ones." (Age 13)
- "Children's rights should be known by everyone" (Age 12)

Responses received from children when they were asked: "If you wrote a slogan about the articles in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, what would you write?"

- "Everyone must know the children's right" (Age 11)
- "Everyone should know the children's rights, not just me" (Age 11)
- "Respect for my religion is respect for my humanity" (Age 13)
- "Do not make children's lives miserable, they deserve to live!" (Age 12)
- "Do not touch children, give them a clean future!" (Age 12)
- "Let's live with our rights, let's develop together" (Age 13)
- "Take care of children, protect your future!" (Age 12)
- "Freedom for people is freedom of expression" (Age 13)
- "The first condition of happiness is health!" (Age 13)
- "Live healthy, age healthily!" (Age 12)

Responses received from children when they were asked: "What do you remember from what we have learned so far about the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its articles?"

- "Everyone should know the children's rights, not just me" (Age 11)
- "Respect for my religion is respect for my humanity" (Age 13)
- "Do not make children's lives miserable, they deserve to live!" (Age 12)
- "Do not touch children, give them a clean future!" (Age 12)
- "Let's live with our rights, let's develop together" (Age 13)
- "Take care of children, protect your future!" (Age 12)
- "Freedom for people is freedom of expression" (Age 13)
- "The first condition of happiness is health!" (Age 13)
- "Live healthy, age healthily!" (Age 12)

Responses received from children when they were asked: "What do you remember from what we have learned so far about the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its articles?"

- "There are many countries that are included in the contract. Turkey is among them" (Age 13)
- "Every child has the right to life and education" (Age 12)



- "We have the right to grow and develop" (Age 12)*
- "All balloons have the right to fly and they all do, just like balloons, children have rights and all are equal" (Age 12)*
- "No one can discriminate against us whether we are blonde or brunette" (Age 13)*
- "Let's imagine a house with flying balloons. Let the children be the house, and the balloons are the right. Without those balloons, children can't fly" (Age 11)*
- "For example, a child's father smokes but tells his child not to smoke. This child may smoke in the future, and her/his friends may also have an effect. We can do what we see, not what we are told" (Age 12)*
- "Everyone has the right to live in this world. No one can restrict another's freedom of life. Nobody can kill anybody." (Age 11)*
- "No one can interfere in another's life" (Age 13)*
- "For example, in the period of ignorance girls were killed. This means that those children have been deprived of their right to live." (Age 12)*
- "Everyone has the right to live and everyone is free to a certain extent. But it cannot be in a way that harms the rights of others." (Age 13)*
- "We wouldn't have a future if everyone didn't live in this world." (Age 12)*
- "Let's say a child is Syrian. He/she should be able to become a Turkish citizen if he wants to." (Age 11)*
- "If there are parents who harm their children in Europe, they take the child from them. After 5 years, they ask the child again. If he wants to return, he can return." (Age 11)*
- "Sometimes mothers give birth to their children and leave them in orphanages. Then, when they grow up they have to call their parents. However, every child has the right to live and grow up with their parents." (Age 11)*
- "For example, the house we live in will be painted. We can say our opinion about the color of our own room. This is our right." (Age 12)*
- "Sometimes adults can think wrong. Despite this, we, as children, are not taken seriously when we speak our minds." (Age 12)*
- "We want a field to be built on an empty land close to our house. The municipalities are telling us that these empty spaces are none of our business, something else will be done there." (Age 11)*
- "For example, our family will move to another place. They need to get our opinion too." (Age 12)*
- "No one can touch us without our consent." (Age 12)*
- "They can touch people with physical or mental disabilities without their consent. They think they don't understand." (Age 11)*
- "I want to spend my free time according to my pleasure. But our families want us to work even in times like these. They say always work! Work harder." (Age 12)*
- "The state should protect children from abuse and violence." (Age 12)*

Responses received from children when they were asked: "What would you name it if they established an association for children's rights"

- "Children's Rights Awareness Association" (Age 12)*
- "Children's Rights Protection Association" (Age 13)*
- "Association for Respecting Children's Rights" (Age 11)*
- "Children's Rights Ideas" (Age 11)*
- "Children's Rights and Children's Ideas" (Age 11)*
- "Branches of Children"*

*The name of the association was chosen as "Association for the Protection of Child Rights" by the majority of votes.

Responses received from children when they were asked: "What can be done by the association regarding children's rights"

- "Preparing brochures and holding meetings." (Age 12)*



- "We can publish a magazine or advertise in newspapers."(Age 11)*
- "We can give classes" (Age 11)*
- "We can arrange a venue and gather people there." (Age 13)*
- "We can introduce it to all people" (Age 12)*
- "We can advertise in the newspaper as a free picnic with the kids." (Age 13)*
- "We can promote the association and our work by opening a website or via a Youtube video."(Age 11)*
- "We can write essays for the magazine." (Age 12)*

Responses received from children when they were asked: "What could be the first work of the association for children"

- "All children should write about their rights." (Age 12)*
- "We can prepare a board game about children's rights." (Age 13)*
- "We can have a picnic." (Age 11)*
- "We can prepare slogans and posters while having a picnic." (Age 13)*
- "Picture drawing activity can be done."(Age 11)*
- "We can draw a picture of how we want to live but can't."(Age 13)*
- "We can make children happy by giving gifts more often."(Age 13)*
- "We can distribute food to the hungry children." (Age 12)*
- "Each child will write a name on a piece of paper and put it in a jar, and the person whose name comes up will be given a gift." (Age 13)*
- "We can create solutions for blind children in Africa." (Age 12)*
- "We can give jobs to the families of the children." (Age 13)*

In February, Istanbul Asks Children Project activities were implemented with the children of the Olive Tree Association (Small Projects Istanbul) Children's Council members. The main idea of the project was to enable children to discuss Istanbul's Maintenance Masters in a free and pleasant environment with an interactive method to express how they perceive the city by working on a specially designed map of Istanbul to identify their beautiful and proud sides, deficiencies and problems together. Also, to enable them to put forward their demands and solutions regarding these issues.

With the Istanbul Asks Children Project, the members of the Council both experienced a participatory democracy and said "we are here too" in this city with their motivation and active participation through the problems they pointed out and the solutions they produced.



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)



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