

Human rights education as a tool of grassroots organizing and social transformation: a case study from Turkey

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Women for Women's Human Rights (WWHR)—New Ways has been carrying out a *Human Rights Education Program for Women* throughout Turkey for over a decade, in cooperation with community centers. The training has a holistic, comprehensive nature, linking several areas of human rights through a critical gender perspective lens. One of the overarching aims of the program is to support women's grassroots organizing in economically disadvantaged areas by equipping women to mobilize around self-identified needs. This article focuses on the impact of the program on women, methodological factors that contribute to its success and its role as a catalyst to promote social transformation at the local level.

Introduction

Historically, the maturation of the concept of rights has followed the development of individuality. A basic precondition for the concept of rights is that a person sees herself as an individual, having a certain area of freedom, which is inviolable. In Turkey, however, a majority of women are not allowed the space to be an *individual* whether in the legal, social, economic or cultural domains. Rather, they are constantly faced with norms and practices forcing them to resign their right to be an individual and instead live as secondary citizens in the service of their families, as a 'girl-child', 'wife' or 'mother'.

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The development of human rights has become an important issue for the Turkish public agenda since the 1980s. Turkey was accepted by the European Union (EU) as an official candidate for enlargement in December 1999. Human rights were set as a priority area for the accession partnership. At the European Council summit in December 2004, the EU decided to begin negotiations with Turkey regarding its full membership in the organization.

Despite the developing human rights discourse and the aspired EU membership, women's human rights remain a rather 'marginal' issue both by the government and mainstream human rights organizations in Turkey.

People think, she is a woman, she should not see or learn anything, and her eyes should be veiled. I was not aware that I have a personality, that I am myself. I only had duties; I was only fulfilling my tasks. The concept of shame and prohibitions were ruling my life. During the *Women's Human Rights Training* process, I understood that I am a person, a woman and that I have rights. In the course of the *Women's Human Rights Training*, I learned communication. I had taken other trainings, courses before. Yet, it is with the *Women's Human Rights Training Program*, that all these trainings formed a whole, the concepts started to fit in place. During the process, my husband and children also changed. They started to appreciate and support me. Both my daughter and I are very lucky that I have been through this training. After the *Women's Human Rights Training* I found myself. I am a citizen, an individual; I exist. (Elif, a participant from Istanbul)

Women for Women's Human Rights (WWHR)—New Ways, an independent women's NGO based in Istanbul, Turkey, developed the *Human Rights Education Program for Women* in light of the above-stated issues in 1995. Designed with a holistic and participatory approach to assist women to develop the knowledge and skills towards the full enjoyment of their human rights, the ultimate aim of the program is to enable women to mobilize around human rights violations they encounter in their local or national contexts. The program is constructed as a 'tool' providing the necessary space and information for women to develop a critical consciousness of human rights, devise their own strategies to realize their rights, and enable them to organize for social and political action around their needs.

Background: women's human rights in Turkey

Turkey is unique in the Muslim world with respect to the extent of secular and progressive reforms of the family code affecting women's lives. The founding of the Turkish Republic in 1923 brought an end to the Ottoman Empire's system of parallel laws and established a secular, unified, and standardized legal system adapted from the European system of law. The Turkish civil code, adapted from the Swiss civil code and introduced in 1926, abolished polygyny and granted women equal rights in matters of divorce, child custody and inheritance. A recent reform of the Turkish civil code in 2001 abolished the supremacy of men in marriage and established the full equality of men and women in the family.¹

Despite the equality that exists in laws and on paper, discrimination against women and girls continues in several areas. For example, although primary education is

compulsory in Turkey, official national statistics show that as of 2000, 19.4% of women in Turkey are illiterate (see Republic of Turkey Prime Ministry Institute of Statistics, 2004). Research conducted by WWHR—New Ways has shown that although there is no legal provision requiring married women to have their husband's permission to work, 50% of the married women living in Umraniye, a shantytown of Istanbul, have indicated that they cannot work because their husbands do not allow them to work outside home (Ilkcaracan, 1998).

Moreover, several customary practices that are in contradiction with the laws continue to shape women's daily lives and maintain the imbalance of power in sexual relations. The discrepancy between laws on paper and customary practices is a major obstacle for many women. This is especially the case for women of lower socio-economic levels and women living in Eastern Turkey, which is economically the least developed region and has a multiethnic character.²

Although none of them are unique to the Eastern region or to the Kurdish population, customary practices such as early and forced marriages, honor crimes, bride price or denying women their inheritance rights have a higher prevalence in the region, mainly due to the fact that these women have the least chance to enforce their rights due to the discrimination against use of the Kurdish language, a lack of education and economic independence. It is interesting to note that most of these customary practices are not only in contradiction with the secular laws, but also with the principles of Islam.

Field research conducted by WWHR in Eastern and Southeastern Turkey in 1996–1997 revealed that 51% of the women had been married against their will, which violates the law. Even though the Turkish civil code foresees equal inheritance rights for men and women, 61% of women in Eastern Turkey report that they could not inherit anything due to customary laws (Ilkcaracan, 1998a).

I am the first female child who went to school in my family. I finished primary school but I was not allowed to go to middle school. My family got me married to my uncle's son. All my life I could not even walk out the door when I wanted. I discovered the *Women's Human Rights Training Program* after I had my sixth child. Then both my family life and social life changed. I started to talk about this training and about our rights with every woman I knew. I saw that you have your own rights, as a woman, as a mother, and that you have the right to know about these rights. We started working as a group after the *Women's Human Rights Training*. When we first started this job, we did not even have a studio; we were making the candles at home. Then we rented a small store. In the past, I was hardly able to leave the house, but now I am talking about making connections with the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, the Directorate of Cultural Affairs, the City Directorate, and private firms. ... Our goal is to promote the social and economic status and awareness of women in Diyarbakir. I pushed the door open, I have a job, I have a group of people I work with, we have goals and plans, and here I am in Istanbul representing my group. (Museyyer, a participant from Diyarbakir, Southeastern Turkey)

The social services and state initiatives that would enable the actual practice of legal rights in women's everyday lives remain extremely limited. Hence there is a need for comprehensive social support programs for people at the grassroots level and

for women in particular, in order to inform them about their legal rights and to enable them to gain a critical awareness of human rights and develop skills for their enforcement. The expansion of such critical awareness of human rights would be a fundamental first step towards the widespread and active participation of individuals in democratic governance. The *Human Rights Education Program for Women* was developed as a response to this need by WWHR—New Ways.

The Human Rights Education Program for Women

Since its pilot application phase in the shanty towns of Istanbul in 1995–1996, the *Human Rights Education Program for Women* has expanded to 30 cities in all regions of Turkey over a decade, and over 4000 women have participated in the program. It is currently the most widespread and comprehensive non-formal human rights education program in Turkey and in the region. The program explores civil, economic, political, sexual, reproductive and sexual rights, gender discrimination towards children, children's rights and violence against women within a human rights framework, with a focus on grassroots organizing and mobilization for social change throughout. Moreover, through discussing women's human rights and violations in relation to participants' personal experiences and including workshops on communication skills, the program provides the tools to apply the critical consciousness of human rights to life. By this definition, *Human Rights Education Program for Women* provides an intersection of a variety of fields, such as law, education, gender, psychology, personal development and political activism.

Aims of the program

The *Human Rights Education Program for Women* has been designed in the context outlined above, based on the premise that if women developed a critical awareness of their human rights, they would be able to overcome the violations they face by developing individual strategies and grassroots organizing. In this framework, the program aims to:

- develop a critical understanding of laws, human rights and women's human rights in existing international and regional conventions, as well as the state's responsibility to implement these conventions;
- raise consciousness about how codified and uncoded laws shape our lives and promote a critical understanding of how laws are shaped by the society and subject to change over time and through advocacy;
- provide an environment in which women can develop an understanding about gender discrimination through sharing their experiences in a safe atmosphere of solidarity while seeking solutions;
- support women in developing individual and group strategies to implement their existing rights; and
- enable women to develop personal and collective grassroots organizational skills to assist them in mobilizing around self-identified needs.

Beginnings: are poverty and human rights mutually exclusive?

In 1995, a pilot training program was implemented in cooperation with the Umraniye Women's Center, in a shanty town area, where poverty is widespread. The training-of-trainers programming was supported by group supervision meetings held by WWHR. In the initial supervision meetings, the most frequently voiced concern was the trainers' *perceived* incompatibility of the concept of human rights and poverty. They feared that the poverty of the women participating in the training would lead them to believe that the concepts of human rights and women's human rights were irrelevant to their lives—a luxury not providing any solutions to their actual problems. However, as the training proceeded, and especially after the workshops on violence against women, the participants began to express their enthusiasm for the training. Moreover, the training became an attraction for a large number of women who insisted on joining the groups after they heard about it from their neighbours and friends.

Evaluation research conducted after the training showed that 85% of the participants found the program to be very beneficial for them, and 15% thought it was fairly beneficial. Among the issues covered by the program, human rights/women's human rights was identified as the most useful one (Ilkcaracan, 1998b).

Inspired by the success of the pilot training, WWHR decided to prepare a 326-page training manual to be used only by trainers who had participated in an intensive training-of-trainers. The manual, prepared by a team of five experts from different academic backgrounds, was completed in 1998 and includes background information and group activities for the 16 workshops. The manual is designed for use by trainers and includes very specific instructions, an introduction on how to use the manual, and an appendix for each section with information sheets to be disseminated to participants.

A training manual on human rights education for women.

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Expansion of the program throughout Turkey: utilizing state resources for women's human rights education

WWHR's experience from the pilot implementations of the program showed that long-term sustainability and expansion of the program throughout Turkey required a revision of initial plans. Most women's NGOs in Turkey are located in a few big cities; therefore, working *only* with NGOs would seriously limit the expansion of the program, not allowing us to reach areas where there were no local women's groups. Our experience had also shown that our original plan, that NGOs would offer continued trainings using the manual after an initial cooperation with us, was not realistic. An effective and independent implementation of the program by local NGOs was hindered by many factors such as the dependency they developed on us, the drop-out rate of their (trained) members and funding problems.

As we were seeking a solution to the sustainability and expansion of the program, we discovered that the General Directorate for Social Services was planning to establish community centers throughout Turkey. Partnerships between state institutions and NGOs was not at all common in Turkey at the time. However, after studying our manual, the general director of the Directorate, who happened to be a progressive social worker himself, was convinced that this program perfectly suited the needs of community centers. In 1998, a protocol was signed to implement the program at community centers throughout Turkey by training social workers employed at the centers as trainers for the program.

The community centers are situated in the economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods of urban areas, most of which are subject to heavy internal migration, and where social services are in great demand. The fact that community centers were state institutions made it easier for women to overcome the resistance of their husbands and families, who initially reacted negatively towards their participation in a 'human rights' training. Having social workers at the centers as trainers for the *Human Rights Education Program for Women* was also a great benefit. The social workers had the educational and vocational background to implement the training successfully. They were already employed at the community centers and thus had established relations with the women in the community as well as an understanding of the local context. Participants could continue to seek the support of the center after they have completed the training and make use of it for their further activities and organizing.

The most significant contribution of this collaboration has been ensuring the sustainability and expansion of the *Human Rights Education Program for Women* throughout Turkey. Approximately 90 social workers have been prepared as trainers through the four training-of-trainers conducted by WWHR since 1998. As of 2004,

the program has reached over 4000 women and is being implemented in 30 provinces in all geographic regions, in over 45 centers.

Methodological issues

Structure of the program: from training-of-trainers to grassroots organizing

The training program consists of three phases: a 10-day training-of-trainers conducted by WWHR—New Ways; a four-month-long implementation phase, with 16 weekly three-hour workshops led by trained group facilitators on the local level, supported by our intense supervision; and an additional program for the support of grassroots initiatives emerging from the program.

The trainers are selected by WWHR. The criteria for the selection of trainers include their potential for a critical understanding of human rights, a capacity to act as a group facilitator, and motivation to implement the program on a long-term basis. During the intense training-of-trainers, the trainers participate in the group and discussion exercises just like participants in the local training groups. This experience enables them to gain a critical understanding of the human rights violations *they* have faced as women themselves, and develop personal strategies to overcome them. Moreover, they obtain firsthand experience of the individual and group processes triggered by the training. Training-of-trainers also includes workshops on group counseling, methodology and strategies to overcome potential problems faced during training. At the end of the 10-day training, the new trainers are asked to devise an action plan to implement the training on the local level.

Trainers form local groups of approximately 20 women. These women are selected on the basis of their motivation. Throughout the local implementation of the program, the trainers receive extensive support from WWHR through phone and site supervision visits. They receive monthly newsletters that link the groups with each other in addition to the women's movement. These connections enhance their motivation for grassroots mobilizing, which is one of the overarching goals of the program.

Each trainer is sent a number of WWHR supplementary training materials for their group. These materials include illustrated booklets prepared for low literacy women on legal, reproductive and sexual rights as foreseen in Turkish legislation and international treaties, as well as a video on domestic violence and sexual abuse in the family entitled *It's time to say no!*. They also receive a series of research reports and books on women's human rights in Turkey. The booklets support the effort of participants to disseminate the knowledge they have received to their families and communities, as most participants become resource people for human rights in their communities.

A national evaluation meeting is held for every group of trainers once they have completed the 16-week training for their first local group. These meetings provide the space for trainers to assess their implementation after they've had hands-on experience, and to discuss ways for encouraging grassroots initiatives from their groups.

We were still participating in the *Women's Human Rights Training* when we started to organize towards forming a cooperative and establishing a kindergarten, so that women can have a place to leave their children when they work. We will build connections with non-governmental organizations. We will explain to them how the development efforts of the neighborhood will benefit from our cooperative and our production. We are determined to explain to the state units about the necessity of women's participation in work life. We will use the media. Despite all the prejudices, women of Gazi neighborhood are working together, producing together; they are organized. That is the message we want to give. Our cooperative will enable women to get out of the house, and to act according to their own needs independent from their children, surroundings or husbands. (Munevver, a participant from Istanbul)

During the third phase of implementation, WWHR acts as a facilitator, advisor and bridge for the emerging grassroots initiatives, bearing in mind that the groups have full autonomy and independence in order to attain sustainable and beneficial mobilization. We provide support to the emerging groups through one-on-one consultations, training workshops, regional grassroots organizing meetings, support for funding sources and linking the local initiatives with each other, other NGOs and the women's movement.

Methodological factors contributing to the success of the program

The most distinctive feature of the *Human Rights Education Program for Women* is its holistic, comprehensive nature, linking several areas of human rights through a critical gender perspective lens. To do justice to this comprehensive nature, the training is conceptualized as an intensive process of four months, a time frame that differentiates it from many other initiatives of human rights education. Our experience has shown that such a lengthy program is essential to enable the participants to internalize human rights values, develop a critical understanding of human rights violations and have the opportunity to transform this understanding to strategies for prevention of human rights violations both in their own lives and in their community.

The training is based on an intensive group process. This allows women to express their experiences and needs as individuals, while acquiring a consciousness on the inherent connection between their individual experiences and human rights violations of women in general. It also enables them to share their own problems and develop strategies through the assistance and feedback of group participants, while gaining an understanding about the problems of other participants and assisting them in their search for solutions. In fact, for many women, the first step towards empowerment is the realization that the causes of their problems are not private, but social. The training includes many group exercises where women can share their individual painful experiences of violations of their human rights, discrimination and violence. The group process enables them to realize that these experiences are not an inescapable part of her individual destiny or a result of her failures, but rather a collective experience shared by many other women as a result of a socio-political system leading to human rights violations of women.

As the program links the local context with the national, and the national with the international within the framework of global human rights norms, women become aware that they are not alone, neither in the extent of human rights violations they face, nor in their struggle to overcome them. They feel that they are a part of an international movement, a factor that significantly contributes to their motivation and determination.

Throughout the four-month training program, an atmosphere of group solidarity develops among the women in the local group. There is the opportunity to transfer the awareness from the group discussions to everyday life and practice, and vice versa. As women search for strategies to transfer the knowledge they've gained in the training to their lives and to begin to experiment with them, they receive the support of both the group and the trainer. The women develop common tactics to deal with the negative responses from their family and community, to prevent common human rights violations in their community. They become conscious of the importance of organized action. Since the program provides the time for women to experience changes in their own attitudes and actions, they are able to evaluate the changes within the group and to share obstacles and successes. The empowerment process is thereby gradual and more substantial.

The role of the trainer, both as the group facilitator and role model, is of utmost importance in this process. During the training-of-trainers, it is emphasized that the role of the trainer in this program is not that of a teacher, but that of a facilitator on an equal level with the participants as a woman, also struggling to overcome human rights violations. The success of the training group is positively correlated with the democratic, open, respectful and encouraging attitude of the trainer, the degree of her motivation and her conviction of the importance of grassroots organizing.

After the completion of the training, the participants are encouraged to go back to the community center for further assistance, meet other participants and strategize for grassroots organizing. WWHR supports new initiatives of grassroots organizing through various methods. The themes and issues of our support range from assistance in local advocacy and lobbying, legal issues related to NGOs, team building, technical assistance, to linkages with funding agencies, resources and similar NGOs within the women's movement. Our multi-year experience has shown that participating in a grassroots organizing process is one of the most empowering experiences for women in realizing their human rights, and our support in this process as an equal partner is perceived by women as especially meaningful.

We live in the capital city but we are not aware of what goes on in this country. In our day, we could not defend our own rights; we were brought up in ignorance. I do not want my daughter, my son or my daughter-in-law to experience what I have lived through. I have to make this happen. I have seen that through the *Women's Human Rights Training Program*. I have changed my husband as well; but it is not only my husband, our society has to change. And this will happen in time. And most important of all, I now live for myself. I had not recognized my own individual existence, desires; I had forgotten about the people out there and how to talk to them. Now I travel and talk to my heart's desire, and I write freely, without fear. (Turkan, a participant from Ankara, Central Anatolia)

The results of an external evaluation study

In 2002, an external evaluation of the program as a whole was conducted to evaluate the overall impact of the program, aiming to review the program from a broad perspective, identify successes and problem areas, and provide insight for future implementation. Evaluation research was conducted with 290 participants throughout Turkey. A survey questionnaire, focus group discussions with participants, interviews with trainers and WWHR—New Ways staff were used to collect data for the evaluation.

The result of the evaluation study has shown that the *Human Rights Education Program for Women* had significantly increased the cognitive, affective and action competences of the participants in relation to human rights. The majority of the participants (72%) indicated that the training has significantly increased their cognitive competences in political, civil and economic rights through the training (Kardam, 2003). The level of education of the participants varied inversely with the extent of knowledge they acquired. The least educated women were the ones who learned the most about their rights.

Women exercising their human rights

Focus group discussions revealed that before the program, many of the participants had internalized the gender norms that condone violence against women, perceived it as normal and had not been able to identify the different types of violence they faced. The findings show that following their participation in the training, 63% of women who experienced physical violence from their partners were able to end it, while 22% were able to decrease its extent after participating in the program. Seventy-five per cent of women who were subject to emotional violence were able to end or decrease emotional violence through the skills they acquired in the program.

Women's self-perception and self-confidence transform significantly with the *Human Rights Education Program for Women*. In the evaluation survey, 93% of the women reported that their self-confidence increased after participating in the program and 82% spent more time pursuing personal interest. This combination of an increase in a critical awareness of rights combined with communication skills resulted in an increased ability to resolve problems for an overwhelming majority of the participants (90%). Women were better able to voice their opinions and demands with increased self-confidence. Participants began to exercise their rights to education and work. More than half of the of the respondents (54%) continued their interrupted education or enrolled in formal or informal educational courses and 29% started to work for an income, while 8% started a new business after completing the training. Participants indicated that by increasing their self confidence and creating an awareness of their rights the *Human Rights Education Program for Women* had made it possible for them to stand up to their husbands and families, demanding to go to school or work, and to develop strategies to exercise these rights.

A multi-level transformation: changing the family and community

The transformation on the personal level also led to changes in family and community relations. As women questioned existing gender roles, they started rethinking their roles in the family and community. The family relationships changed during and after the training as gender relations and norms had to be redefined and renegotiated, often through both internal and external conflict. Many times, husbands and in-laws resisted the wives' demand for exercising their rights. It was a long and difficult process that for the majority resulted in a more equal family relationship as the survey indicated. Around 70% reported that the attitudes of the husbands and other members of the family towards them changed for the better. Three-fourths of respondents (74%) reported they had more decision-making power within the family and 41% indicated that they had convinced their husbands to participate more in housework following the training. One of the most significant attitudinal changes occurred towards children, as participants developed a greater awareness of their daughters' rights and the importance of not engaging in discriminatory behavior towards female children. Ninety-three per cent indicated that their attitude towards their children changed in a positive direction after the training.

In many cases, participants received greater respect from their communities following the training, although they also experienced ambivalent and conflicting attitudes from neighbors and other community members. Many women became 'resource' people in their communities, sharing information from the program with their neighbors, relatives and friends and providing advice for overcoming violations. Ninety-five per cent of the participants reported that they shared knowledge from the program with their communities, while 87% said that they became mentors on women's human rights issues. Thus, not only did women assert themselves more in the community, but the program had broader outreach and impact within the communities.

As the training dispelled participants' prejudice and fear around 'grassroots organizing' and 'feminism', they developed a positive attitude towards solidarity with other women. Women became politically more conscious and critical; 73% voiced an increasing interest in current affairs in Turkey and abroad. However, reticence remained in seeking remedy from state institutions, as 75% indicated that they had never approached government institutions on any basis. Joining an organization was still not easy for many. Only one-third (31%) reported that they had joined an organization after the training. Yet, we must bear in mind the political and social context of Turkey, which does not encourage organizing, as well as disabling factors from the state, society and family. The women who have mobilized for social change have met significant challenges and overcome strong biases and prejudices.

Women as active agents of social change: emerging grassroots initiatives

As mentioned above, one of the overarching aims of the *Human Rights Education Program for Women* is to equip women to mobilize around self-identified needs and

to collectively become active agents to promote social change. Despite the stigma around organizing in Turkey and the unfavorable social and political circumstances hindering grassroots efforts, over the years 12 successful independent women's grassroots organizing initiatives have emerged from the program in 10 provinces, in all geographical regions of Turkey (Canakkale, Van, Antalya, Ankara, Istanbul, Izmir, Diyarbakir, Aydin, Samsun, Edirne).

These grassroots organizing initiatives display a range of diverse aims and structures stemming from local needs and priorities. While some of them are geared towards women's economic empowerment, others focus on community consciousness raising activities and support for local women. For example, women in Diyarbakir, in economically the most disadvantaged region of Turkey, have established a Candle Production Atelier in which they produce handmade candles that they sell to local stores and a national supermarket chain. At the same time, they manage a public kindergarten in Diyarbakir.

The emerging initiatives also share experiences and resources with each other. Women from Canakkale have received training on recycled paper production from the Purple Paper Production Atelier in Istanbul and have started their own atelier in Canakkale. Many of the initiatives (Ankara, Canakkale, Edirne, Aydin) work in collaboration with the community centers in their local vicinities, actively partaking in the management of the centers, providing counseling and support services for women, and fund raising for the centers. Most groups organize a series of consciousness raising activities, reach out to women in their communities and take action around community issues. Women at the Gazi District in Istanbul have founded the Kybele Cooperative and in conjunction with their economic activities are running a local campaign to establish a kindergarten. Women who have participated in the program in Van have established the first women's association in Eastern Turkey.

One of the best practices of grassroots organizing emerging from the program, the Association for Women's Labour in Canakkale, started out as an association to promote women's economic and political empowerment. Over the years, they have held extensive trainings, conferences and workshops on women's human rights issues and established considerable influence on the local governance. They opened a Women's Counseling Center in 2003, and they hosted the *Eighth National Women's Council Meeting* in 2004, bringing together women's NGOs throughout Turkey.

Once we completed the *Women's human rights training program*, we immediately moved to organize among ourselves as a group of participants. We decided to put into practice the things we had learned during the training and to implement our rights and to be a part of the women's movement in Turkey. As women, we experience discrimination in our own lives and see it happen to other women around us. We have to fight against this discrimination against women. We realized that it is necessary to be organized as a group in order to succeed. Thus we decided to acquire a legal identity and form an association. We aim to ensure that the women in Canakkale actively participate in the social, economic and political spheres. Our ultimate objective is to put an end to the violence against women. (Gulay, participant from Canakkale, West Turkey)

The grassroots initiatives emerging from *Human Rights Education Program for Women* demonstrate the transformative nature of the program not only on the individual level, but also on the community level. After participating in the program, women are able to stand up for their rights together, challenge and eliminate discrimination against themselves in a wide-range of fields and promote women's human rights and equality in their communities and on the national level. Furthermore, grassroots NGOs and initiatives that emerge from the program affirm the solidarity between women and carry it out to the public sphere, succeeding in transforming the web of local power dynamics on the local level and putting gender on the agendas of local decision-makers. The program demonstrates how women are able to transform their local contexts and become active agents to promote social change and equality through human rights education.

Notes

1. For more information on the reform of the Turkish Civil Code in 2001, see *Women for Women's Human Rights—New Ways* (2002).
2. Besides Kurds and Turks, which are the largest ethnic groups, the region also includes Zaza, Arabs and Christians.

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