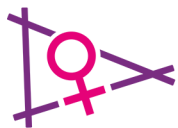


WOMEN FOR WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS ASSOCIATION

REPORT ON PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT CARRIED OUT IN THE EARTHQUAKE REGION:

ADYAMAN, DIYARBAKIR, MALATYA



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All observations, findings and recommendations shared in this report belong to our association.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	7
Preliminary Work and Field Site Selection	10
Methodology	14
Steps of PSS Work	15
Findings of the Fieldwork	16
Adiyaman Fieldwork	16
Diyarbakir Fieldwork	21
Malatya Fieldwork	23
Assessments	29
Conclusion: Policy and Implementation Recommendations	32



INTRODUCTION

"We will not forget, we will not forgive, we will not make peace with it..."¹

Almost all the articles and reports on February 6 earthquakes begin with a reference to the date, epicenters, and magnitude of the earthquakes. For sure, these are important facts. We all know about the epicenters, time, and magnitude of the earthquakes. We also know that on February 6, millions of lives, who have and are still living through an unnamable pain, have changed irreversibly. That said, a year later, we still don't know the extent of the physical damage wreaked by the earthquakes, the fate of the missing people and children, the exact death toll, the number of people who lost their limbs, the whereabouts of the aid collected by the mainstream TV channels in the aftermath of the earthquakes, and the reconstruction plans regarding the destroyed cities.

Do the children, women, and LGBTI+s feel safer a year later? Do those who lost their homes have new roofs over their heads? Were they able to mourn for their losses? Were they able to heal their wounds? For instance, can they stop themselves from waking up at 4:17 AM every day? People, who are not only fighting for their survival in the region but also trying to make their voices be heard, have answers to these questions and many more. That said, even after one year, their answers, unfortunately, have not changed.

¹ A slogan chanted in Hatay during the commemorations held on the anniversary of the earthquake. <https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/6-subatin-yildonumunde-hatay-unutmak-yok-affetmek-yok-helallesmek-yok-haber-1667292>
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In an environment where the public institutions do not fulfill their duties, those responsible are not held accountable or prosecuted, and above all, “all those things that have not been done” are instrumentalized as promises for election propaganda and hence normalized, we—women and LGBTI+s—have tried to stand side by side in our hindered mourning for our losses and in our efforts to rebuild life and heal ourselves. To this end, Women for Women’s Human Right Association carried out psychosocial support (PSS) work in the earthquake zone in solidarity with women and LGBTI+s whose lives were already laden with difficulties before the earthquakes. In this report, we share the processes and findings of this work, which we conducted with a team of two experts in Adıyaman, Diyarbakır, and Malatya between May-December 2023; we also present our policy and implementation recommendations.

With our PSS work, which was based on a feminist perspective, we aimed to remind women of their own strength and resources so that one day when all the “projects” are finalized and everyone is gone, they could find the power and the tools to heal themselves in their own groups. On the flip side, we wanted to support women in channeling their anger into their struggle against patriarchy and all other forms of discrimination, and thereby transforming it into a collective power to challenge the system.

The PSS work we carried out with women and LGBTI+s was based on one-on-one interviews, group work, and case referrals. One of the first obstacles we encountered was “basic needs”. Most of the time, we were not able to go beyond sentences that started with “if only we had a house” and touch deeper hidden wounds. Or, women who were forced to carry water to their containers every day—even today—instead of talking



about their feelings, rightly said “only if we had water first”. Among all “basic needs” women put their own “basic needs” last. As WWHR, we sought together with women for ways to address all these issues and to feel well in a circle of solidarity. Women were able to talk about their common problems collectively and started to take initiative to solve these problems and demanded services from institutions.

We have seen that whether in a village in Adiyaman or in a women’s cooperative in Malatya, women, although very different from each other, share similar feelings. During the one-on-one interviews or group work, anger and fear were the most commonly voiced emotions. Like the emotions, the problems expressed were also similar. We witnessed that women endure the trauma they live in silence so that they could keep on undertaking care work which has been intensified in parallel to the increase in the need for physical and emotional care. Trauma induced anxieties, stress, absentmindedness, and sleep disorders were the problems that we encountered frequently. We witnessed how empowering it was sometimes just to collectively converse about these problems, or to hear others share them, and sometimes to discover something new about oneself through a simple game played together.

Today, we are sad, angry, and mourning, just as we were on February 6, 2023. This report cannot even begin to express the pain of those who lost their children, families, loved ones, limbs, and homes in the earthquake. We have no choice but to make the best of what we do and strengthen our solidarity to prevent further loss of life and to overcome the corruption and decay we have been living through for so long.



PRELIMINARY WORK AND FIELD SITE SELECTION

As a team, we were involved in the feminist support groups that immediately organized in the aftermath of the earthquake. Our priority was to understand the situation in the region and provide whatever support we could with the means and resources available to us in an acute crisis. Besides being involved in different feminist solidarity groups, we contacted our Human Rights Education Program for Women (HREP) trainers and fellow feminists in the region to make an assessment and get first-hand information about the needs on the ground.

Following the February 6 earthquake, we periodically participated in the voluntary relief and support activities in the cities and districts such as Adıyaman, Hatay, and Gaziantep (Sakçagözü, İslahiye, Nurdağı) where the destruction wreaked by the earthquakes have been massive and we witnessed how the earthquakes affected the lives of women and LGBTI+s.

At the end of February, we went to Diyarbakır and met with civil society organizations and feminist activists. The extent of destruction in Diyarbakır was relatively less compared to other cities, and the city was directing all its resources to the earthquake-hit cities as well as to the communities who were migrating to Diyarbakır from the earthquake zone. Initially, we held meetings to assess the needs of the region, discuss ways of cooperation, and identify rights violations against women and LGBTI+s with BAKAD, Diyarbakır Bar LGBTI+ Network,



Diyarbakır City Platform, Rosa Women's Association, Eastern and Southeastern Businesswomen's Association (DOGÜN-KAD), Keskesor, Youth Approaches to Health Association (SGYD) Diyarbakır Youth Center, Women's Association for Culture, Arts, and Literature-KASED, and Mesopotamia Psychologists Initiative.

During our first visits to Diyarbakır, we realized that although they had experienced and been affected by the earthquakes, the extent of destruction in other cities had led the people of Diyarbakır to downplay their own suffering. Their own trauma seemed less important compared to other people's trauma who were in much more dire situations. For this reason, we thought that providing PSS was essential for the well-being of this group in the field as well as for the sustainability of support. In March, a psychologist and a social worker from our team provided post-traumatic psychological first aid and PSS to the feminist and LGBTI+ activists in Diyarbakır.

As a result of the PSS we provided for activists who carry out solidarity work in the region whilst they themselves are earthquake survivors, and in line with our observations in the field, we decided to carry out a structured psychosocial support for all women and LGBTI+ groups who were affected by the earthquakes regardless of their involvement in volunteer activities. We aimed to provide support to both women's and LGBTI+ organizations in Diyarbakır, which have been engaging with intensive relief work in Adıyaman and Malatya so that they could continue their work and activities, and women and LGBTI+ living in temporary accommodation centers in Adıyaman and Malatya. We planned this program to be based in Diyarbakır so that the field team members would not stay in tents or in con-





Diyarbakır DOGUNKAD Office - PSS Room

tainer cities and thus could separate their private lives from the relief and support work they carry out. This planning aimed to preserve the well-being of the field team.

Considering the needs and conditions of each field site, we specified and followed different strategies for the provinces of Adıyaman, Diyarbakır, and Malatya. In Diyarbakır, we worked in solidarity with Eastern and Southeastern Businesswomen's Association (DOGÜNKAD), which shared their office with us to enable us to carry out PSS work; thus, we turned one of their rooms into a one-on-one therapy room. During our visits and meetings, we explained our work to women's and LGBTI+ organizations in Diyarbakır and asked for their support in referring women and LGBTI+s who need PSS services. With the intention of facilitating the coordination of civil society-led



PSS work in Diyarbakır and being informed about what is being done, we joined the Diyarbakır Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) group, which brings together CSOs providing PSS services in Diyarbakır.

For the program's eight-month field work, we set up a team of two people who know the region well and can provide multilingual services. This team consisted of one psychologist and one social worker between May and September, and between October and December, the team consisted of two social workers. We worked on a plan where the team would stay in Diyarbakır and travel to Adıyaman and Malatya every week via private vehicle. During the orientation and preparation phase before going to the field, we ensured that the team received training from social workers with many years of experience working in feminist and LGBTI+ organizations and receiving applications.

Besides holding coordination meetings with the team in the field every week, we frequently visited the region, especially in the first three months of the fieldwork, in order to facilitate the fieldwork processes, arrangement of various interviews, and site selection. We ensured that the field team received regular supervision from two experts, a social worker and a psychologist, so that they could maintain their well-being and carry out their work under healthy conditions. To protect the well-being of the PSS team, we provided hotel accommodation for the days they stayed in Adıyaman and Malatya, arranged for them to use private transfers during field visits, and took out liability insurance.



METHODOLOGY

The main purpose of our fieldwork was to identify psychological and social maladjustments in order to enable women and LGBTI+s to cope with the psychological trauma caused by the disaster and to increase the awareness of women and LGBTI+s regarding their situation as well as their internal and environmental resources which would contribute to empowering their coping/recovery strategies. We achieved these goals through individual psychological counseling (therapy), one-on-one interviews (with a social worker), group work, case follow-up and referral.

It is not possible to expect the trauma caused by the disaster to be completely separated from other past traumatic experiences. We have planned a feminist and holistic PSS process that takes into account the various experiences of discrimination and violence that women and LGBTI+s have suffered in the past based on their gender identity, ethnic and religious belonging.

This work carried out with a feminist social work perspective aims the following for those who receive support:

- to realize and recognize their own strength and resources,
- to acquire self-healing capacities and tools that would render them independent from institutions,
- to use solidarity as a means of empowerment,
- to transform their anger into a collective solidarity that would enable them to struggle against the patriarchal system and all other forms of discrimination.



STEPS OF PSS WORK

During our eight-months-long PSS work we went through the steps below. Most of the time, the process was not linear, but cyclical:

- Identifying the activities carried out by public and non-governmental organizations for earthquake-affected communities in Adıyaman, Diyarbakır and Malatya and having up-to-date information on these services,
- Identifying the needs of the field. If there are needs other than PSS such as water, housing, food, and hygiene materials we referred those in need to the relevant institutions identified in the first step to get their needs covered,
- Preparing and implementing the group work content based on the identified common needs,
- Identifying people in need of individual consultation, determining the sessions to be conducted by the psychologist and making sure that they are continued throughout the process,
- In cases where individual supports are envisaged to outlast our fieldwork, we made sure that the said support is concluded properly and that the needed service is received by the person in question,
- Following-up on the referrals made,
- Aiming to form mutually empowering relations with institutions with which we are cooperating, and organizing capacity building and strengthening activities on issues that are lacking in the field.



FINDINGS OF THE FIELDWORK

ADİYAMAN FIELDWORK



Adıyaman Yaylakonak Container City

To have a better understanding of the situation in Adıyaman, we first joined a civil initiative, the Solidarity Group of Civil Society Organizations, in Adıyaman, and received information from member CSOs about the support activities they carry out in the field and the locations where there is a need for PSS. We learned that CSOs mostly work in central Adıyaman, that fewer support activities are carried out in the remote villages, and that many people with shelter and housing problems move to the villages due to the increasing temperatures. For this reason, we decided to focus on villages in Adıyaman. For two weeks, we visited a total of four villages and two small towns (Damdırmaz Village, Yaylakonak Town, Bulam [Pınarbaşı] Town, Akçatepe Village, Kaşlıca Village, Meryemuşağı Village)

in different districts of Adıyaman and organized meetings with women to identify their needs. During our one-day visits to Damdırmaz, Bulam, and Kaşlıca we identified the needs and made referrals. In Akçatepe and Meryemkuşığı villages in Tut district and Yaylakonak town in Adıyaman Central District we decided to conduct PSS work based on the identified needs and conditions.

Our first visit was to Akçatepe on July 5, 2023. Akçatepe was a village with a population of 800 people before the earthquake and we learned that this number had increased to 1000 after the earthquake due to migration. In the village, where 41 people lost their lives, most of the buildings were severely damaged and the water problem, which existed before the earthquake, had exacerbated after the earthquake. People in the village were trying to meet their needs by bringing in water with tankers. We identified that lice and drinking water-related diseases were common in the village, especially among children. Since most of the houses were damaged or destroyed, villagers were living in containers and tents. Funeral house which was not damaged by the earthquake was used for group work with women. The team visited the village for two weeks and organized visits to almost every container house to address the post-earthquake difficulties women face in returning to daily routines and to build their trust in the PSS team. Following this two-weeks-long preparation, an eight-week-long group work was carried out. These sessions focused on how emotional states such as intense fear, forgetfulness, anger, and stress caused by the earthquake related trauma affected daily life and on the development and strengthening of individual problem-solving skills and capacities. We reached a total of fifty women through group work, one-on-one sessions, and household visits.



In order to facilitate the participation of women with small children, we created a separate activity space/playground in the space where the group work was carried out. This space for children made it easier for women to attend the group work regularly. During the group work in Akçatepe, two women received individual consultation, two women had one-on-one therapy sessions, and two cases were referred to other institutions.

In the course of our work, we collaborated with Women's State of Solidarity (DAKAHDER) which provides health and legal counseling to women in central Adıyaman and made sure that the women's group in Akçatepe also received these services. Women expressed their need for hygiene products, and we acted as a mediator between the women and Support to Life Association team, which distributes hygiene kits, so that women could personally demand these kits. 200 women received this support.

Following one-on-one and group support we provided in Akçatepe, the women told us that they felt more courageous in asking for support, that it was good to talk to someone from outside the village, and that their efforts to receive support for their needs and problems proved to be resultful.

Once the group work in Akçatepe was completed, we started the PSS process in August in Yaylakonak, which we had already visited. In this town with six scattered neighborhoods, some families were still staying in tents because the existing containers did not cover the need for shelter. In Yaylakonak, where 120 people lost their lives during the earthquake, the high number of deaths of children had triggered a feeling which women expressed with the words "we lost a generation". In our interviews, we observed that the traumatic mourning process was ongoing.





Adiyaman Tut District Akcatepe Village - Condolence House

In the town of Yaylakonak, we visited regularly for one month, we conducted a two-weeks-long group work with fifteen women in the school building. Besides the domestic care work they undertake, women were working intensively in the tobacco harvest, thus, we limited the group work to two weeks in line with their harvest schedule and provided one-on-one support to those in need. For the remaining two weeks, we conducted home visits. In total, we provided support to 40 women: We conducted individual PSS sessions with three women, and one-on-one therapy sessions with one woman. We referred a woman who recently given birth to another institution and ensured that she received support.

In Meryemuşığı Village, where we conducted fieldwork in September, there were 165 women over the age of 18 in 105 households. The village, where six people had lost their lives due to the earthquake, had 48 containers and there was still a need for containers during the time of our visits. The mukhtar told us that he had been in contact with the district governorship, governor's office and Disaster and Emergency Management



Authority (AFAD) for the needs of the village, but his demands remained unmet. The main income of the village came from pistachio harvest and gardening, and to a lesser degree from animal husbandry. We limited our group work to two weeks due to women's intensive involvement in pistachio harvest, gardening and additional winter preparation works. During this period, we reached 43 women in total through house visits and group work. We provided one-on-one therapy to one woman out of 43 and made three case referrals to different institutions.

We identified that the absence of public transportation from the village to the district centers is a factor that limits women's living space within the village. We spotted that women do not go out of the village except for receiving health services and shopping. We also observed that women frequently come together for reasons such as preparing food for winter, meeting for mukabele (Qur'an reading) or drinking tea on doorsteps, and that as a coping mechanism they avoided being alone.

The difficulty of maintaining privacy in living spaces, the containers being unfit for winter conditions and the uncertainties about when permanent housing will be available were the main issues that concerned women. As we observed in other villages and towns, women in Meryemuşağı shared that although their houses were reported as slightly damaged, they were worried about staying in their homes, especially at night.

Besides the PSS we provided in villages and towns, five sessions of one-on-one therapy were conducted with one woman living in Adıyaman city center, and following these sessions, she was referred to another psychologist because she needed long-term support.



DIYARBAKIR FIELDWORK

As we have stated in the section on preliminary work, we made several visits as the staff and members of WWHR to Diyarbakır before beginning our PSS work. During this stage, we provided psychological first aid to 21 people from organizations working with women or children in Diyarbakır. After we begin our work in Diyarbakır in May, the PSS team conducted follow-up interviews with these 21 people and continued one-on-one sessions with four of them. The PSS team carried out its work in the office established for this purpose in Diyarbakır.

When we commenced our work in Diyarbakır, we got in touch with women’s and LGBTI+ organizations which we had previously contacted and shared information about our PSS work.

We decided to hold a meeting with women’s and LGBTI+ organizations to share our experiences and converse about the difficulties we face as professionals and volunteers working in the field. In this meeting, in order to transform our experience sharing into a practice of empowerment, the decision to form Amed Women and LGBTI+ Solidarity Network was taken. In the course of the PSS we offered in Diyarbakır, we also undertook the facilitation of this network. In our meetings, substance use and sexual abuse against children came to the forefront as the most common problems encountered in the field. We identified the need for capacity building for tackling these problems and made plans about receiving training from experts on these issues.



We planned a closed meeting on addiction. We included the topic of sexual abuse in the activities organized for the week of November 25th. We held an open online meeting titled “Sexual Abuse: Concepts, Principles and Preventive Work” within the scope of Feminist Meetings. For these two events, we received positive feedback, especially from fieldworkers.



MALATYA FIELDWORK

We chose women’s cooperatives and the women’s organizations in Malatya as the priority groups for our PSS based on the fact that Malatya has the highest number of women’s cooperatives in the region and the information shared by local women’s organizations. Through DOGÜNKAD, we contacted the Malatya Chamber of Commerce and Industry and gathered information about the state of women’s cooperatives in Malatya. We then organized a meeting hosted by the Malatya Chamber of Commerce and Industry on June 16 to identify the needs. All women’s cooperatives in Malatya were invited to the meeting, and we met with eight women’s cooperatives from eight districts. The Coordinator of the Women’s Assembly of the Diyarbakır Chamber of Commerce and Industry also accompanied us during this meeting. At the meeting, participants from the cooperatives stated that they were coming together for the first time since their last gathering four months after the earthquake and that they had never been asked how they were doing by any institution so far. They added that it is very valuable for them that a women’s organization from Istanbul have been instrumental in organizing this meeting and have asked them about their situation. As a result of this meeting, we decided to visit the cooperatives and plan our PSS work in more detail in the light of these visits because each district was affected differently by the earthquake and the needs of each cooperative were different. At the end of the meeting, we shared the experience of the women’s assembly established within the Diyarbakır Chamber of Commerce and Industry with the executives of the Malatya Chamber of Commerce and Industry and discussed how this model, if established in Malatya, could provide support to women’s cooperatives in the region.



In our first meeting with women's cooperatives in Malatya, we learned that the demolition of buildings every day not only increase environmental pollution but also cause secondary traumatic stress and force people to live in a state of constant vigilance. Another factor that increased their stress and anxiety was the lack of support to maintain their cooperative responsibilities. One participant, whose workbench was buried under the rubble, shared that she could not leave the rubble because she had bought the machines on credit and had to wait for reporting. Those who did not lose their workbenches in the earthquake said that they could not find people to work in the workbenches, and when they did, they had difficulty paying salaries because of the low income of the cooperative. Although they did not have many problems with food, their needs for baby food, baby and patient diapers, and hygiene products were not met.

Following the June 16 meeting, we hold individual meetings with all the participating cooperatives to clarify the needs and conditions for PSS work. During these meetings, some cooperatives expressed that they would like to conduct the PSS after September, as they are busy with agricultural activities during the summer months. After this preliminary work, in the first two weeks of July, we visited cooperatives in districts that were available for PSS work or that had suffered more damage from the earthquake than other districts (Akçadağ, Yeşilyurt, Pütürge). We also contacted the women's cooperative in Doğanşehir, one of the two most devastated districts in Malatya, along with Akçadağ district, and inquired about their situation. Representatives of this cooperative said that they needed more time to recover to receive PSS.

On July 13, we met with twelve women from the Toprak Ana Women's Cooperative in Yeşilyurt district. A large tent where



they would do sewing had been provided by the District Governorship and the Ministry of Family and Social Services, but since the machines had not yet arrived, they were producing materials that did not require machines. We learned that no PSS had been provided in the tent city where the workbench tent was located until then, but that the Ministry of Family and Social Services would soon start providing PSS in this tent city. For this reason, we decided not to provide PSS in this tent area and to allocate our resources to other places that would never receive this service. During the meeting we held with the women in the cooperative, we shared information about the institutions they could receive support from.

We also visited the Yeşilyurt Women's Cooperative, another cooperative in Yeşilyurt district. The building of this cooperative, which produces dry food, had been demolished and its warehouses full of products and the machinery purchased with grant support were under the rubble. Since the cooperative members were dispersed and the president of the cooperative had to follow up the process regarding the machinery, we could not start a group work, but we explained our support mechanism and shared lists of people from our association and other institutions whom they could contact.

On July 13, during our visit to the Pütürge Women's Cooperative, we learned that there was less destruction in Pütürge compared to other districts and that there was heavy migration from central Malatya after the earthquake. At the time of our visit, the people who had migrated from the center had returned and the population had decreased. The buildings in the area which was previously devastated by the Elazığ earthquake were already renovated, so the damage wreaked by the February 6 earthquake was relatively less. Still, the women said they were nervous about entering reinforced concrete bu-



ildings and had trouble sleeping. The thirty women members of the cooperative were engaged in local carpet weaving. The fact that there was less destruction enabled women to return to work in a shorter period of time, which we found to be an important factor in helping women cope with trauma. We ended our interview by leaving the contact information of the organizations where they could receive support as well as our own numbers. We decided not to carry out long-term work here due to the more intense need for PSS in other districts.

On July 6, as a result of our visit to Akçadağ Women's Cooperative, we decided to offer PSS in Akçadağ. Since they are busy with agricultural activities during the summer months, we decided to start our work with Akçadağ Women's Cooperative in November and focused on our work in the villages of Adıyaman during the summer months.

Upon completing our work in Adıyaman, we started our PSS work with Akçadağ Women's Cooperative in Malatya in November. For our PSS work in Malatya, we contacted organizations working in the region (Concern Worldwide, Support to Life Association, Community Volunteers Foundation-TOG, Earthquake Psychosocial Solidarity Network [DEPSDA], Turkish Psychologists Association [TPD], United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], International Organization for Migration [IOM]), Association for Social Development and Aid Mobilization [SGDD-ASAM], etc.) and received information about their work and the support they provide.

Akçadağ Women's Cooperative was established in 2019 and produces food. The cooperative building was still being used as a soup kitchen during our visits. Despite being a district with a high level of destruction, Akçadağ has received a lot of immigration from outside after the earthquake. According to



the information we received from the municipality, the population increased from 28,000 people before the earthquake to 60,000 after the earthquake. There are seven container cities in the district. In the early days of the earthquake, 10,000 people were fed daily, but by the time of our visit, this number had been reduced to 300. Women said that in the first days after the earthquake, there was no aid coming to the district and that they had a very difficult time.

We conducted regular group sessions with 15 women in Akçadağ for one month. In addition to the group work, we conducted 33 individual social work interviews with eight women. Women working in the cooperative described the obstacles put before them by men in business life and the negative effects of unequal conditions with men regarding care labor. They expressed their need not only for coping with the traumatic aspects of the earthquake but also with the negative effects of



Malatya Akçadağ Women's Cooperative Group Work Event



care work. In this district where there was a lot of destruction, the settlement of more than one family in the apartments that remained intact had turned into a factor that increased the burden of women's care labor and created conditions in which they had difficulty managing their stress. Women had lost their privacy spaces.

In the interviews we conducted, we addressed issues such as creating safe spaces, economic and psychosocial empowerment, male violence, and provided referrals for in-kind and cash support.

In response to the needs of the Akçadağ Women's Cooperative group, we facilitated the participation of women in a legal literacy training which was organized in collaboration with UN Women Turkey and the Ankara Bar Association. In addition, we arranged for a HREP trainer who had established a cooperative in Diyarbakır to meet with Akçadağ Women's Cooperative group for an experience-sharing meeting where we talked about establishing a cooperative in the context of economic rights.

Additionally, upon the invitation of Community Volunteers Association (TOG) working in Teknokent Container Living Space in Malatya city center we provided PSS to a group of 18 women on the topics of "personal space, boundaries and communication". These topics were suggested by TOG.

During our work in Malatya, we identified that the professionals working in the field have needs and we conducted a one-session employee support workshop with fieldworkers.



ASSESSMENTS

We summarize below our assessments regarding the work we carried out with 184 women in three different locations. We provided regular support to 114 of these women.

- Compared to the city centers the support and aid that reaches the rural areas are much less, and they are not regularly provided and fail to meet the needs. The uncertainty about procuring and accessing resources and the state of dependency on external aid are factors that increase anxiety levels. When we began our fieldwork, four months had passed since the earthquake, and yet food, shelter, and hygiene support were still not sufficient and were not regularly provided to those in need which resulted in increased levels of anxiety and stress.
- The existing infrastructure problems in these locations have exacerbated after the earthquake and reached a critical point.
- Housing conditions are not healthy; even if the containers are adequate, these containers and their electrical infrastructure are not suitable for winter conditions.
- For women home is more than a building with four walls and a roof on top, it is also a bond that women form with a space of their own, a space which they organize. Therefore, the feeling of losing their homes amounts to the severance of this bond. The lack of space in container or tent cities, the impossibility of having privacy in these spaces, makes it harder for women to cope with their own traumas. Furthermore, the increased emotional care labor makes it difficult for women to regulate their own feelings and maintain emotional balance.



- There is no knowledge or familiarity with PSS in the rural locations. The fact that humanitarian aid organizations and public institutions have allocated their resources to aid in cash and in-kind appears as an obstacle before those in need of PSS to realize their psychosocial needs and formulate their demands regarding PSS. That said, there is massive need for PSS in the field.
- In rural spaces, where income is dependent on men working outside the village, the number of women working income generating jobs is very limited. The domestic care work which the women who do gardening for their own consumption undertake virtually forces women to work double shift. We observed that in locations where the income is dependent on jobs outside the villages women feel more powerless.
- Women are well-aware of the gender-based inequality in domestic and care work and find this burden of heavy workload unfair. Due to the disruption of their routines and the trauma they experience, they feel more fatigue than before when undertaking these responsibilities.
- Their roles as the caretakers of their family members, especially their children, causes them to overlook their own needs.
- Intense fear cause by the earthquake, feelings of insecurity at the face of a possible risk of another earthquake and shirking from entering houses, and sleep disorders are issues and feelings shared by women living in rural and urban areas. The fear of another earthquake affects women's clothing choices, and they sleep with their heads-carves tied at night.
- The way the staff of some organizations that distribute cash and in-kind aid treat women make women feel hu-



miliated. Women feel especially uncomfortable when their photos are taken and when they are put into a role that makes them feel like they are “begging” for the aid they receive.

- We also found out that PSS was had been carried out by many institutions with or without expertise in the field after the earthquake. However, these supports which were often short-term failed to form trust between those who provide support and those who are at the receiving end of the support provided.
- We observed that when volunteers and professionals working in the region stay at the earthquake zone and do not receive regular supervision, they end up feeling lonely and experience secondary trauma.



CONCLUSION: POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION RECOMMENDATIONS

The obstacles before accessing rights, which was already difficult before the earthquake, and the existing discrimination and violence are deepened and experienced more intensively in the event of an earthquake or another disaster. It would be naïve to think that it would be possible survive an earthquake with well-thought planning given the already rotten conditions of the houses, roads, electricity infrastructure, and sewage. Therefore, the preparations for disasters should first aim to eliminate existing disorders, corruption, and inequalities and to ensure that all citizens have equal and quality access to public services. This is an important point to consider when talking about earthquakes and their impacts. For instance, if we claim that “after an earthquake, women cannot access health services related to their sexual and reproductive health rights”, we would be taking earthquake as the reason for the lack of access to these services and we would be missing the truth. Before the earthquake, for many years, the preventive perspective in primary healthcare services have been overlooked in Turkey. Women have not been able to access their sexual and reproductive health rights for many years now. In the aftermath of the earthquake, the situation with regards to these already inaccessible services and rights has worsened.

Sexual and reproductive health rights are just one example. Turkey has long been a country where, regardless of the impact of the disaster, rights-based services are not provided by public institutions. Moreover, discrimination and violence are



constantly reproduced by the state. For good disaster preparedness, we need to get rid of the corruption stemming from on rent oriented politics that permeates all social institutions such as family, healthcare, and education services.

As the work we carried out suggests, state's re-signing of the Istanbul Convention and its proper implementation is an important condition of disaster preparedness. States that are a party to this Convention have to endorse the statement that "gender inequality is at the root of inequalities based on gender identity, discrimination and violence against women. To change this, we must ensure gender equality throughout the social sphere." Only a state that accepts and fulfills this commitment will have the potential to truly protect the people with its plans and preparations regarding disasters.

Keeping these points in mind, we came up with the following recommendations:

- Mental health experts, social scientists, non-governmental organizations, trade unions, and relevant professional chambers should be included in the advisory/executive board or similar structures that should be established by the public institutions to come up with the necessary planning before and after disasters. These structures should ensure that the differentiated needs of all segments of the society are addressed with a rights-based approach.
- Services in the field of sexual and reproductive health should be provided with a rights-based approach. They should maintain certain quality standards and be accessible to everyone even in times of crisis. Special measures should be taken and additional services should be developed for every situation where the provision of these services is interrupted, such as during crises in disasters.



- In times of crisis such as disasters, systems such as telemedicine should be established to facilitate women’s access to sexual and reproductive health rights and services, and medical abortion should be available.
- Investments in the social care services sector should be prioritized in post-disaster reconstruction processes.
- Diversity of needs should be taken into consideration during the provision of in-kind aid after the disasters. The content of aid provided should be determined in a way to meet different needs.
- In the post-disaster period, the decision of how and to whom the social assistance provided by the public institutions will be distributed should not be left to the initiative of those responsible in administrative and local governments. The distribution should be done in a way to cover everyone’s needs based on concrete criteria and should take into account the existing inequalities.
- Information on the social assistance provided by the public institutions after the disaster, and the information for who and how these public resources are used should be shared with the public regularly and transparently. Social assistance practices targeting the empowerment of women and LGBTI+s should be developed.
- Information on public mechanisms that protect women and LGBTI+s from violence should be shared transparently and regularly by the state. A special report on this issue should be prepared and made publicly available during disasters.
- It is necessary to identify specifically where and how the mechanisms established to protect women from violence—which do not already function properly—malfunction in disaster situations. These mechanisms should be made ready for crises.



- Specific mechanisms should be developed to prevent violence in temporary accommodation centers.
- Temporary and safe shelter facilities that would be immediately available to women should be created for use in the aftermath of disasters.
- In post-disaster recovery periods, activities such as HREP which focuses on women's human rights and gender equality and supports women's empowerment through a network should be expanded.
- Safe spaces suitable for the needs of women and LGBTI+s should be created in temporary accommodation centers in post-disaster recovery periods.
- In post-disaster recovery periods, conditions and infrastructures should be created to enable women to return to their pre-disaster production if they wish.
- All volunteers and professional experts who will work in the field after the disaster should receive gender equality training.
- All volunteers or professional fieldworkers who will work in the field after the disaster should receive regular supervision support.
- All humanitarian aid organizations providing in-kind and cash support should include PSS work in their implementation areas. In case they do not have their own implementation capacity, they should meet this practice in the field through collaborations with other institutions and organizations.







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