

## **Child Studies in Migration Foundation**

### **Current Situation**

Problems caused by forced migration in the region such as social injustice, human rights-violations, and poverty severely traumatized all society. As a result of these adverse conditions, individuals had experienced enormous collapses in their lives; and children, as the most vulnerable group, were affected by the consequences of forced migration most severely.

According to the migration researches on the family structure of immigrants, conducted by Migration Foundation and Non-Governmental Organizations in the region, average family size of immigrants varies between 9 and 11 family members; and children those are in the basic education age-between 6 and 14 years- form the majority.

Difficulties and problems experienced by immigrant families in the new settlement after forced migration are reflected on children incrementally. Children of immigrant families grow up without enjoying their childhood, stuck between childhood and adulthood, and are alienated to the nature and identity of the child. Daughters of immigrant families help housework, as well as childcare. Sons of immigrant families, on the other hand, chose to contribute to the family subsistence by selling their labor power on the street because of the poverty that family face with. Those who chose to work on the street in order to contribute to the family subsistence spend their 6-14 hours in a day on the streets. Besides, it is known that all family members including children work as seasonal workers in different regions under very difficult conditions.

Regarding the adverse conditions that children and families are exposed to, some children cannot participate in education process healthfully, and leave his/her education at an earlier age. Others, who participate in education process despite all difficulties, face with gendered, rote-learning, repressive, discriminatory, exclusionist, competitive, androcentric, male-dominated logic of the education system. Children, who participate in education process, complete their development without any remarkable contribution to their creativeness.

Current Law System is undistinguishable from a labyrinth which brings together the traditional mentality of executives, making of laws from adult-centered point of view, and infrastructure problems. Looking at implementations, acceptance of Convention on the Rights of the Child, Child Protection Act and Juvenile Courts could not go beyond being an improper make-up to current law system. Commentaries on Convention on the Rights of the Child Article 3 prove that this acceptance of Convention is nothing more than a make-up and just for international prestige.

Children are the most vulnerable group among other vulnerable individuals (such as manual laborer, drug-addicted, law victim, poor and forced to leave education) during the traumatic processes (such as war, migration and poverty) of the society. In this context, health and social services are grounded in the field of child poverty and they try to find solutions with charity-based methods and approaches. On the other hand, they create dependent, docile, and obedient personalities.

In the framework of current conditions, in terms of education, health, law and social service politics, children cannot go beyond a passive being, a living object. In this context, current situation came to a point where it does not only violate the principle of the child's high-benefit, but even eradicates the notion of childhood.

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## Motives

Solution offerings aiming at the social problems caused by forced migration process and afterwards, do not target the main source of the problem. Instead, they produce temporary solutions which, in fact, deepen the existing problems. More importantly, the same mentality which cause above-mentioned social trauma plays the major role in the solution of the problem. This process leads to no solution, but only to the new depressions in the society.

It is obvious that any system, which is not human and individual-centered, not able to provide a safe and humane living space for children, not able to satisfy the most basic rights of children such as education, health, culture, play, and enjoying the childhood, which forces 45 % of children to work even if they are at basic educational age, cannot go beyond making the solution even more difficult. Besides, what prevails in the current socio-political system is the understanding that children who are victims of migration or any other oppression, who face with difficulties in accessing to the society and to daily life, must be "rehabilitated" in order to integrate into the society. This understanding does not see the child as a social being; but instead reduces it just to an individual and ignores the socialization and acculturation processes of individual within the society.

Apart from the post-trauma of forced migration and consequences of migration that children had experienced, hitherto adult-centered understanding and point of view does not focus on the solutions of children's problems and hinders the alternative solutions, as well. Adult-centered understanding regards the early childhood, childhood and adolescence ages as transitional stages to adulthood; and does not take them into account seriously. This situation in itself has significant deadlocks which should be seriously examined pedagogically, psychologically and even politically.

Problems caused by adult-centered understanding also reflected on the debates after the acceptance of Universal Declaration of Human Rights. These debates and searches paved the way for development of a law system unique to the child, defined the child as an individual; and transformed the traditional approach in favor of children.

Although Convention on the Rights of the Child is a significant improvement in terms of world children, due to the fact that societies stick to traditional mentality and there are shortcomings in the implementations, children cannot wholly develop as social beings. Therefore, children are still seen as passive livings needed to be educated, small cute beings, naughty creatures, sweet beings that helps letting off steam. Existing point of view may be the exact answer of who is not and what is not a child; whereas, unfortunately, it is the very answer of who is a child for a large segment of the society.

Looking from human rights and children rights perspective, it is obvious that children must be defined as individuals who have their own existing within the nature and society, as subjects who are reasonable, creative, and critical, have will and responsibility, care about playing and recreating, are socialized and acculturated within the society.

In societies and systems within which the child are not regarded as an individual, it is essential to conduct alternative non-governmental works in order to re-create the notion of childhood. These works require an adequate evaluation of existing situation, as well as the consideration and improvement of cultural, economic, and social processes of the relevant group or society.

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UN Convention the Rights of the Child makes all relevant states obliged to inform the child about his/her rights and to actually exercise these rights under any circumstances whatsoever.

In this regard, unconditional acceptance and exercise of all articles in Convention on the Rights of the Child, especially of the ones on which the state put commentaries, are the prerequisite of actual materialization of children rights. On the other hand, the right of the child to learn and to practice his/her mother tongue and culture is not only his/her basic right, but also a prerequisite for the harmonious development of the child.

Within this regard, in the case of default and/or neglect of these obligations, relevant civil societal groups are responsible for taking necessary steps in favor children, working with children and establishing example models with children. Within this sense of responsibility, Migration Foundation primarily aims at working with children in order to support their harmonious development in accordance with Convention on the Rights of the Child.

### **General Approach to Child Studies**

#### **Main Philosophical Methods and Approaches**

Migration Foundation's Main Philosophy in the child studies is to define the child as an individual who has its own existing; to project and practice artistic, cultural, social and sportive activities which encourage the freedom, independence and creativeness of the child on the one hand, and which contribute to the physical and mental health of the child, on the other.

All works aiming at children will be structured from a multi-lingual perspective within which education in the mother-tongue is available in the whole process.

Methods and approaches, which will be followed through the process of establishment of alternative works, will be in accordance with following principles:

- Society-based and sensitive to culture
- Supported and sustained by rights-based and freedoms-based approaches
- Child-centered and include children into the process
- Mutual learning ( learning from the child and dialog-based)
- Respect for the child, protect and support the child
- Encourage natural and environmental consciousness
- Participative and transparent
- Democratic and principled
- Critical
- Based on the relations of equality
- Based on gender equality
- Understandable (in mother tongue)

### **Motives of Main Philosophical Methods and Approaches**

Existing system (of education, law, social service, health etc.) produces a monotype, marginalizing, and othering mind-set through which not only the systems reproduces itself; but also development and exercise of alternative approaches are hindered by system devices which impede questioning. This situation, which alienates individuals to nature, to society, and to the individual himself/herself, can be overcome if and only if wounded minds re-create themselves in order to question, analyze, produce and share.

Keeping in mind that society is consisted of individuals whom are produced by the existing system, accordance of all alternative works to the child's high-benefit principle and to Convention on the Rights of the Child should be repeatedly considered.

Another important point in alternative child studies is socio-economic and cultural sensibilities. It is essential to be aware of the any kind of influences which can evoke past and present life traumas; and it is required to develop methods and approaches with reference to this awareness. To what extent gendered approaches are effective is obvious. Gender equality which diffuses into all processes of alternative works would contribute children to question the existing system from gender equality aspect, too.

It is inevitable for alternative child works to eradicate the hierarchical structure of existing education system for the sake of children rights and harmonious development of the child.

This method and approach are essential for the child to develop his/her participation and self-expression skills.