

A girl-centered perspective on children's living spaces in temporary shelters in earthquake-affected zones in Türkiye

Executive Summary

In cooperation with the Ministry of Family and Social Services, Suna's Daughters team established Children's Hubs in two temporary shelters in Pazarcık and Antakya, areas hit hardest by the earthquakes in Türkiye in February 2024. The Hubs, in which children can participate in a variety of movement and art-based workshops, aim to provide a safe space for children, especially girls, between the ages of 12-18.

With funding from EMpower, in early June 2023, a team of researchers conducted a field visit to these sites where the Children's Hubs were established to evaluate these container cities - which were designed as longer-term living spaces compared to tent cities - from a girl-centered design perspective and to reveal to what extent and how their needs have changed since February.

The full report is available in Turkish at [LINK](#)

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 on the basis of 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 the relevant target group of girls.



A total of 68 children (42 girls and 26 boys) enrolled in the centers filled out screening forms which included questions pertaining to their daily lives and their specific needs in the temporary shelters. About approximately 80% of the children who filled the screening forms were between the ages of 12-14 and more than 90% of them lived in the container cities where the Hubs are located. Focus group discussions and workshops with children were also conducted to gain more insight into their daily routines and the challenges they faced after the earthquake.

Our findings summarized as follows:

- Moving freely and safely in container cities and spending time with their friends has a positive impact on the physical and emotional state of the children. Spending time in open spaces, in nature and in the shade, playing games, socializing with peers, and being in a "quiet and calm environment" are amongst common demands of the children.
- The earthquake disrupted children's education very sharply. While 93% of the children who filled out the screening form stated that they had been going to school before the earthquake, as of the beginning of June, only 10% of the children stated that they had been going to school when schools were open after the earthquake. Lack of transportation and financial uncertainties are the biggest anxiety factors for returning to school.
- Household chores take up a large part of girls' daily routine. Responsibilities such as cleaning the container houses, keeping siblings and nieces and nephews busy, taking them to the park, and making them study have fallen to the majority of girls.
- Children have accepted the idea that they will live in temporary spaces for at least one more year. Children have adapted to the conditions in container cities, but the need to create safe spaces where they have access to the kind of services in line with their needs continues.

In our interviews with children, we found out that the Hubs contribute to life in container cities and that girls feel safe in them. Children choose to come to the Hubs for activities such as socializing, reading, and studying. One of the most important reasons behind this sense of belonging is the emphasis placed on children's participation in all aspects of the Hub experience from decision-making processes to the design and content of the workshops offered.

The issues that need to be closely monitored in the upcoming period can be summarized as follows:

- Expected and unexpected situations such as changes in the climate, the opening of schools, and the occurrence of any crisis/accident may require the arrangements in container cities to be revised and improved. In this process, it is critical to follow a process that is sensitive to the needs of children and takes into account their participation.
- Uninterrupted access to education is crucial to reduce the burden of care that is clearly evident for girls, and to support all children's adaptation to a new life and their academic and social development.
- Outdoor spaces are an important part of children's daily lives in container cities. Diversifying these areas according to the needs of specific age groups and gender and designing them with a girl-centered design approach is a must for ensuring that girls use these areas.
- Despite all the challenging conditions, neighborhood relations are established between household units and children develop friendships in temporary shelters. In the container cities, practices such as barbecuing together, sitting together for tea can bring people together. Arrangements that find a way to incorporate child-centered designs and practices will stand out and be remembered as examples of good practice.

