WE MADE IT TOGETHER:

WE ACT PROJECT RESULTS AND GOOD PRACTICES



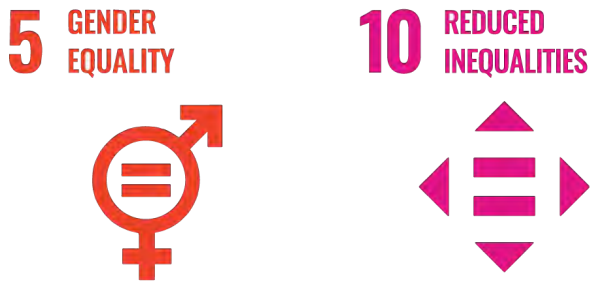
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daktilo1984

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WE ACT PROJECT RESULTS AND GOOD PRACTICES



June 2025

“This publication was funded by the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of the project beneficiaries and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.”

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TABLE OF CONTENT

PREAMBLE 1

INTRODUCTION 3

BACKGROUND 4

PRESENTATION OF THE PROJECT 7

FINANCIAL SUPPORT PROGRAM FOR CSOs on IMPROVING GENDER EQUALITY IN TÜRKİYE 20

IMPACT OF THE PROJECT 72

SUCCESS STORIES OF ELECTED WOMEN 79

BEST PRACTICES FROM SUB-GRANTING PROGRAM 83

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS 97

PREAMBLE

In today's complex and ever-evolving socio-political landscape, the meaningful participation of women and marginalized groups in governance, media, and public life is not only a matter of equality but also a fundamental pillar of resilient and inclusive democracies. The WE ACT – Women Empowerment and ACTion in Politics and Media project was born from this understanding, as a comprehensive initiative to strengthen democratic values through the empowerment of women in Türkiye, particularly in political and media spaces.

Supported by the European Union Delegation to Türkiye and implemented in partnership with ALDA (European Association for Local Democracy) and Daktilo1984, WE ACT is rooted in the belief that democratic transformation begins at the local level and that women's inclusion is a prerequisite for equitable development. Over the course of 30 months, the project brought together women from diverse political, cultural, and social backgrounds to strengthen their leadership capacities, expand their visibility, and build synergies for collective impact.



Antonella Valmorbida

Secretary General of ALDA

This handbook serves as a reflection of the project's reach and resonance across Türkiye's seven regions. It presents an overview of key actions, lessons learned, and inspiring success stories gathered from the field -from women who ran for local elections and civil society organizations that mobilized communities, to young people advocating for LGBTI+ rights and migrant women redefining their place in society-.

The initiatives under the sub-granting scheme particularly illustrate the diversity and dynamism of grassroots actions designed to promote gender equality and participatory democracy.

What makes WE ACT distinctive is not only its wide geographical and thematic coverage but its commitment to a bottom-up approach. By investing in local actors -especially women community leaders, activists, and young changemakers- the project fostered durable networks, increased dialogue, and advanced participation in an increasingly constrained civic space.

At a time when democratic values and gender equality are under strain globally and regionally, WE ACT stands as a testament to what can be achieved through strategic collaboration, inclusive participation, and collective resilience. It has amplified voices often sidelined in public discourse and institutional processes.

This handbook is not merely a record of accomplishments but a resource for inspiration, replication, and continued advocacy.



Derya Özkaynak Suer

Director of Administrative Affairs, Daktilo1984

It highlights how gender equality, when pursued through inclusive and participatory frameworks, can serve as a driver for democracy, development, and social cohesion.

We extend our deepest gratitude to all the women and civil society organizations who contributed their courage, insights, and creativity to the WE ACT project. Your efforts are the foundation of a more just and inclusive future.

INTRODUCTION

WE ACT - Women Empowerment and ACTion in Politics and Media project is supported **by the European Union Delegation to Türkiye** and is implemented from January 2023 to July 2025 under the leadership of **ALDA (European Association for Local Democracy)** in partnership with **DAKTİLO1984.**

The 30 months project aimed to address and support two crucial human rights and freedoms; Freedom of expression (art. 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights) and Right to take part in the government of their Country (art. 21). By opening up the participation to the capacity-building for participatory democracy to both women candidates and CSOs committed to the promotion of equal opportunities, the project contributed to create a favourable environment for democratic debate and social accountability. In fact, women candidates learned about the importance of being socially accountable towards citizens during their mandate, and to interact with the civil society throughout policy making processes. Moreover, local CSOs were empowered to efficiently engage with political figures, especially in support of women's rights and LGBTI+ rights protection. Consequently, the project addressed the following principles:

- Meaningful and inclusive participation and access to decision-making,
- Non-discrimination and equality,
- Accountability and rule of law for all,
- Support for transparency and access to information.

The target groups were provided with skills and knowledge regarding the concept and the mechanisms of civil participation in decision-making processes. These integrated the electoral process as a catalyst to ensuring a meaningful, constant and inclusive governance, in the respect of the democratic principles and the rule of law. By addressing empowerment of women and advancing their representation in local politics, media and decision-making processes at different levels, the project contributes to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), namely **SDG 5: Gender Equality** and **SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities.**

Finally, the sub-granting scheme ensured that the actions were well rooted in the territory and regionally inclusive as much as possible, hence ensuring greater effectiveness and endurance. It also ensured that concrete interventions were undertaken at grassroot level to support and protect the rights of women and the LGBTIQ+ groups, therefore allowing the ownership of the project results by local CSOs, consistently with a bottom-up approach.

The WE ACT Project is influenced by the PARFAIT Project, implemented in 2017 by ALDA with the support of the EU, with the partnership between the Coalition for Women of Tunisia, the Tunisian branch of the European Partnership for Democracy (EPD) and the Agency for Local Democracy in Kairouan. The project was implemented across six governorates of Tunisia and its main activities included workshops on themes related to elections (147 trained, 10 women elected out of 30 candidate women), gender sensitivity, and grants to support micro-projects.[1]
[2]

[1] *https://www.peaceagency.org/political-participation-decentralization-and-gender-mainstreaming-the-parfait-project-in-tunisia/*

[2] *https://www.alda-europe.eu/parfait/*

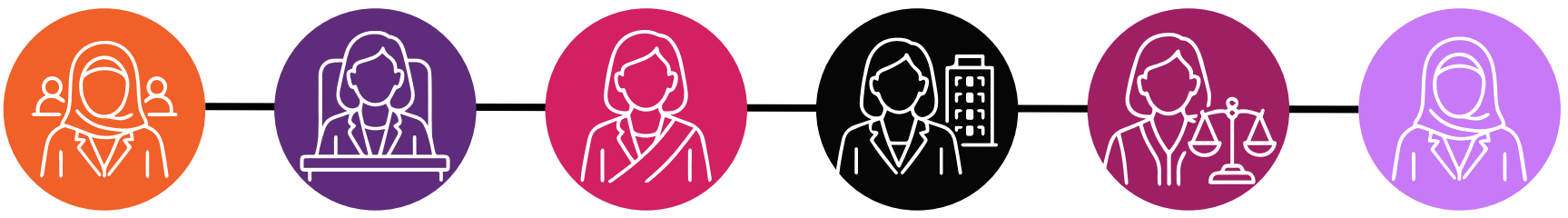
BACKGROUND

Although women's right to vote and stand for election was earned early (in 1934), Türkiye is one of the countries having the lowest rate of representation and participation of women in politics. Thanks to the struggle of the women's movement, over the last 40 years remarkable progress has been made regarding the elimination of gender-based inequalities. From the first mass public demonstration held against the violence against women that took place after the 1980 coup until today, gender equality has become an urgent social problem. However, despite successful efforts of the feminist movement in Türkiye regarding reforms of the civil and penal codes in the last two decades, much needs to be done in the public sphere.

Political representation and participation of women is an area where the achievements towards protection and improvement of women's human rights have been limited compared to other fields (i.e. civil rights). On the contrary, the presence of women in the political arena has always been perceived as a major threat by the ruling powers of male politicians. Hence, women are not welcomed in politics and there is a strong resistance against their presence. Moreover, in the last decade Türkiye has been facing an overall backlash on gender equality in terms of policy, politics, and common discourse. This culminated with the Government withdrawing[3] from the Istanbul Convention (The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence), with the support of high-ranking politicians and institutions of Türkiye.

Türkiye ranks continuously at the bottom of the Global Gender Gap Index by the World Economic Forum. Türkiye appeared on the 130th place out of 153 countries in 2020 moving down from its 105th rank in 2006. In terms of political empowerment of women, Türkiye moved down from 96th to 109th rank between 2006 and 2020.

The Turkish women organisation Ka.Der, has conducted research confirming the urgent need for action in this field. According to Ka.der's latest report (2020), the share of women in the high-level decision-making bodies were as follows:



17.32% of **Parliament Members**

11.76% of **Ministries Chairs**

3% of **Mayors**

6.66% of **Mayors of Metropolitan Municipalities**

14.2% of **Presidents of higher judicial bodies**

2% of **Mukhtars (village heads)**

[3] The Convention has been withdrawn with a Presidential decree published on March 20th, 2021.
[4] It is the Committee on Equality of Opportunity for Women and Men and Committee on Petition.

In the overall picture, the rate of women MPs in the parliamentary elections (2018) increased slightly compared to the 2015 elections but still, only 2 out of the 19 Committees[4] in Parliament are chaired by women and only one of the Ministers (Minister of Family and Social Services) in the Government is a woman.

In addition, the rate of women mayors is drastically low, even if it increased from 0.8% to 3.2%, making an improvement of 300% compared to the 2014 elections. Similarly, women members of municipal councils rose to 11% from previously 4.2%. The number of female mukhtars, which was 674 in the 2014 local elections, increased by 59% in 2019.

In the 2024 elections we see an important increase in women mayors, municipal councils and muhtars. 11 out of 81 cities are now governed by women mayors which is equivalent to 13.58%. 61 out of 921 districts are also governed by women, a 6.62% of the total number. When it comes to the women mukhtars, which is considered to be a great achievement of 2024 local elections, doubled its previous number which was 1134 and now it is 2150 women, 4.26% of the total mukhtars.

According to the United Nations Global SDG Database, prior to the recent local elections held in March 2024, Turkey had the lowest percentage of seats held by women in local governments [Indicator 5.5.1 (b), a global SDC sub-indicator for UNECE countries], which is %10.1 among 46 countries with latest available data[5]. Yet, women have sent a message of democratic resilience in Turkey's 2024 Local Elections, contrary to pre-election polling, the number of women candidates and general elections in 2023 leaving the country more divided than ever. Most notably, the number of women as provincial mayors rose from four to 11 with many of them relatively young or new to politics and there was a 90% increase in women's representation compared to local elections in 2019. Out of 14,110 total candidates for metropolitan, provincial, and district mayor positions, only 11.51% (1624) were women.

Consequently, although there are no significant developments at the central government level, the positive developments observed at the municipality and mukhtarship level have been a beacon of hope for both the women's movement in Türkiye and for the present project. Considering that equality and freedom are the two essential values of democracy, it appears that the struggle for equality of women in Türkiye (and in the world) is a struggle for democracy.

[5] *https://w3.unece.org/SDG/en/Indicator?id=141*

Municipality Status	Number of Municipalities in Turkey (2024)	Number of Women Mayors (2024)	Percentage of Women Mayors in 2024	Number of Women Mayors (2019)	Percentage of Women Mayors in 2019
Metropolitan Municipality	30	5	16.67	3	10.00
Provincial Municipality	51	6	11.76	1	1.96
District	922	64	6.94	37	3.89
Belde (Town)	405	3	0.74	2	0.52
Total	**1408**	**78**	**5.54**	**39**	**2.86**

Table 1: *The number and percentage of women elected as mayors in Local Elections of 2019 and 2024 in Turkey[6].*

Contrary to what is thought, women's battles are not for women only but for all people and the entire society, seeking to create a livable world for all by eliminating all forms of inequalities and deprivation of fundamental rights.

In conclusion, it is worth mentioning that the women, when invested, can change the narrative of an election by responding to the very needs of a society.

[6] *YSK. (2024, December). Statistics on March 31st, 2024 Elections. YSK. Retrieved December 18 2024, from https://acikveri.ysk.gov.tr/aday-istatistik/secilen-adaylar.*

PRESENTATION OF THE PROJECT

The participation of women in local politics is both an aim in itself, plus it can push local governments to shape more gender-equal policies, taking new steps towards an inclusive society for all.

Since the transformative power of women in local politics is proportional to their numbers, it appears that much needs to be done to involve more and more women in democratic processes and elections. Moreover, the equal representation of sexes/gender in politics is not only a requirement for a well-functioning local democracy and good governance, but also to respect human rights treaties and conventions, consistently with a human rights based approach.

Increasing the influence of women's aspiring candidates and dealing with women's political rights can be an effective strategy to shape a well-functioning, inclusive and participatory democracy, as well as to support the individual empowerment of women and their recognition as full members of society.

To do so, WE ACT - Women Empowerment and ACTion in Politics and Media project aims at empowering women aspiring candidates and providing them with useful tools to succeed in their political endeavours, also tackling their visibility and relations with local and national media, which are crucial actors to make political efforts accepted and credited.

SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS AND PROJECT PARTNERS

SUPPORTING INSTITUTION FOR THE WE ACT PROJECT

EUROPEAN UNION DELEGATION TO TÜRKIYE (EUD)

Delegation of the European Union to Türkiye

Türkiye's involvement with European integration dates back to 1959 and includes the Ankara Association Agreement (1963) for the progressive establishment of a Customs Union (ultimately set up in 1995). In 1987, Türkiye applied to join what was then the European Economic Community, and in 1999 it was declared eligible to join the EU.

7

Today, the Delegation of the European Union to Türkiye aims to address the needs arising from these longstanding and multifaceted ties through the collaborative efforts of over 180 Turkish and EU experts.

The Delegation of the European Union to Türkiye, through its four main missions, supports a wide range of initiatives aligned with EU values:

1. External Relations & Diplomacy
2. Economic & Trade Monitoring
3. EU Accession & Compliance
4. Coordination & Public Engagement[7]

As part of the Delegation of the European Union to Türkiye's broader efforts to foster public engagement and support Türkiye's alignment with EU values, the "WE ACT - Women Empowerment and ACTion in Politics and Media" project is funded under the **Thematic Programme on Human Rights and Democracy – Turkey**, and is implemented from January 2023 to July 2025 under the leadership of ALDA, in partnership with DAKTİLO1984.

CONSORTIUM PARTNERS FOR THE WE ACT PROJECT

ALDA - EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR LOCAL DEMOCRACY

The European Association for Local Democracy (ALDA) is an organisation dedicated to promoting good governance and citizen participation at local level. ALDA aims in particular to facilitate cooperation between local authorities and civil society in the European Union and its neighbourhood. Created in 1999 on the initiative of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, ALDA coordinates and supports a network of Local Democracy Agencies (LDAs), established in the early 1990s. LDAs are financially autonomous and are locally registered NGOs acting as drivers of good governance and local self-government.

ALDA is a membership organisation with over 300 members, including local authorities, associations of local authorities and non-governmental organisations, in over 40 countries. ALDA is financed by membership fees and project funding from the European Commission, the Council of Europe and other public and private donors.

[7] https://www.eeas.europa.eu/turkey/who-we-are_en?s=230

With 20 years' experience in drafting and managing projects financed by the European Union and its central interest in local democracy, together with a strong motivation to defend gender equality, ALDA, as a project leader, was responsible for coordinating the project and contributed its expertise in terms of project cycle management, management of sub-grants and participatory democracy.

DAKTILO1984 (1984 ASSOCIATION)

Daktilo1984 (1984 Association) is a non-profit organization based in Türkiye with the primary aim of fostering a pluralistic democratic society through enabling a rational debate environment, research, and advocacy.

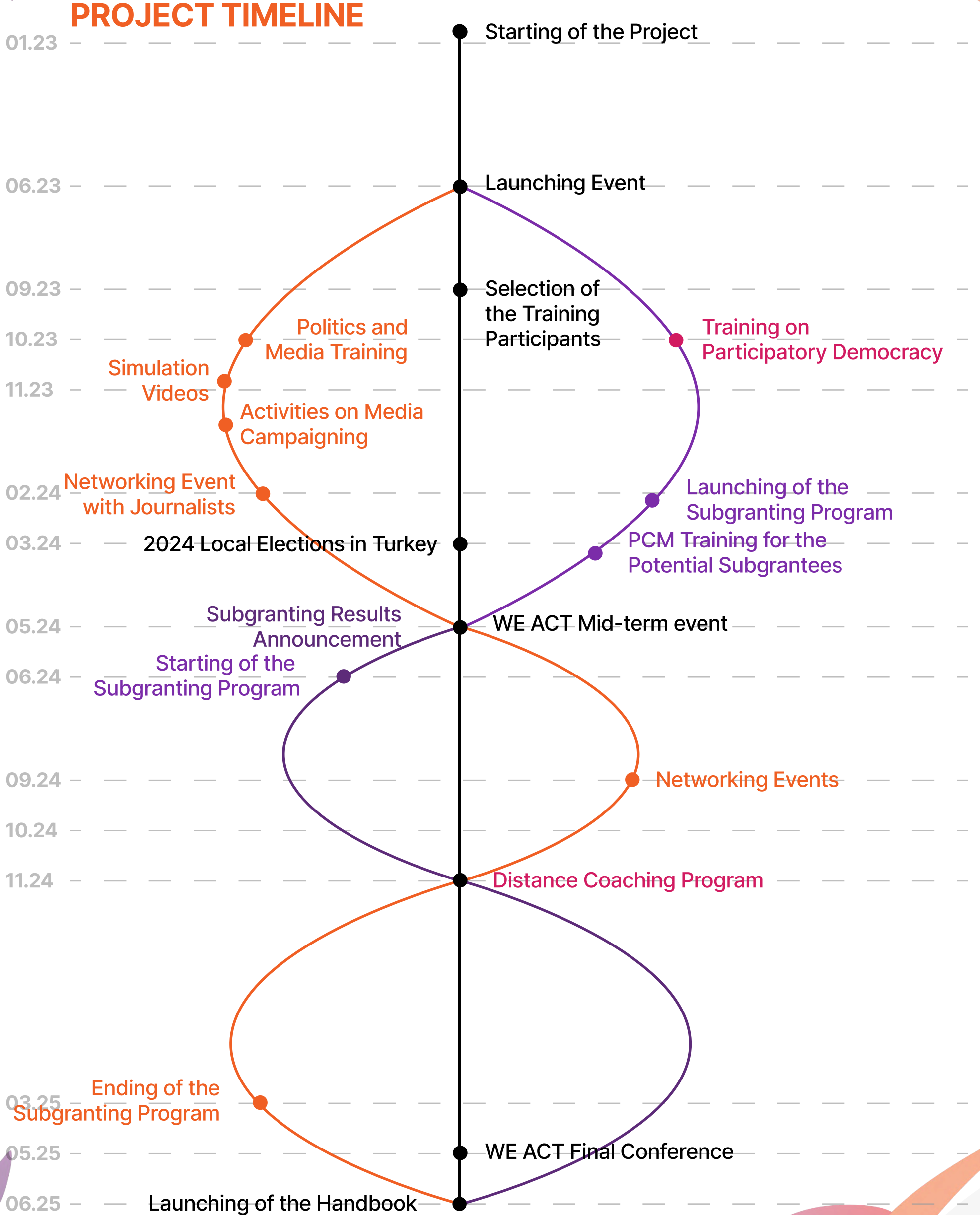
The association's mission is to increase civic participation, strengthen democratic processes, and ensure that diverse voices like women, youth are represented in the public's sphere. Daktilo1984 aims to contribute to the conciliation of liberal democracy and pluralism in Türkiye.

With over 30 projects implemented in collaboration with international and national partners over five years time, the association secured funding from diverse sources such as the European Commission, European Endowment for Democracy, NDI, European Climate Foundation, Atlas Network, German Embassy in Ankara, Friedrich Naumann Foundation, D66 (Social Liberal and Progressive Political Party in the Netherlands), Mercator Stiftung, Fritt Ord, Google Foundation, Lifeline Consortium, SILC (Swedish International Liberal Centre) and more ensuring sustainability and expansion of its work.

By combining academic expertise with public engagement, the Daktilo1984 continues to be a leading force in Türkiye's civil society, advocating for transparent governance, democratic resilience, and freedom of expression in an evolving political landscape.

As part of its commitment to gender equality and political participation, the association played a key role in the WE ACT project, primarily focused on providing training for women candidates in politics and media, equipping them with the necessary skills and opportunities to navigate political communication, public engagement, and media representation effectively. Additionally, the Daktilo1984 supported the organization of project events, contributed to the selection of sub-grantees, and enhanced their media visibility, ensuring their voices reached a broader audience. Through these efforts, the association strengthened the presence of women in politics and media, fostering more inclusive and representative governance in Türkiye.

PROJECT TIMELINE

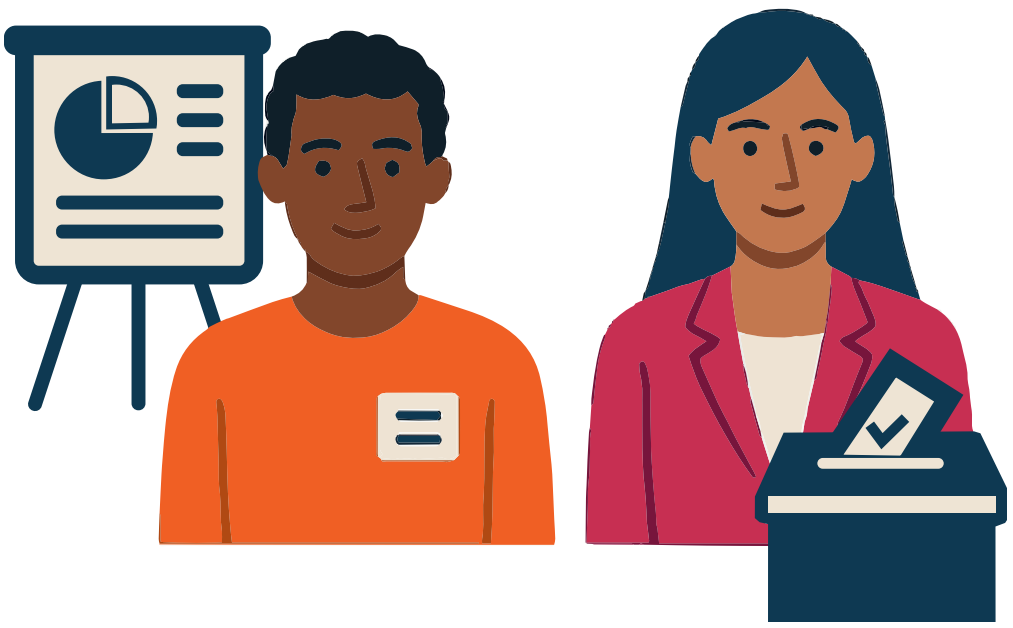


PROJECT ACTIVITIES

THE PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY TRAINING

The Participatory Democracy training was designed and implemented by ALDA to prepare the candidates to optimally perform their role of local administrators and listen to the needs of their citizens. This training also was directed to CSOs representatives working to support women and LGBTIQ+ rights.

Total Participants: 169 People



85 Representatives Of CSOs

84 Women Politicians

The aim of the training was to respond to the need of the CSOs to learn the mechanisms of participatory democracy and techniques to properly inform their citizens, collect their opinions and advocate for their rights. And also it aims to address the needs of the women candidates of being legitimate to their electors, and to cope with very concrete problems when resources are never enough; i.e., the need of preparing to be good administrators, complying with the principles of ethics, accountability and transparency, which are crucial for a Local Authority.

The training addressed the following topics:

- Concepts of good governance: transparency, accountability, ethics
- Concepts of participatory democracy
- Mapping the key stakeholders
- The stages of participatory democracy
- The policy cycle and how the four stages of civil participation intercept its different phases
- Tools and strategies to ensure inclusive and effective participation in each stage



Van



Ankara



İstanbul



Adana



İzmir



Gaziantep

The training sessions were held in 6 different cities (Adana, Ankara, Gaziantep, İstanbul, İzmir, Van) covering 7 different regions; Mediterranean, Black Sea, Central Anatolia, Southeastern Anatolia, Marmara, Aegean, and Eastern Anatolia.

The main outcome of the training was the development of an action plan by the participants, who incorporated the lessons learnt in their daily work, putting practices and concepts of participatory democracy into practice. These action plans are expected to be further supported through a coaching program provided by ALDA in the continuation of the training, helping participants refine their strategies and effectively implement the concepts in their respective roles.

POLITICS AND MEDIA TRAINING

As part of the WE ACT project, the politics program was led by Daktilo1984 and co-managed by both Daktilo1984 and ALDA, while the media program was designed and managed solely by Daktilo1984 to equip women politicians with the necessary knowledge of politics and skills to navigate the media landscape, communicate their political messages effectively, and strengthen their public engagement strategies. These training sessions were open to women from various political backgrounds, ensuring a diverse and inclusive environment that encouraged cross-party dialogue and solidarity.



- Over 160 women politicians participated in the five sessions in-person for politics and media training, alongside a four-day online sessions, bringing together women from all over Türkiye.
- The physical training were held in six major cities—İstanbul, Ankara, Izmir, Adana, Gaziantep, Van- strategically chosen for their accessibility and strong political networks.
- The program covered all regions of Türkiye, enabling a broad and impactful national reach.
- Participants included candidates of mayors, municipal council members, muhtars (neighborhood leaders), for 2024 local elections, all preparing to run or serve in local governance roles.

The politics and media trainings provided participants with:

- **Women in politics and local governance:** Addressing the unique challenges women face in politics and local governance, with a focus on visibility, voice, and navigating media dynamics.
- **Public speaking & messaging:** Techniques for delivering speeches confidently, structuring compelling narratives, and engaging with diverse audiences.
- **Social media strategy & political branding:** Building digital presence, countering online harassment, and using media for effective voter outreach.
- **Practical media exercises:** On-camera media training with simulated TV interviews, debate settings, and campaign speech recordings.

Beyond the trainings, the WE ACT initiative expanded its impact through media collaborations and published content:

- ***Articles & interviews published on Daktilo1984:*** Several women politicians trained in the program were featured in op-eds and interviews, amplifying their voices and perspectives.
- ***Live streams & podcasts:*** The project facilitated live discussions and podcast episodes, reaching wider audiences and increasing awareness of women's political representation.
- ***Networking events with journalists:*** The program organized a dedicated meeting between women politicians and prominent journalists, fostering connections and creating media visibility opportunities.

SIMULATION VIDEOS

To reinforce the impact of the training, a simulation video initiative was implemented, offering real-world campaign experience for women candidates.

Bizim Seçim: Kadınlar Yönetecek - YouTube Playlist (10 videos)

Yerelde Kadın Aklı - YouTube Playlist (32 Videos)

During the training sessions, participants practiced public speaking, and their speeches were recorded by a professional shooting team. This was followed by on-site campaign video production for 10 confirmed women candidates.

- The project team traveled to each candidate's city, capturing their campaign efforts, community engagement, and leadership in action.
- These professionally shot campaign videos incorporated local visuals, personalized messaging, and strong political narratives to enhance the candidates' voter outreach strategies.
- The videos were later used across social media, political campaigns, and local networks, increasing visibility and strengthening the public presence of women candidates.

This initiative successfully bridged the gap between theoretical training and practical implementation, ensuring that women candidates had stronger public narratives and professional communication skills in the lead-up to the elections.

NETWORKING

The aim of the networking events of the project were to encourage dialogue and cooperation among actors engaged in the promotion of gender equality and non-discrimination (CSOs, Local Authorities, thematic networks, media outlets), as well as to maximise the impact of their actions, but also to create synergy with already existing platforms and initiatives, candidate women were invited (and were sponsored) to join key events being organized by relevant stakeholders at national or international level.



PUBLIC MEETINGS





The Launching Event of the project took place in Istanbul, Türkiye on **22 June 2023**. The main aim was to launch the project and promote its visibility to raise awareness on the priority issues addressed by the project and to support exchange, partnership and networking. **36 people participated** with different representations from CSOs, municipalities, INGOs, and unions.

The Mid-term event took place in Istanbul, Türkiye on **22 May 2024**. The mid-term event aimed to oversee the state of the art of the project and assess the impact of the first phase, namely the training capacity building activities implemented in each community. INGOs, municipalities, women candidates, representatives of CSOs, unions, academicians, journalists were among the **144 people** of the mid-term event.







The Final event will took place in Istanbul, Türkiye on **15 May 2025**. Its main aims were to widely promote and present the final outcomes of the project, to raise further awareness on the relevant issues/priorities tackled by the project; to draft follow-up actions and plans. Around 90 people are attended to attend the event, including the project partners, the women beneficiaries of the action, the relevant stakeholders from the Turkish context to represent valuable actors (LAs, CSOs and their associations), as well as the selected beneficiaries of the subgranting scheme and the associates to the project.













DISTANCE COACHING



Distance coaching was set up to provide guidance and assistance to the participants throughout the remaining time of the project after training sessions. The coaching sessions aimed to:

- explore and deepen some of the topics dealt with during the in-presence training
- propose some examples, best practices or case studies concerning the subjects of the training, that could be presented by ALDA, the partners or also external experts
- provide assistance to the beneficiaries when it comes to their daily work.

The coaching program was organized under two themes; participatory democracy mechanisms and capacity building. Sessions offered under coaching program:

Capacity building

1. Social Media Management
2. Digital Tools and Mapping

Local participatory mechanism

1. Legal Framework of Participation in Local Government in Türkiye: Good Practices from Türkiye and the World
2. Citizen Participation from Local Government Perspective: Şişli Municipality Example
3. Participation in Local Government from a Citizen Perspective
4. Review and Monitoring of Documents Produced by Municipalities.

The total number of the participants is 78 for 7 sessions and on average 85% of the participants stated that they have benefited from the program at a high or moderate level.

VIDEO PILLS

The aim of the video pills is to improve and broaden the range of visibility and interaction of the communication of project activities and virally disseminate them mainly via social media with the hashtag **#WEACT.** To enhance the project's outreach, the video pills played a key role in expanding its audience, contributing to the growth of its social media presence. As a result, the project's Instagram account reached 668 followers, Facebook gained 37 followers, and Twitter attracted 248 followers. Additionally, the biannual newsletter, sent to over 500 subscribers, further supported these engagement efforts.

- **Participatory Democracy Training**
- **Politics and Media Training**
- **Mid-term Event**
- **Subgrantee Projects**
- **Monitoring Visits of Subgrantees**
- **Finalization of Subgrantee Program**
- **Final Event**

FINANCIAL SUPPORT PROGRAM

FOR CSO'S ON IMPROVING GENDER EQUALITY IN TÜRKİYE

Under the financial support program for CSOs, to enhance their capacity on project cycle management before collecting applications to the grant program, one training on project cycle management (PCM) was organized which included financial management, consistency with the EU guidelines and procedures to build the capacity of the potential candidates of the subgranting scheme.

The sessions of the training consisted of the following:

- Project cycle management and logical framework approach
- Project implementation: guidelines to the administrative and financial project management
- Communication and visibility of the project: key points and mistakes to avoid

After the training session, the **"Financial Support for CSOs on Improving Gender Equality in Türkiye for CSOs"** launched and 133 applications were received. 21 projects were selected to implement their project ideas for 10 months.

The primary objective is to provide financial support to local CSOs while recognizing the capacity-building efforts of organizations throughout the project. This is achieved through the exchange of best practices from selected 21 projects of the CSOs at the local level, focusing on **gender equality, LGBTIQ+ rights, anti-discrimination (gender, religious, or ethnic), and the promotion of civic** and **fundamental rights.**



21 projects carried out different activities for different target groups; including mapping, legal trainings & networks, digital activism with women with disabilities, gender equality training in industrial zones and rural areas, gender equality courses to be published on online platforms, panels with young people, meetings with seasonal agricultural workers, pasta and pie preparation courses, mentoring programs for women mukhtars, translation of gender guides into different languages, empowerment trainings with refugee women, parliamentary visits, courses with migrant women, producing fairy tale books and making art workshops.

The 21 projects were from all the regions of Türkiye; Marmara, Central Anatolia, Aegean, Mediterranean, Black Sea, Eastern Anatolia, and finally, Southeastern Anatolia. The activities were held in 13 different cities.

CITIES OF SUBGRANTEES



This handbook aims to share the brief information, success stories and best practices of these 21 projects implemented from June 2024 to March 2025.

MARMARA REGION

8 Micro Projects

Hürriyet, Hoşgörü, Hukuk Derneği - İstanbul **(Liberty Law Tolerance Association)**

Kadın Öz Savunma Derneği - Bursa **(Women Self-Defence Association)**

Sivil Toplum Araştırmaları Derneği - Tekirdağ **(Civil Society Research Association)**

İnovasyon, Girişimcilik, Eğitim ve Araştırma Derneği - Bursa **(Innovation, Entrepreneurship, Education and Research Association)**

İstanbul Ekonomik Araştırmalar Derneği - İstanbul **(Istanbul Economic Studies Association)**

Birlikte Yaşam ve Sosyal Tasarım Derneği - Bursa **(Roof Coliving)**

Sosyal Politika, Cinsiyet Kimliği ve Cinsel Yönelim Çalışmaları Derneği (SPoD) - İstanbul **(Social Policy, Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation Studies Association)**

Yalova Rus Dili Konuşanlar Derneği - Yalova **(Yalova Russian Speaking People Association)**

Eşitlik ve Hakikat Araştırmaları Derneği - İstanbul **(Equality and Truth Studies Association)**



We are Here!

Hürriyet, Hoşgörü, Hukuk Derneği - İstanbul Liberty Law Tolerance Association

Location: Istanbul
Duration: September 2024 – March 2025

- 3H Association Website
- 3H Association Instagram Account
- 3H Association X Account
- 3H Association Tiktok Account
- 3H Association Youtube Channel

#NGOs
#Citizens
#Local Authorities

Direct Beneficiaries **33** women & LGBTI +

Indirect Beneficiaries **374** People



We are Here!

General Objective

It aims to enable women and LGBTI+ in Istanbul to move freely on the streets without fear for their safety. In order to achieve this goal, the project team communicates directly with affected individuals, collaborates with CSOs working in this field, and establishes contacts with LGs to guide them towards positive changes towards this goal. After collecting the data, the mobile application will be operational.

"The most important part of this project was to bring together participation and digital innovation in the fight against violence against women and LGBTI+ people, mobilizing municipalities, while creating a space to discuss the problems caused by the lack of public safety." ***Zülfü Hayat Çınar, Project Coordinator***

Activities

1. **Panel series** to enhance the application beta version in Istanbul and receive feedback.
2. **Online meetings** with other partners like local governments to extend partnerships.
3. **Kick-off meeting** to promote online application.
4. Launching **online mapping application: SafeOut**

Have you tried the SafeOut mobile app?

Download the app

Download the app

Significant Achievements

The project especially focused on LGBTI+ and women living in Istanbul and aims to ensure a secure mobility within the city for these target groups. They had the chance to make meetings with different communities and took feedback from them to extend the operational capacity and zone of the application.



Make Your Voice Heard for Equality!

Kadın Öz Savunma Derneği
Women Self-Defence Association

Location: Istanbul
Duration: August 2024 - February 2025

- Kadın Öz Savunma Derneği Website
- Kadın Öz Savunma Derneği Instagram Account
- Kadın Öz Savunma Derneği X Account
- Kadın Öz Savunma Derneği Youtube Channel
- Kadın Öz Savunma Derneği Facebook Page
- Kadın Öz Savunma Derneği Linkedin Profile

#NGOs
#Young Women

Direct Beneficiaries **511** women + **23** men

Indirect Beneficiaries **122.190** people



Make Your Voice Heard for Equality!

General Objective

With this project, they aim to empower young women in the fight against gender inequality and the different types of violence fueled by this inequality, to raise widespread public awareness in the fields of media, law, education, politics and arts, which are the main components of social life through digital activism, and to create policy recommendations to ensure gender equality.

"We realized that we have built a strong bond with the participants, supporting each other's motivation." ***Hatice Dolgun, Project Coordinator***

Activities

- **Empowerment workshops** for the young women to enhance their awareness on gender equality themes such as gender, combating on gender based inequality, combating on gender based discrimination, mental empowerment, physical self-defense, activism and digital activism.
- Organized group work **meetings** to create learning spaces. In 5 different thematic areas - such as media, politics, art, education, law- identifying problems and generating knowledge and solutions on gender-based inequalities
- Organized a **digital forum** for the participants of the workshop to increase participation and create a community.
- Developed a **policy paper** and solutions guide, disseminated the results.

Significant Achievements

- The project reached 25 young women and gave 8 sessions of training and 250 people through Digitals Forums.
- Build knowledge and awareness on gender-based inequalities to participants and with the digital forums to the public.
- Policy recommendations and solution guide created with the contributions of working groups.
- Promoted knowledge and strategy sharing on gender equality among civil society organizations, activists and relevant stakeholders, contributing significantly to the long-term impact of the project.

Inclusive Empowerment for NEET+ Youth

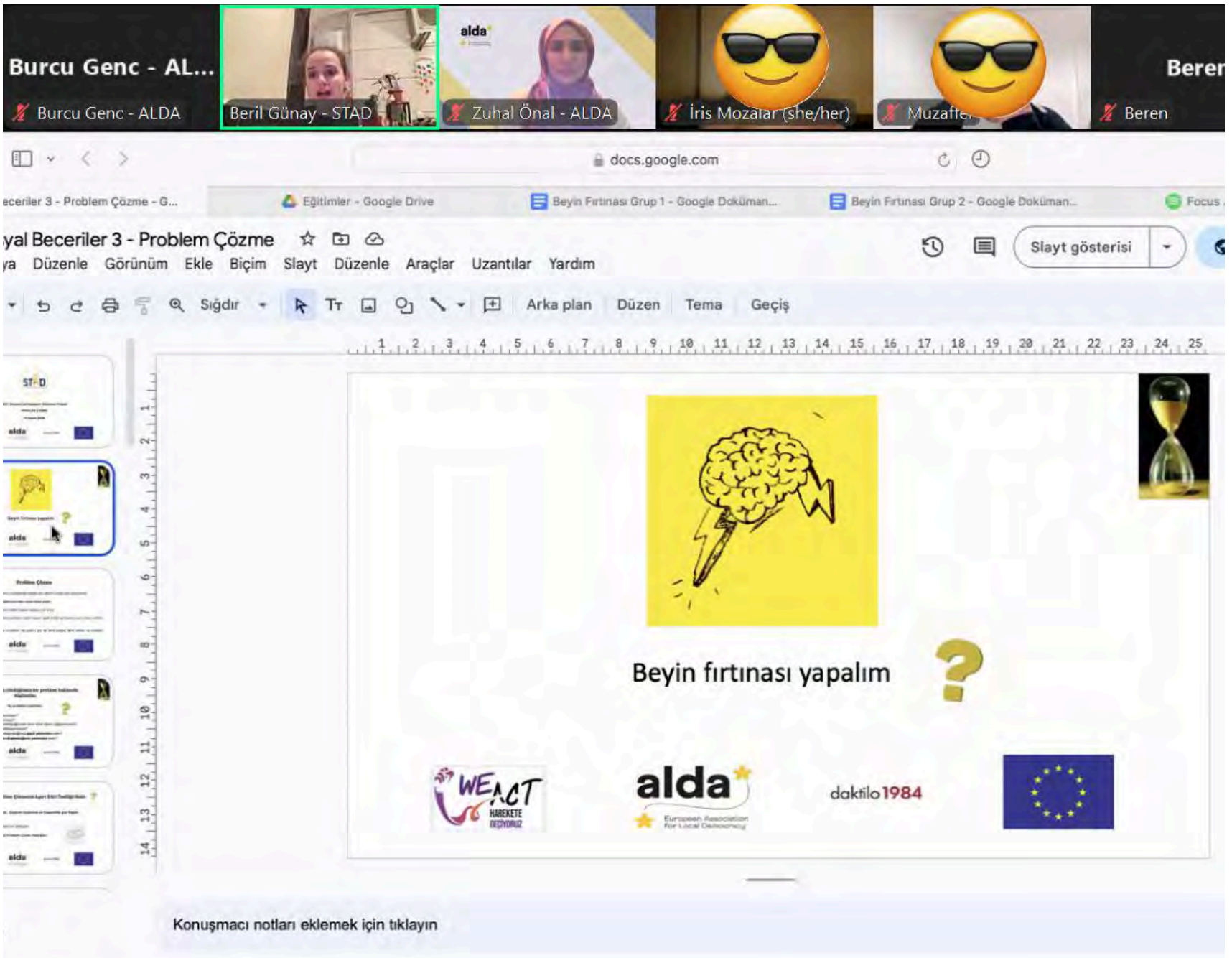
Sivil Toplum Araştırmaları Derneği
Civil Society Research Association

Location: Online
Duration: October 2024 - January 2025

STAD Website
STAD Instagram Acoount

#Citizens
#Young Powerment

Direct Beneficiaries **18** NEET LGBTI+ young people



Inclusive Empowerment for NEET+ Youth

General Objective

The project aims to increase LGBTI+ equality in employment by increasing the employability of NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) LGBTI+ youth, strengthening their competencies required in employment processes and strengthening advocacy to combat discrimination in the labor market and increase inclusion.

"We observed that the concept of NEET is still not widely recognized or understood in Türkiye."
Baran Yetişmiş, Project Facilitator

Activities

1. **Online empowering training** for NEET+ young people including project management, Social skills training, mental empowerment & well-being training, organizing, workers' rights, and union training, CV preparation training.
2. **Empowering toolkit** prepared for NEET+ young people and disseminated.

Significant Achievements

- 18 NEET+ participated in 15 sessions of the training program of 3 hours each.
- A community of NEET+ young is created and paved the way for an organic peer-to-peer support mechanism.
- A toolkit Empowering Toolkit for NEET+ Youth, which includes training content, methodologies, and digital tools, with contributions from trainers and facilitators, has been prepared and disseminated online.
- CVs of NEET+ young people were created and reviewed.

From Local to National with Women Leaders

İnovasyon, Gelişim, Eğitim ve Araştırma Derneği
Innovation, Entrepreneurship, Education and Research Association

Location: Bursa
Duration: November 2024 - January 2025

- IGEA Website
- IGEA Instagram Account
- IGEA Youtube Channel
- IGEA Linkedin Profile
- IGEA Facebook Page

#Citizens
#Local Authorities

Direct Beneficiaries **74** women

Indirect Beneficiaries **300** people



From Local to National with Women Leaders

General Objective

The overall objective of the project is to increase women's participation in politics at all levels, from mukhtars to MPs. The specific aim is to increase the number and influence of elected women muhtars in Bursa province.

"If I am going to take political action in the future, it must be something big for children and women, it must not be unfair!" ***Hatice Avcı, Mukhtar of Karaman Neighborhood, Nilüfer-Bursa***
"Everything starts with a step and grows with labor!" ***Hülya Bulun, Mukhtar of Cuma Neighborhood, İnegöl-Bursa***

Activities

1. Online **launch event** for muktars for information meeting and project introduction
2. One-to-One **coaching sessions** for women muhtars in Bursa Region about capacity awareness in leadership
3. **Meetings** with relevant stakeholders; Bursa Muhtars Association, Nilüfer Municipality, İnegöl Municipality, Osmangazi City Council, Bursa Uludağ University, Bandırma Onyedi Eylül University, Green Crescent and Purple Salkım Women Solidarity Association.
4. Created **20 success stories** of women mukhtars and 10 video shooting to increase their visibility.
5. **Launch meeting** with women muhtars and dissemination of their stories on social media platforms.

Significant Achievements

- 20 women muhtars joined the coaching sessions. A majority of the mukhtars commented that they started to think about continuing their path on politics after these sessions.

Gender Equality and Psychosocial and Economic Integration Program for Syrian Migrant Women under Temporary Protection

İstanbul Ekonomik Araştırmalar Derneği
Istanbul Economic Studies Association

İstanbul Ekonomik Araştırmalar Derneği

Location: Sultanbeyli, Istanbul
Duration: July 2024 - September 2024

IEAD Website

#NGOs
#Refugee Women

Direct Beneficiaries **42** **Syrian refugee women**

General Objective

The aim of the project is to increase the gender awareness of Syrian refugee women under temporary protection living in Istanbul, and to increase individual and social welfare through a training program that will provide skills in the fields of psychosocial, economic and gender equality.

"Women enhanced their understanding of job-seeking skills, entrepreneurship, and financial literacy. Post-training evaluations demonstrated increased competencies in these areas." ***Istanbul Economic Studies Association***

Gender Equality and Psychosocial and Economic Integration Program for Syrian Migrant Women under Temporary Protection

Activities

1. **Training** session on Migration to deep dive into migration processes, status, and how to cope with the challenges.
2. **Training** session on Gender Equality to share experiences from their daily lives, explaining the gender equality theories, strategies to combat against all kinds of violences, and finally to strengthen the capacity to express themselves.
3. **Training** session on Psychology to provide them necessary tools to face the challenges they experience, i.e. post-traumatic stress, integration problems, and social isolation.
4. **Training** session on Economy to support them with relevant information on economic mechanisms that can help them to facilitate social cohesion, negatively affected family relationships, etc.

Significant Achievements

- Participants were provided with training sessions on Economy and Gender Equality, covering job-seeking skills, financial literacy, entrepreneurship, gender stereotypes, women's rights, and gender dynamics in everyday life.
- Sessions on Migration and Psychology included topics such as migration processes, gender-based violence, trauma symptoms, stress management techniques, and post-traumatic growth and resilience.

Layers of Gendered Neighborhood: Exploring and Reimagining Women's Democratic Participation

Birlikte Yaşam ve Sosyal Tasarım Derneği (Roof Coliving)

roof coliving

Location: Nilüfer, Bursa
Duration: December 2024 - March 2025

- Roof Coliving Website
- Roof Coliving Instagram Account
- Roof Coliving X Account
- Roof Coliving Linkedin Profile

#Women
#Citizens
#Local Authorities

Direct Beneficiaries **82** (79 women and 3 LGBTI+ from neighborhood)

Indirect Beneficiaries **32.521** people reached indirectly



Layers of Gendered Neighborhood: Exploring and Reimagining Women's Democratic Participation

General Objective

The aim of the project is to identify and make visible the ways in which women domestic laborers participate in urban public life, as well as to identify how this public existence can be improved through women's participation in urban planning processes and to raise the awareness of local governments and representatives on the issue.

"During the 'From Kitchen to the Square' event, while preparing food, our kitchen turned into complete chaos. Recipes clashed, everything happened so fast. That moment -our state in the kitchen and the very essence of creating something together- became one of the most fun and memorable experiences of the project." ***İzel Büyükgöze, Roof Coliving***

Activities

1. Municipal public dialogue **meeting** to understand local women's participation practices
2. **From Kitchen to the Square event** - Fieldwork to explore public experiences of women domestic laborers
3. **Urban Walks** with women to get to know the neighborhood and places better
4. **Participation workshop** for women in the neighborhood of Konak in Bursa.
5. **Analysis of the fieldwork and workshop results** showcased.
6. Dissemination of the content in local government

Significant Achievements

- 1 map and 4 physical models created for different parts of the neighborhood to revive its functionality by the women domestic laborers that are living in the area.
- Gender responsive urban policy recommendations were developed and a report was prepared.
- Created one comic book about women's experiences of urban space.
- Results are shared with the local authority in a face to face meeting.

Strategic Planning and Alliance Meeting for LGBTI+ Political Participation

Sosyal Politika, Cinsiyet Kimliği ve Cinsel Yönelim Çalışmaları Derneği (SPoD) Social Policy, Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation Studies Association)

Sosyal Politika, Cinsiyet Kimliği ve Cinsel Yönelim Çalışmaları Derneği

Location: Istanbul
Duration: August 2024 - January 2025

SPoD Website
SPoD Instagram Account
SPoD X Account

#Citizens
#Member of Parliament

Direct Beneficiaries **23** **(16 women and LGBTI+)**



Strategic Planning and Alliance Meeting for LGBTI+ Political Participation

General Objective

To make strategic planning on how SPoD works with a total of 6 deputies MPs who signed the LGBTI+ Rights Charter that SPoD prepared for the deputy candidates in the 14th of May 2023 Elections. In addition, to plan how SPoD can build a social alliance against the possible new constitution that aims to criminalize LGBTI+s constitutionally and to revise the alliance strategy.

Activities

1. Two-day strategy **meeting** with the representatives of LGBTI+ community.
2. Additional online **meeting** with the representatives to extend the target group all over Türkiye.
3. Sharing the report and fact-sheet with 6 MPs through **parliamentary visits** in Ankara
4. **Dissemination** of the report with the partners.



Significant Achievements

- The project reached 6 MPs in the parliament from different backgrounds of parties; from center-right to left.
- Based on strategic planning meetings and lobbying meetings with MPs, the project identified potential MPs for joining the alliance through a snowballing method and updated alliance strategy.
- Also the project paved the way for a further campaign called “Hepimiz Hedefteyiz”.

Migrant Women in Yalova

Yalova Rus Dili Konuşanlar Derneği
Yalova Russian Speaking People Association

Location: Yalova
Duration: September 2024 - December 2024

#NGOs
#Migration
#Women Enpowerment

Direct Beneficiaries **80** migrant women living in Yalova

Indirect Beneficiaries **550** people



Migrant Women in Yalova

General Objective

A training program that provides equal opportunities for the professional and career development of Russian speaking migrant women in Yalova and provides them with support, training and networking opportunities.

"26 women successfully finished the course and four of them are employed after finishing the course which showcases that economic opportunities for women have improved." ***Yalova Russian Speaking People Association***

Activities

1. **Launch event** for the women to know better Yalova district
2. Online Business **Turkish Course** for Russian speaking women
3. **Final conference** for women that participated in the course
4. Engaging women in **social activities**

Significant Achievements

- In Yalova, a strong sense of community and mutual support among Russian-speaking individuals was cultivated through the project.
- 5 women were employed in different companies after finishing their Turkish courses.
- An introductory trip was organized with the women who had lived in Yalova for years but had not seen different parts of the city, and these women were included in the community.





Make a Difference for the Unnoticed

Eşitlik ve Hakikat Araştırmaları Derneği
Equality and Truth Studies Association

EHAD
Eşitlik ve Hakikat Araştırmaları Derneği
Komeleya Lêkolînên Wekhevî û Rastiyê

Location: Istanbul
Duration: October 2024 - March 2025

- EHAD Website
- EHAD Instagram Account
- EHAD X Account
- EHAD Youtube Channel

#Local NGOs
#Local Authorities

Direct Beneficiaries **17** people

Indirect Beneficiaries **725** people



Make a Difference for the Unnoticed

General Objective

Promote equal access to rights for women facing multiple and intersectional discrimination in cities; and to support them in their struggle for their rights.

"The main purpose of our work was to make our target group, one of the most disadvantaged groups of the society, visible and raise their awareness of their rights. The concrete outputs we produced within the scope of the project directly reached our target group and contributed to them becoming more conscious and determined in their rights-seeking processes." ***Equality and Truth Studies Association***

Activities

1. **Literature review** for Kurdish translation of the literature.
2. Preparing **right-focused videos** in Kurdish and Turkish on gender equality and access to rights for women
3. Creating **a network** with fellow countrymen associations to enhance dissemination of the videos.
4. One day **training** on gender equality for the women that are part of the network.

Significant Achievements

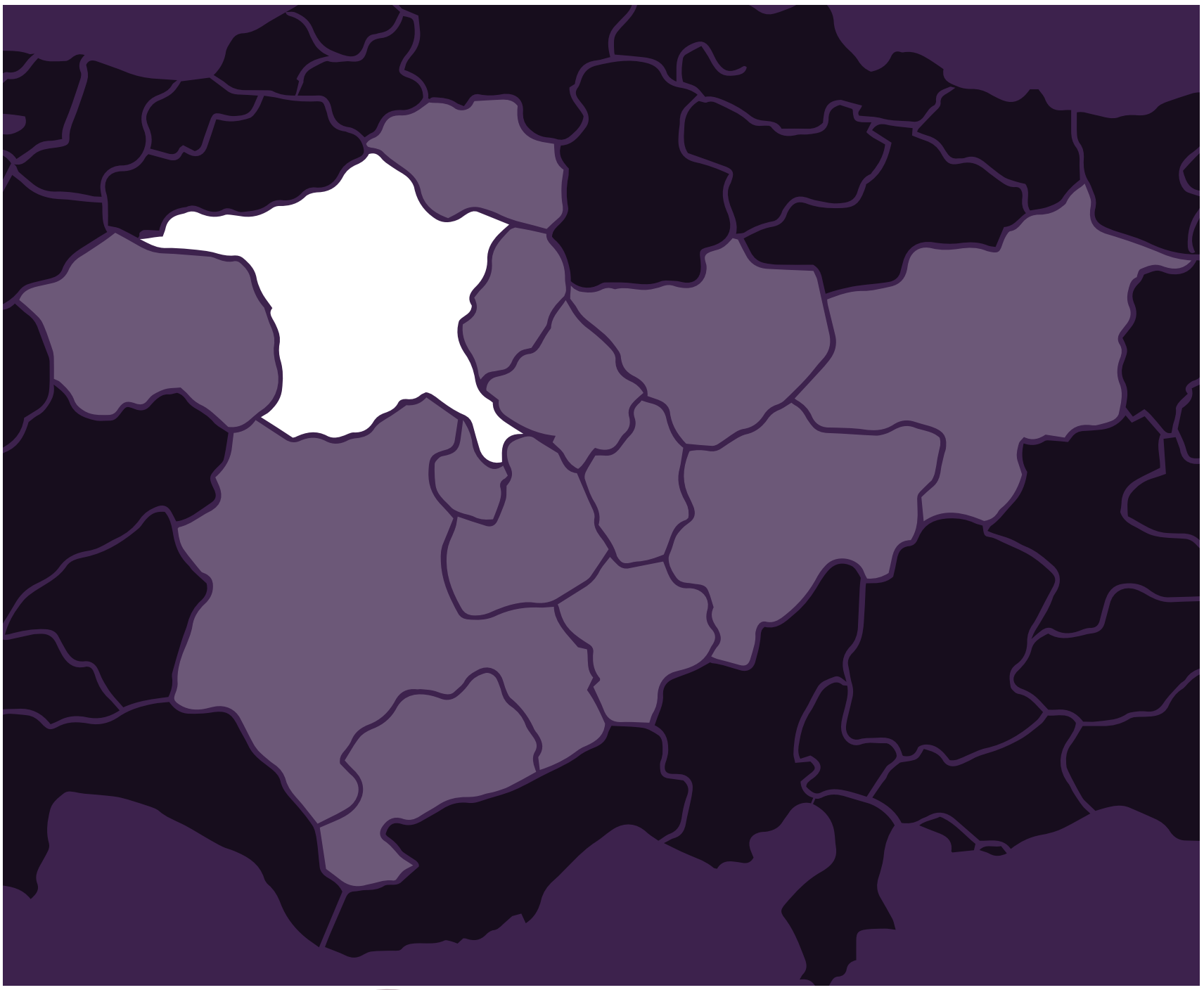
- A network of countrymen associations was created which aim to reach more women in the neighbourhoods.

CENTRAL ANATOLIA REGION

2 Micro Projects

Kadın İşverenler ve Sanayiciler Derneği - Ankara **(Women Employers and Industrialists Association)**

Çaplı Vakfı - Kız Başına - Ankara **(Çaplı Foundation)**



Gender Responsive Businesses

Kadın İşveren ve Sanayiciler Derneği
Women Employers and Industrialists Association

Location: Ankara
Duration: August 2024 - December 2024

- KAISDER Website
- KAISDER Instagram Account
- KAISDER Facebook Account
- KAISDER X Account

#NGOs
#Local Authorities
#Organized Industrial Zones

Direct Beneficiaries **83** women from Ankara Industrial Zone

Indirect Beneficiaries **1000+** people



Gender Responsive Businesses

General Objective

To raise awareness on gender equality issues and provide participants with knowledge and skills. These trainings aim to provide knowledge and awareness to understand the issue of gender inequality and promote gender equality approach at work, in society and in their personal lives. The project's main purpose is to contribute to increasing women's employment by promoting gender-sensitive workplaces, with a positive impact on women's empowerment in the long term.

"The most important achievement of the project is that gender equality has moved from being a mere legal obligation to being recognized as a fundamental component of corporate performance and sustainable development. Businesses now see gender equality as a strategic approach." ***Women Employers and Industrialists***

Activities

1. Project stakeholders **meeting** to create a community for the industrial zones and their expectations.
2. Creating the **training module** of gender equality in workplace for organized industrial zones
3. Organizing **trainings** for the workers & employers in the 1st organized industrial zone of Ankara
4. Developing a **Policy Document** specially designed for the 1st organized industrial zone of Ankara

Significant Achievements

The most successful activity of the project was the training on gender equality in the organized industrial zone and the policy document developed as a result. In the traditional business world, there was a relatively high level of gender inequality. Employers, managers and employees in the industrial zone were present at the event, where the importance of gender equality, the effects of discrimination in the workplace and the benefits of inclusive policies were explained in detail. The main conflict was to transform established gender roles and stereotypes in the workplace. By raising awareness on gender equality and creating a concrete policy document, the project has the potential for significant social change.

Feminism for Everyone!

Kız Başına - Çaplı Vakfı
Çaplı Foundation

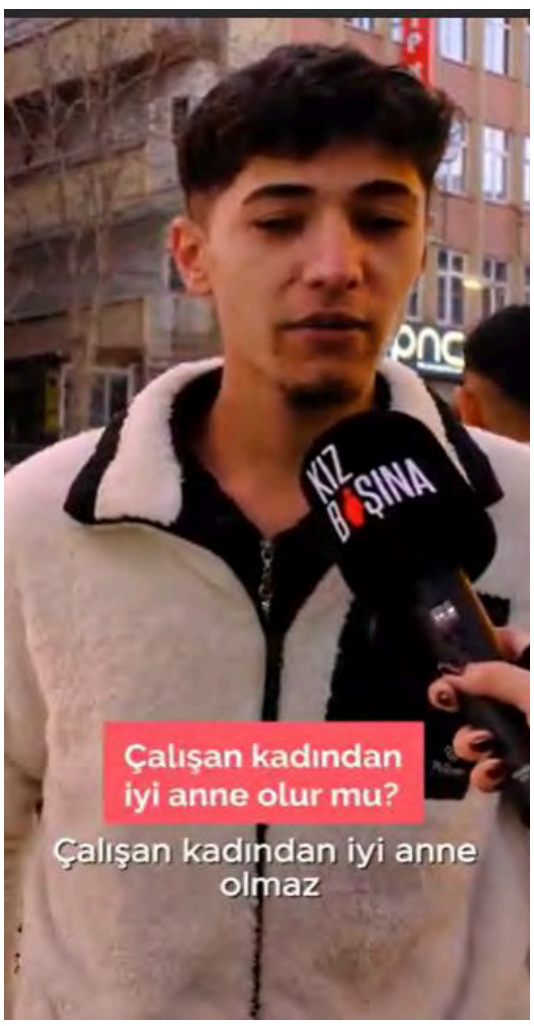
Location: Online
Duration: October 2024 - March 2025

- Kız Başına Website
- Kız Başına Instagram Account
- Kız Başına Facebook Page
- Kız Başına X Account
- Kız Başına Tiktok Account
- Kız Başına Youtube Channel
- Kız Başına Linkedin Profile

#Citizens
#Young Women

Direct Beneficiaries **5013** (2996 women and LGBTI+)

Indirect Beneficiaries **100.000** people







Feminism for Everyone!

General Objective

The fact that feminism is still perceived negatively in Türkiye complicates the struggle for women's rights and other efforts for gender equality, and misperceptions and negative views on feminism negatively affect women's equal participation in all areas of life such as social life, business life and politics. This project aims to break the prejudices of the society on many issues such as quotas, alimony, menstrual leave, maternity leave, which are misunderstood or prejudiced in Türkiye, and to explain to a wide audience why feminism is for everyone.

Activities

1. **Survey-poll** conducted with 2500 participants across Türkiye.
2. **Street interviews** with a wide variety of people to collect data to create the course.
3. **Udemy -How to Make Your Circle Feminist- course** created for people from different backgrounds.

Significant Achievements

- The survey provided valuable insights into how feminism is perceived, especially by men. The results revealed critical misconceptions and gaps in understanding: 81% of men agree that violence against women is a serious issue, but only 39% believe that feminist movements help solve it -highlighting a disconnection between recognizing the problem and understanding feminism's role in addressing it.
- Street interviews were conducted with people from different social backgrounds, directly challenging the misconceptions revealed by the survey. The interviews gained significant traction on social media: 2 million views -indicating that the content resonated with a wide audience-, 1.5 million social media reach -proving the effectiveness of the outreach strategy-, more than 60k interactions -demonstrating strong engagement and audience interest.
- The "Feminism For Everyone: How to Make Your Circle Feminist?" course was launched to 15.000+ students, providing practical strategies for advocating gender equality and breaking down misconceptions.
- The project generated over 2 million reach across platforms.

AEGEAN REGION

2 Micro Projects

Engelsiz Yaşam Derneği - İzmir **(Barrier-Free Life Association)**

Buldan Eğitim ve Dayanışma Vakfı - Denizli **(Buldan Education and Solidarity Foundation)**



Transforming the Local: Strengthening Disabled Women's Participation for Inclusive Cities

Engelsiz Yaşam Derneği
Barrier-Free Life Association

Location: İzmir
Duration: August 2024 - March 2025

Engelsiz Yaşam Instagram Account

#NGOs
#Local Authorities

Direct Beneficiaries **30** women with disability

Indirect Beneficiaries **550** people



Transforming the Local: Strengthening Disabled Women's Participation for Inclusive Cities

General Objective

The overall objective of the project is to contribute to the empowerment and inclusion of women with disabilities at all levels of democratic participation. The specific aim is to increase the participation of women with disabilities in order to include the demands of women with disabilities in the structural documents to be prepared after the local elections.

"The most meaningful and tangible achievement of the project has been the increased knowledge of women with disabilities regarding local decision-making processes and the strengthening of their institutional engagement with local governance structures, resulting in greater visibility of their representation opportunities. A direct outcome of this process is the election of Barrier-Free Life Association President Gülgün Yorgancılar to the Executive Committee of the Gaziemir City Council, demonstrating that the capacity-building and advocacy efforts implemented throughout the project have translated into institutional-level impact." ***Süleyman Gök, Project Facilitator***

Activities

1. **Empowerment training series** with women with disabilities; including sessions such as decision making mechanisms -roles and responsibilities-, urban participation process, digital activism and participation tools and mechanisms.
2. **Advocacy training series** with women with disabilities; online meeting of the local decision makers with women with disabilities, and digital awareness session.
3. **Podcast series** on the role of local governments in promoting and protecting the rights of women with disabilities.

Significant Achievements

- The president of the association is elected for city council in the region.
- Following the training, 90% of participants reported increasing confidence in engaging with local governance structures and feeling equipped to use digital tools in a more strategic manner.
- A five-episode podcast series titled Inclusive Democracy and Decision-Making Processes serve as a sustainable digital knowledge product advocating for the inclusion of women with disabilities in local decision-making.

I'm a Woman, I have my Rights

Buldan Eğitim ve Dayanışma Vakfı
Buldan Education and Solidarity Foundation

Location: Buldan, Denizli
Duration: October 2024 - February 2025

BULDAN Foundation Website
BULDAN Foundation Instagram Account
BULDAN Foundation X Account
BULDAN Foundation Facebook Page

#NGOs
#Local Authorities

Direct Beneficiaries **356** people (337 women and 19 men)

Indirect Beneficiaries **50.000** people



I'm a Woman, I have my Rights

General Objective

The overall aim of the project is to raise awareness on gender equality and combat discrimination by empowering women living in rural areas.

The specific objective of the project is to create a feasible and disseminable "Rights-Based Gender Equality Literacy Training Module in Rural Areas" to raise awareness of women between the ages of 18-35 in Buldan on gender-based roles and gender equality, and raising their awareness and knowledge on gender equality and rights through an advocacy campaign.

Activities

1. "Rights-Based Gender Equality Literacy in Rural Areas" **training program** developed especially for the Denizli region.
2. Organization of the **pilot program of the training**.
3. **Training of the trainers** was realized.
4. **Advocacy and dissemination** of the training.

Significant Achievements

- The project got an invitation from the Denizli Metropolitan City Council to organize a training.
- A 170-woman survey and multi-stakeholder consultations shaped the Rights-Based Gender Equality Literacy Training Module, developed with Yaşar University which underlines that the project was implemented by the data-driven approach.
- 36 trainers trained in the ToT which exceed the target indicator of the project. Also more than 90 people participated in the pilot training.
- Trained facilitators will continue coaching rural women, ensuring long-term change and advocacy.

MEDITERRANEAN REGION

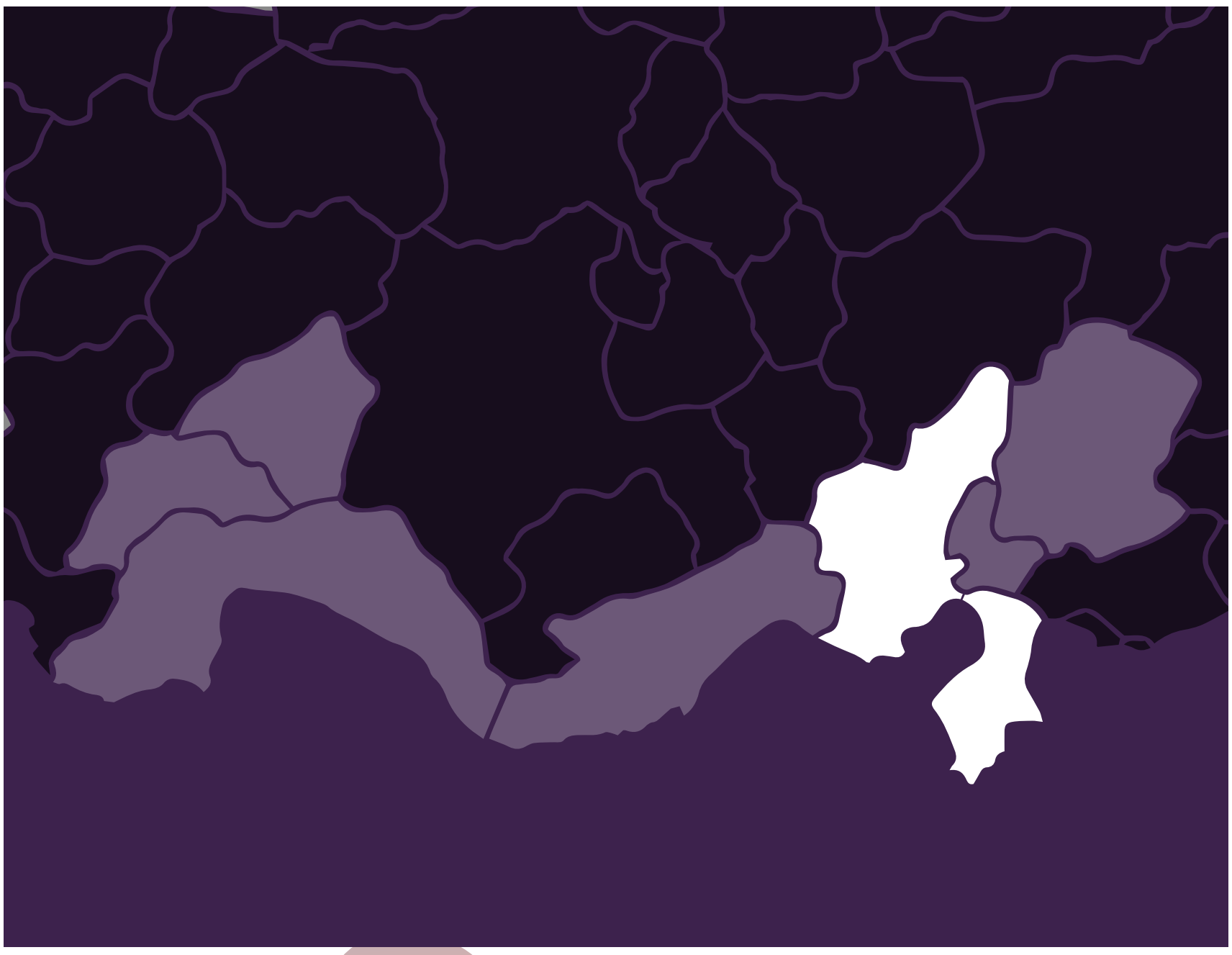
4 Micro Projects

Küresel Eşitlik ve Kapsayıcılık Ağı - Hatay **(Global Equality and Inclusion Network Association)**

Adil Yargılanma Hakkına Erişim Derneği - Adana **(Association for Access to Fair Trial Rights)**

Konuşmamız Gerek Derneği - Adana **(We Need To Talk Association)**

Kadınlarla Dayanışma Vakfı - Hatay **(Women's Solidarity Foundation)**



Purple Ladder: Local Women Leaders Capacity Building Program

Küresel Eşitlik ve Kapsayıcılık Ağı Derneği
Global Equality and Inclusion Network Association

Location: Hatay
Duration: October 2024 - March 2025

Küresel Eşitlik ve Kapsayıcılık Ağı Derneği Website
Küresel Eşitlik ve Kapsayıcılık Ağı Derneği Instagram Account
Küresel Eşitlik ve Kapsayıcılık Ağı Derneği Linkedin Profile
Küresel Eşitlik ve Kapsayıcılık Ağı Derneği X Account

#NGOs
#Woman
#Local Authorities

Direct Beneficiaries **132** women living in disaster zones + **3** men

Indirect Beneficiaries **27.820** people



Purple Ladder: Local Women Leaders Capacity Building Program

General Objective

Within the scope of the project, it was focused on cities located in disaster zones. They aim to make significant contributions to gender equality by working with elected women municipal council members and women mukhtars to increase their capacities in strategic planning, performance planning, performance programs and budget preparation processes.

"Our biggest challenge was actually encouraging women to step out of their homes -reaching the right woman and connecting with our target audience." ***Ayşe Kaşıkırık, Expert***

Activities

1. **Two online meetings** held with women from disaster zones to talk about strategic policy documents under "Purple Ladder Academy" program
2. **One face-to-face meeting** held in disaster zones to meet with local women leaders to develop good practice map
3. **Online map** for "Women Leaders Good Practice in Turkiye"
4. Preparation of the **Guide** for Guide to Innovative Community Practices for Gender-Sensitive and Resilient Cities in Post-Disaster Recovery Processes

Significant Achievements

- Women mukhtars, cooperative leaders, and civil society representatives in disaster-affected areas gained knowledge and skills in strategic and local equality action plan preparation, gender-sensitive urban policies, local democracy, human rights, and gender-responsive budgeting.
- 34 good practice examples by women leaders in Hatay and Adıyaman were mapped.
- The Guide to Innovative Community Practices for Gender-Sensitive and Resilient Cities in Post-Disaster Recovery Processes was prepared to strengthen the capacity of local women leaders and promote gender-sensitive resilience policies in post-disaster recovery. The guide provided recommendations to enhance the resilience of women and girls in Global South countries against potential disasters.

Adana LGBTI+ Rights Empowerment and Legal Support Network

Adil Yargılanma Hakkına Erişim Derneği
Association for Access to the Right to a Fair Trial

Location: Adana
Duration: October 2024 - March 2025

Adil Yargılanma Hakkına Erişim Derneği Website
Adil Yargılanma Hakkına Erişim Derneği Instagram Account
Adil Yargılanma Hakkına Erişim Derneği Facebook Page
Adil Yargılanma Hakkına Erişim Derneği X Account

#Network
#Local Authorities
#Legal Consultancy

Direct Beneficiaries **49** women, 17 LGBTI+ + **16** men

Indirect Beneficiaries **425** people



Adana LGBTI+ Rights Empowerment and Legal Support Network

General Objective

The project aims to strengthen the rights of LGBTI+ people in Adana, create a legal support network, and provide a sustainable platform for LGBTI+ people to fight against discrimination and defend their rights. Within the scope of the project, legal support services will be provided, awareness will be raised and social acceptance will be improved through joint work with NGOs and the Bar Association on LGBTI+ rights.

"We aim to set a good example for establishing these networks in other provinces as well."
Emel Sevgi Öngör, Responsible of Project Development in the Association

Activities

1. Creating a **legal network** for LGBTI+ in Adana
2. "LGBTI+ rights and law" **training** for lawyers
3. **Legal consultancy and services** for 10 LGBTI+ cases
4. **Participation workshop** for the CSO representatives in the region
5. **Networking** with Right Based CSOs
6. Preparation of **manual** for "Application to LGBTI+ Rights and Human Rights Protection Mechanisms for CSOs and Lawyers"

Significant Achievements

- 10 LGBTI+ cases were given legal consultancy and service.
- A network for legal consultancy for LGBTI people in Adana district was created and started to have regular meetings.
- 15 lawyers and 4 LGBTI+ participants participated in the law training and a manual prepared and disseminated.

Harvesting Empowerment: Fostering Menstrual Health and Community Among Seasonal Workers and Refugees in Adana

Konuşmamız Gerek Derneği
We Need To Talk Association

Location: Adana
Duration: July 2024 - March 2025

Konuşmamız Gerek Derneği Website
Konuşmamız Gerek Derneği Instagram Account
Konuşmamız Gerek Derneği X Account

#NGOs
#Local Authorities
#Agricultural Firms

Direct Beneficiaries **327** seasonal agricultural labourer women and refugee women

Indirect Beneficiaries **120** people



Harvesting Empowerment: Fostering Menstrual Health and Community Among Seasonal Workers and Refugees in Adana

General Objective

The main objective of the project is to address menstrual care needs and enhance awareness of menstrual health among seasonal agricultural workers and refugees residing in Adana. By creating safe and inclusive spaces in which women will share their experiences, challenges, and triumphs related to menstruation and reflect their stories, they will increase the knowledge about menstrual cycle, foster a sense of community and support among menstruating women, and provide guidance and opportunities for women to express their relationship with their bodies, wombs, and menstrual cycles creatively.

"Many women who participated in the workshops stated that they did not have sufficient knowledge about menstrual health and hygiene. Some participants mentioned that due to financial difficulties, they used old fabric instead of pads, which caused discomfort. Others with heavy bleeding shared that they could not feel comfortable using anything other than baby diapers. Most participants said they learned about the importance of tracking their menstrual cycle for the first time in these workshops. When experts explained the health impacts of cycle tracking, participants showed great interest in this information." ***We Need to Talk Association***





Harvesting Empowerment: Fostering Menstrual Health and Community Among Seasonal Workers and Refugees in Adana

Activities

1. **Meetings** with local feminist groups to extend the dissemination of the workshop and create a participatory environment for the project implementation.
2. Determine **workshop locations** together with the feminist groups.
3. **Workshops** implemented in refugee camps and agricultural zones disseminating menstrual health packages to the refugee women and seasonal agricultural worker women.
4. **Advocacy** and dissemination of the project results.

Significant Achievements

- Through the project, the subgrantee has established effective and sustainable links with civil society organizations, local municipalities and public stakeholders in Adana. By ensuring the active participation of stakeholder organizations at every stage of the project, it was aimed both to disseminate the project and to implement it in the most effective way. In this way, long-term collaborations were developed with local organizations and contributed to social transformation processes.
- Within the scope of the project, key groups living in Adana were reached and safe sharing spaces were created on topics such as menstruation, sexual and reproductive health, and the experience of womanhood in the light of a gender equality perspective. In this way, social solidarity was achieved, accurate and scientific information was disseminated and menstrual care kits were delivered to the target audience. Positive physical, psychological and social experiences were obtained among the participants, and useful results were revealed by reporting these experiences.
- The qualitative and quantitative data collected during the project were presented to stakeholder organizations at the closing meeting. These data brought the current needs of local menstruation-focused activities to the agenda, and future projects.

“Your Stories Follow Mine“ – Illustrating Gender Equality

Kadınlarla Dayanışma Vakfı
Women’s Solidarity Foundation

Location: Hatay and Istanbul
Duration: September 2024 - March 2025

- KADAV Website
- KADAV Instagram Account
- KADAV Facebook Page
- KADAV X Account
- KADAV Youtube Channel
- KADAV Linkedin Profile

#NGOs
#Migration
#Local Authorities

Direct Beneficiaries **66** women from disaster zone and Syrian refugee women in Istanbul

Indirect Beneficiaries **120** women





“Your Stories Follow Mine” – Illustrating Gender Equality

General Objective

The aim of this project is to carry out a creative awareness-raising work with local women affected by the earthquake in February 2023 and refugee Syrian women, on gender equality, ecofeminism and the idea of creating an egalitarian life, by conducting studies on gender concepts and sexist elements that are surrounding us in society and shaping norms and behaviors. In particular, looking at famous stories such as fairy tales, readapting and illustrating them, the creative work developed with those women will enable to unfold the cultural gendered norms and roles that lead to inequalities and discrimination, and for women to reflect on their own experience to help creating alternative narratives fostering a more inclusive and egalitarian environment.

“Seeing that they could change fairy tales was like moving a stone from its place. It was something truly significant, like breaking a taboo. Because fairy tales feel unchangeable. They are stories we have known since childhood, repeatedly told, heard, and portrayed in films, commercials, and cultural narratives. Challenging this constant bombardment of fairy tales felt like putting a stick in the wheels of an unstoppable machine. And it felt good. Realizing this was an empowering experience for all of us.” ***İnci Bacacı, Coordinator of empowerment and production workshops (Designer / Trainer)***

Activities

1. **Study** for revisiting narratives with gender equality
2. Illustrating women’s stories through **art workshops**
3. Preparation and publication of the adapted **fairy tale book**

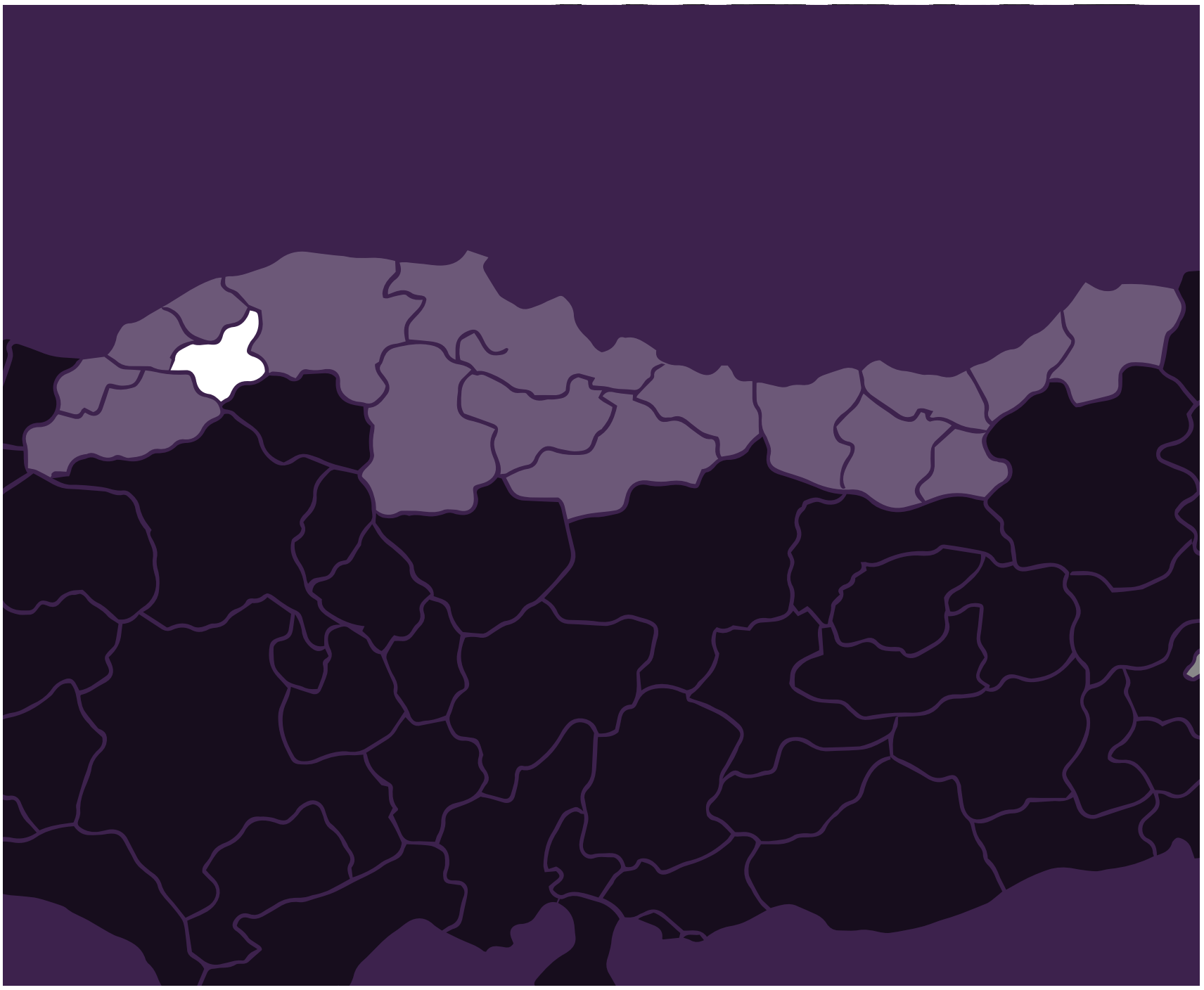
Significant Achievements

- During the workshops it was discussed that early marriages of girls and their expulsion from school increased even more after the earthquake and that this issue is a projection of the fairy tales that have been told to people for years. In a matter of disasters always the girls are the first to be sacrificed, not boys. Participants of the workshops highlighted that these workshops are important to understand the deep connections of fairy tales with the gender equality approach in today’s world.
- Reaching a wide range of participants from academia to neighbourhoods, from political parties to the bar association, from schools to agricultural workers strengthened the project results by multiplying in accordance with the name of the project, “YOUR STORIES FOLLOW MINE”.

BLACK SEA REGION

1 Micro Project

S.S. Karabük Uğraşan Kadın Üretim ve İşletme Kooperatifi (KABUK) - Karabük **(Limited and Liable Karabük Working Women Production and Business Cooperative)**



Equal Steps, Strong Tomorrows

Sınırlı Sorumlu Karabük Uğraşan Kadın Üretim ve İşletme Kooperatifi (KABUK)
Limited and Liable Karabük Working Women Production and Business Cooperative

Location: Karabük
Duration: June 2024 - March 2025

KABUK Instagram Account
KABUK Facebook Page

#Local Authorities
#Women in vulnerable situations

Direct Beneficiaries **95** women (17 of them are young women)



Equal Steps, Strong Tomorrows

General Objective

To fight against gender inequality, to raise awareness among disadvantaged women and young girls, and to help them adapt to business life and the social environment at the same time. To explain that women are not alone and that they can be stronger together. To ensure that women and young girls learn about their rights.

"We saw how much joy women, especially disadvantaged women, experienced when working together on an activity—particularly food production. Seeing how happy they were when they felt special, how engaged they became in the process, and how productive their efforts were gave us hope. The smiles on their faces brought us immense joy as well." ***Selva Seza Candan, Project Coordinator***

Activities

1. Face-to-face pasta and pie making **training**
2. Online self esteem, handling anxiety and entrepreneurship **training**
3. **Final event** with a live music show for the participants

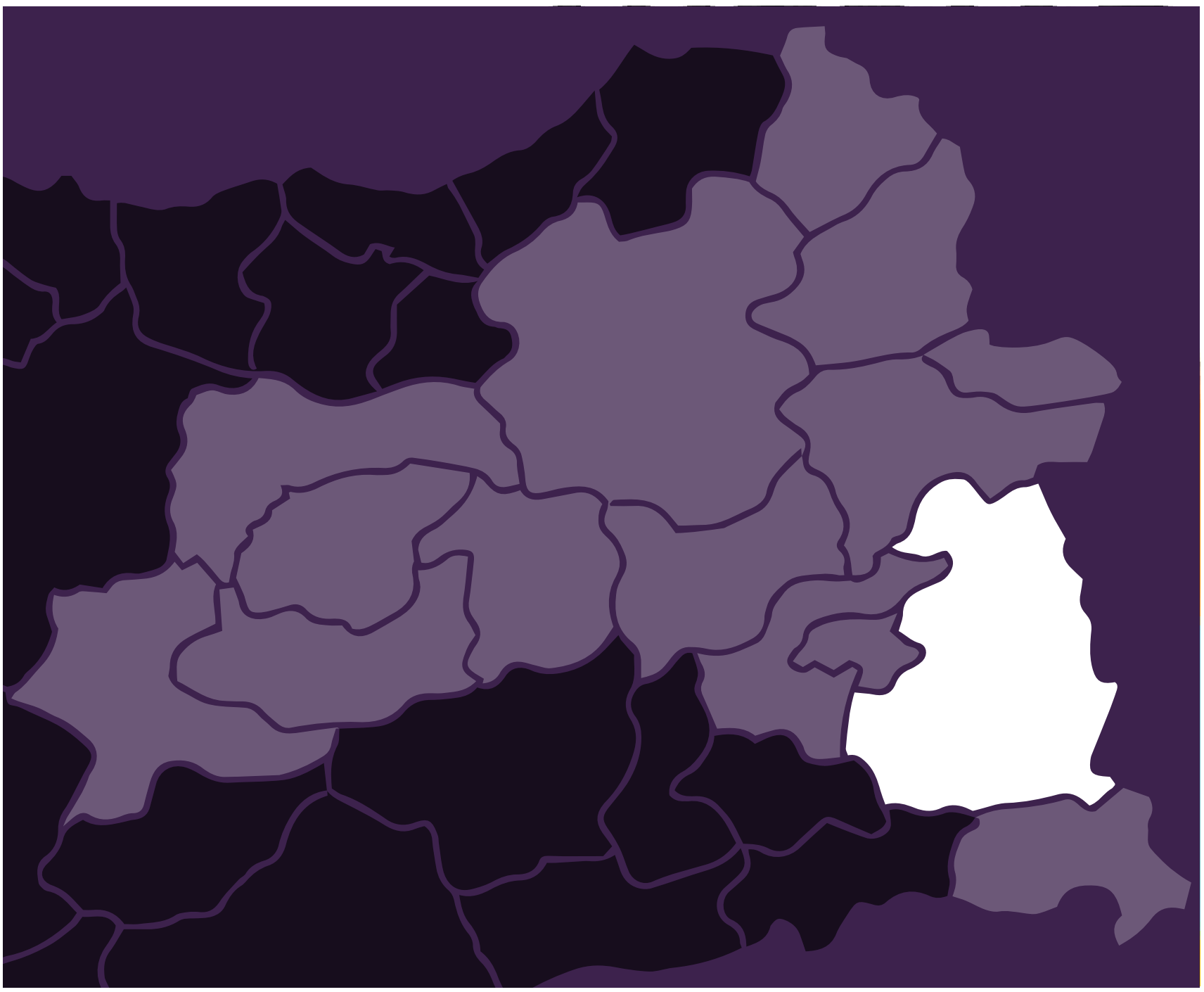
Significant Achievements

The training sessions proved to be highly effective, as they not only provided information but also addressed the target group's significant need for socialization. Given the prolonged lack of participation in events or social activities, the impact was observed to be more pronounced on psychological well-being rather than solely meeting the need for training.

EASTERN ANATOLIA REGION

1 Micro Project

Van İşitme Engelliler ve Aileleri Derneği - Van **(Van Hearing-Impaired and Families Association)**



Empowerment of Disadvantaged Women with Gender Equality Support

Van İşitme Engelliler ve Aileleri Derneği
Van Hearing-Impaired and Families Association

Location: Van
Duration: August 2024 - March 2025

- Van İşitme Engelliler ve Aileleri Derneği Website
- Van İşitme Engelliler ve Aileleri Derneği Instagram Account
- Van İşitme Engelliler ve Aileleri Derneği Facebook Page
- Van İşitme Engelliler ve Aileleri Derneği X Account

#Gender Equality
#Local Authorities

Direct Beneficiaries **78** women + **10** men

Indirect Beneficiaries **2300** people



Empowerment of Disadvantaged Women with Gender Equality Support

General Objective

Women living in Van continue their lives in difficult living conditions by experiencing intersectional disadvantages in a social environment oppressed by both disability and patriarchal order. The aim of the study is to contribute to the empowerment of 50 women with disabilities and intersectional disadvantages who are foreign nationals and members of the host community through gender equality training and workshops, and to make them aware of their existing rights in education, health, access to justice and political representation.

"The experience-sharing meeting held with local NGOs and public institutions was a first of its kind. Following the meeting, which brought together 8 NGOs, 4 public institutions, and 3 private sector representatives, a press release was issued." ***Van Association of the Hearing Impaired and Their Families***

Activities

1. Preparation of a gender equality **guide** in Farsi and English.
2. **Training** series of gender equality for Farsi speaking and women with disabilities communities.
3. **Dissemination** of guides to local governments and local CSOs.

Significant Achievements

- The training program was widely participatory. The project team performed training sessions with Afghan migrant women, women with hearing disabilities, and women with physical disabilities.
- The training raised great awareness among Afghan migrant women, who are very unfamiliar with the concepts of gender equality and have a patriarchal family structure.

SOUTHEASTERN ANATOLIA REGION

2 Micro Project

Dicle Fırat Gazeteciler Derneği - Diyarbakır **(Dicle Fırat Journalist Association)**

Umut Kadın Topluluğu Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışma Derneği - Gaziantep **(Syrian Women Network)**



Mainstreaming Gender Equality: Defending Women Journalists

Dicle Fırat Gazeteciler Derneği
Dicle Fırat Journalist Association

Location: Diyarbakır
Duration: October 2024 - March 2025

DFG Website
DFG Instagram Account
DFG X Account

#Journalism
#Gender Equality
#Women empowerment

Direct Beneficiaries **28** women

Indirect Beneficiaries **13.689** people



“Mainstreaming Gender Equality: Defending Women Journalists” Project

General Objective

The project includes the preparation of a news file and a video-documentary through video-interviews with 6 women journalists who have previously been subjected to rights violations, their publication, and working with rights organizations. Through this project, it is aimed to contribute to the mainstreaming of gender equality and to put the rights and freedoms of women journalists on the agenda under the general heading of freedom of the press.

“Especially if you are a girl, they usually have doubts about whether you can handle these jobs. Since everyone knows what happens to female journalists, families are more protective, especially towards girls.” ***Melike Aydın, Interviewer, Women journalist***

Activities

1. **Video interviews** with women journalists from different cities of Türkiye
2. Preparation of six **video documentaries** about the struggles of women journalists in media sector
3. **Workshop** for representatives of women CSOs in Diyarbakir region

Significant Achievements

- The subgrantee got intervened by the police during the workshop, but fortunately it didn’t affect the overall goals of the activity. The women, at first, were scared to attend the workshop, but then they decided to come and the workshop took place.
- More than 10k people watched the documentaries in the news agencies.

Together to Promote Gender Equality within the Syrian Women's Network and Its Partner Organizations

Umut Kadın Topluluğu Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışma Derneği Syrian Women Network

Location: Gaziantep
Duration: November 2024 - February 2025

SWN Website
SWN Instagram Account
SWN Facebook Page
SWN X Account

#NGOs
#Network
#Local Authorities

Direct Beneficiaries **51** people

Indirect Beneficiaries **453** people



Together to Promote Gender Equality within the Syrian Women's Network and Its Partner Organizations

General Objective

The project aims to increase coordination and networking between member and partner organizations with the Syrian Women's Network to promote gender equality within the Turkish city of Gaziantep. It also aims to increase the knowledge of leaders within the network's member and partner organizations about women's basic human rights and how to achieve them.

"We were able to gather women leaders of Gaziantep, women from other organizations, and other women from civil society. We were able to link those women together and connect them. The purpose of that is to exchange knowledge between those women." ***Fatima Ali, Project Coordinator***

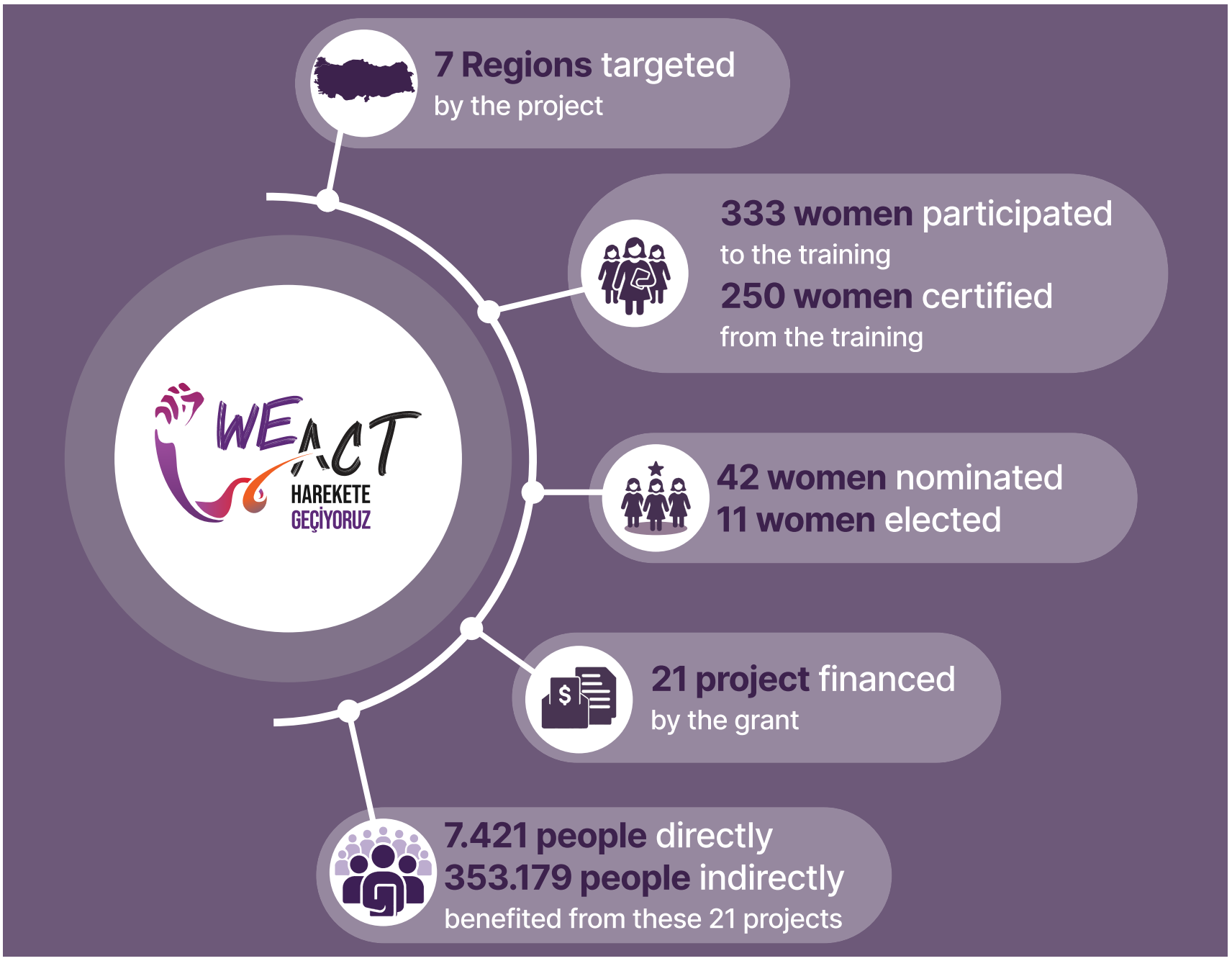
Activities

1. **Workshop** for introduction to international conventions of gender equality
2. **Workshop** to develop a gender equality policy for the Syrian Women Network
3. **Developing a policy** for gender equality.

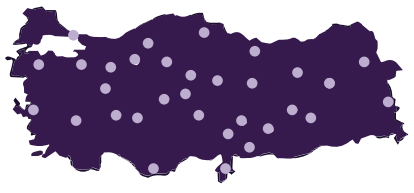
Significant Achievements

- The significant success of the project was the development of a comprehensive gender equality policy, which marked a transformative step for the Syrian Women's Network. This policy was designed to be implemented across all the network's programs and among its staff, ensuring a consistent and institutionalized approach to promoting gender equality. The policy -developed with the inputs from collaborators of the project- was shared with all 33 partner organizations within the network.
- The project also increased coordination and networking between member and partner organizations with the Syrian Women's Network to promote gender equality within Gaziantep city.

IMPACT OF THE PROJECT



PARTICIPANT PROFILE



Women Politicians from 41 provinces

CSO Representatives from 18 provinces



Ages 19-71



Almost all considered themselves minority





2 participant with disabilities

Participants were from each of the **7 regions of Türkiye**, **women politicians** from **41 different provinces** out of 81, and **CSO representatives from 18 different provinces**. Almost all of the participants considered themselves as minority because they are women, while **15% considered themselves belonging to a minority** due to religion/ethnicity/ sexual orientation, etc. There were **2 participants with disabilities**. The participants were from a wide range of **ages between 19 to 71.**

Over the first year of the project's implementation, there were a number of setbacks that forced the project to be adapted to the timeline. These included the earthquakes of February 2023 (2nd month of the project), which had a heavy impact on the involvement of Turkish civil society, causing them to redirect their actions towards supporting the affected populations, and the national elections in May 2023 (5th month of the project), which, given their major significance, mobilised our partners and a wide range of other players we intended to involve in the project.

Although there were some setbacks, after 30 months of activity the project contributed to ongoing discussions as it had a role in **creating a space for discussion** and peer-learning for women aspiring candidates across the political spectrum, ranging from right to left. One of the CSO representatives underlined

> "the importance of the training in terms of bringing women from different political and cultural backgrounds, candidates and CSO representatives and enabling them to discuss together."

The WE ACT project impacted particularly the local level by providing training in six different cities, receiving participants from all regions of the country. It was observed that the participatory democracy concepts, practices and mechanisms could be integrated into the election campaign of the women candidates, together with CSOs policy recommendations.

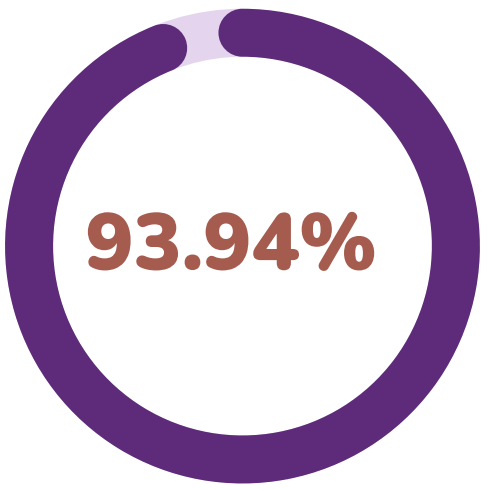
> "In the Participatory Democracy training, one participant stated that her participation gave her new ideas about what can be done, such as how public budgets can be more gender responsive. Another one mentioned that thanks to this training, they added gender-sensitive budgeting to their campaign as a cause"

Mid-term evaluation report of the project

SUCCESS INDICATORS

The majority of the indicators initially set for the project were fully achieved. Among them the following ones can be highlighted:

93.94% Of The Women Improved Their Knowledge Of The Electoral System And Local Government Legislation.



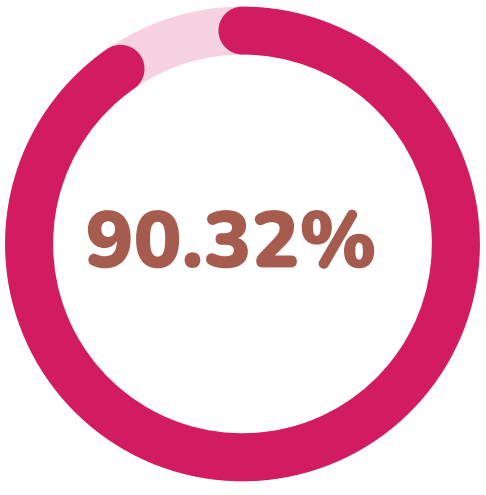
Increase women's knowledge of the electoral system and local government legislation. Of the 165 women who attended the training, 127 actively participated, and 99 completed the final test. Among those assessed, **93.94% achieved a passing score** -49 passed, 44 obtained full marks, and only 6 did not succeed. This strong result demonstrates the training's success in fostering a solid grasp of political structures and legal frameworks, which is essential for informed and effective participation in public life.

92.47% Of The Women Improved Their Confidence And Practical Abilities To Enter Political Life.

The project sought to build the **confidence and practical abilities of women aspiring to enter politics**, particularly in running electoral campaigns and delivering public speeches. Out of 165 women who joined the training sessions, 127 were active participants, and 93 completed both pre- and post-training surveys. Among these, **86 women (92.47%) improved their scores,** indicating a notable increase in both political knowledge and self-confidence. These results underscore the project's role in preparing women to engage in political life at the local level and in encouraging gender-responsive leadership.



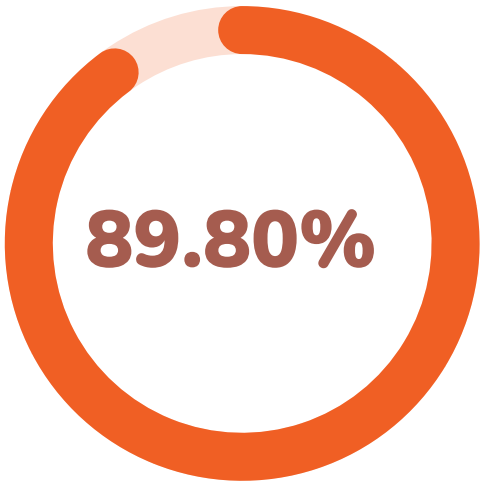
90.32% Of The Women Improved Their Communication And Public Speaking Skills.



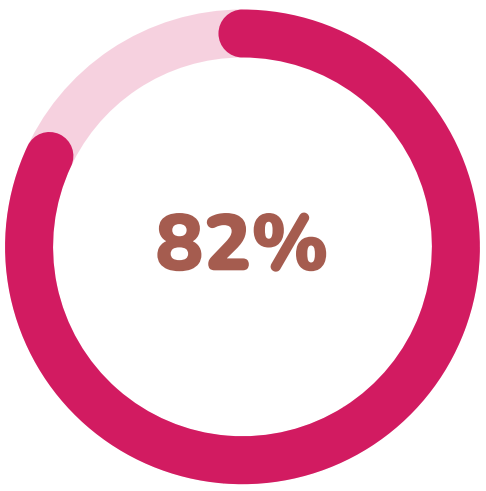
The initiative made a meaningful impact on **enhancing communication and public speaking skills among prospective women politicians**. Out of 165 attendees, 93 participants completed both pre- and post-training surveys. Of these, **84 (90.32%) demonstrated improvement in their scores.** This notable outcome illustrates the value of the training in developing key communication abilities, which are vital for persuasive and confident political engagement.

89.80% Of The Women Passed The Final Test On Gender-Sensitive Policy And Budgeting.

The project aimed to deepen **women candidates' understanding of gender-sensitive policy and budgeting** - an area that, while technical, is vital for inclusive governance. Of the 165 women who participated, 99 completed the final test, **with 88 (89.80%) achieving a passing score.** Although the outcome reflected substantial progress, it slightly missed full achievement due to the complexity of the topic. In response, the project team conducted a supplementary online session and provided recorded materials to support further learning. This proactive measure illustrates the project's commitment to accessible and thorough capacity development in governance.



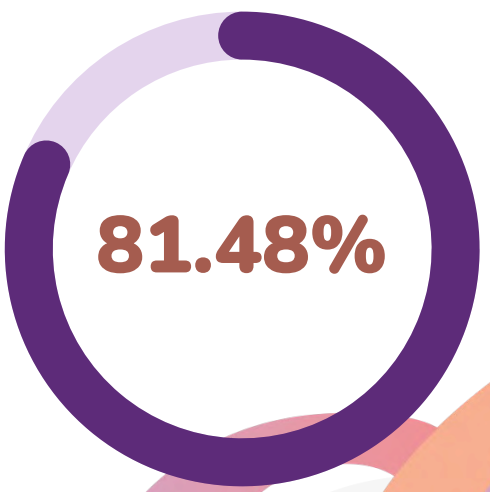
82% Of Women Candidates Improved Their Scores On Women's And LGBTI+ Rights.



To improve awareness of women's and LGBTI+ rights and effective ways to support these communities, the project provided targeted training to aspiring women candidates. Among 50 participants who completed both pre- and post-tests, **82% (42 women) increased their scores,** with an average improvement of 2 points on a 12-point scale. Although a few showed no change or a slight decline, the majority demonstrated clear progress in a topic often overlooked in political education. These findings confirm the training's strong impact, with no need for corrective actions, and show that the activity met its intended goals.

81.48% Of CSO Representatives Improved Their Understanding Regarding The Barriers Faced By Women In Politics And How To Effectively Support Them.

Additionally, the project worked to **enhance the understanding of civil society organisation (CSO) representatives regarding the barriers faced by women in politics** and how to effectively support them. Of 85 CSO participants, 54 completed both pre- and post-tests. Among them, **81.48% (44 participants) improved their scores,** reflecting stronger comprehension of the topic. The results indicate meaningful learning, with only a few participants showing no change or a decrease. This success reaffirms the training's relevance and effectiveness, and no adjustments were necessary for its implementation.



Given the informal feedback received from the participants, the training program was particularly appreciated since it targeted specific needs. They indicated that they became aware of the **difficulties** faced by each target group, and that what they learnt after this training enabled them to **improve their effectiveness** and the scope of their actions.

It can be observed from the participants' statements that the training program contributed significantly to the capacity building of the beneficiaries. Women candidates repurposed the training materials in their election campaigns.

> "It was very beneficial, I can say it was the best training I've attended."

Participant from Gaziantep

> "I have developed many ideas on how active participation in policies can be achieved."

Participant from İzmir

> "The training met my expectations, I noticed my deficiencies. I learned the critical points of creating a goal and action plan."

Participant from Adana

> "Regardless of which training people participated, no one shared a negative opinion about them, instead, most participants stated that they were useful and fruitful, mentioned their satisfaction with the content and asked for more such training and more modules to continue receiving such training. Some mentioned that they referred to training materials afterwards. There were few participants who stated that training gave them confidence. One candidate stated that she used the information she gathered in the training in her campaign. Some other women said that they transferred this information to their fellow party members.

Mid-term evaluation report of the project

The most influential aspect of the project was to **gather women together from all different regions** and develop a **sense of community** respecting the democratic principles. This not only deepened the democracy culture among the participants and candidates but also contributed to overall discussions and limited encounters.

With the project, the women candidates also had the opportunity to **express their needs** such as rhetorical skills, body language, and expressional skills.

> "There were some moments of discussion between women aspiring candidates about the language use, misuse of terms, lack of gender sensitivity towards LGBTI+ people, and references to sexist terms, descriptions and proverbs. Since women politicians are usually considered as more gender-sensitive and an entry point to discussing gender issues in politics, this finding underlines how far the efforts in this area needs to go to be able to achieve a wide-scale improvement."
>
> **Mid-term evaluation report of the project**

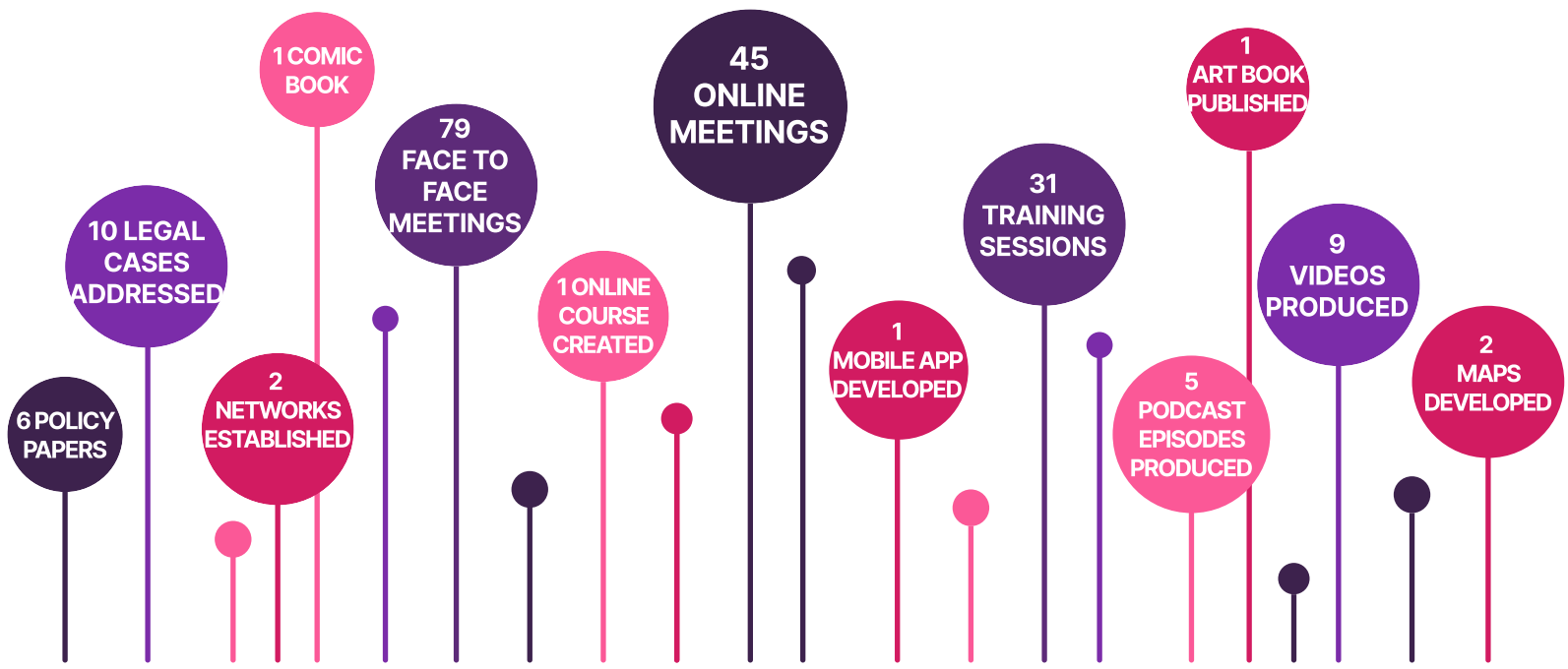
> "I was able to receive information that eliminated my technical infrastructure deficiency. Shares about concrete data and video production such as Canva, CapCut and Endeksa were very useful."
>
> **Participant from Ankara**

> "The one-on-one practice part was very good. It is a unique experience to have our speech evaluated immediately."
>
> **Participant from Gaziantep**

> "I really liked the media training provided. It allowed me to discover my communication skills and helped me evaluate my interpersonal relations."
>
> **Participant from Adana**

Another important finding of the project is that the women candidates stated that there are **blockages from their male colleagues** and from **female counterparts too**. Their efforts on fieldwork are always welcomed by their parties, however when they want to be in decision-making mechanisms, they indicate that they face resistance.

Over The Course Of 10 Months, The Subgrantees Carried Out The Following Activities



Most of the indicators were achieved with high rates, and a total of **7400** people directly benefited from these actions. The indirect beneficiaries is a total of **353.179** across all 21 projects.

In addition to the core activities implemented throughout the project, several publications and multimedia outputs were developed, generating significant multiplier effects. These include the creation and publication of a comic book, an art book, an online best practices map, and a series of 9 videos[8]—all made accessible online and available for future download.

Furthermore, the online course (How to Make Your Circle Feminist[9]) was launched on the Udemy platform under the Kız Başına channel, attracting approximately 15,000 enrolled learners to date. The project's visibility was further amplified through Kız Başına social media accounts, which garnered over 2 million views through project-related street interview videos.

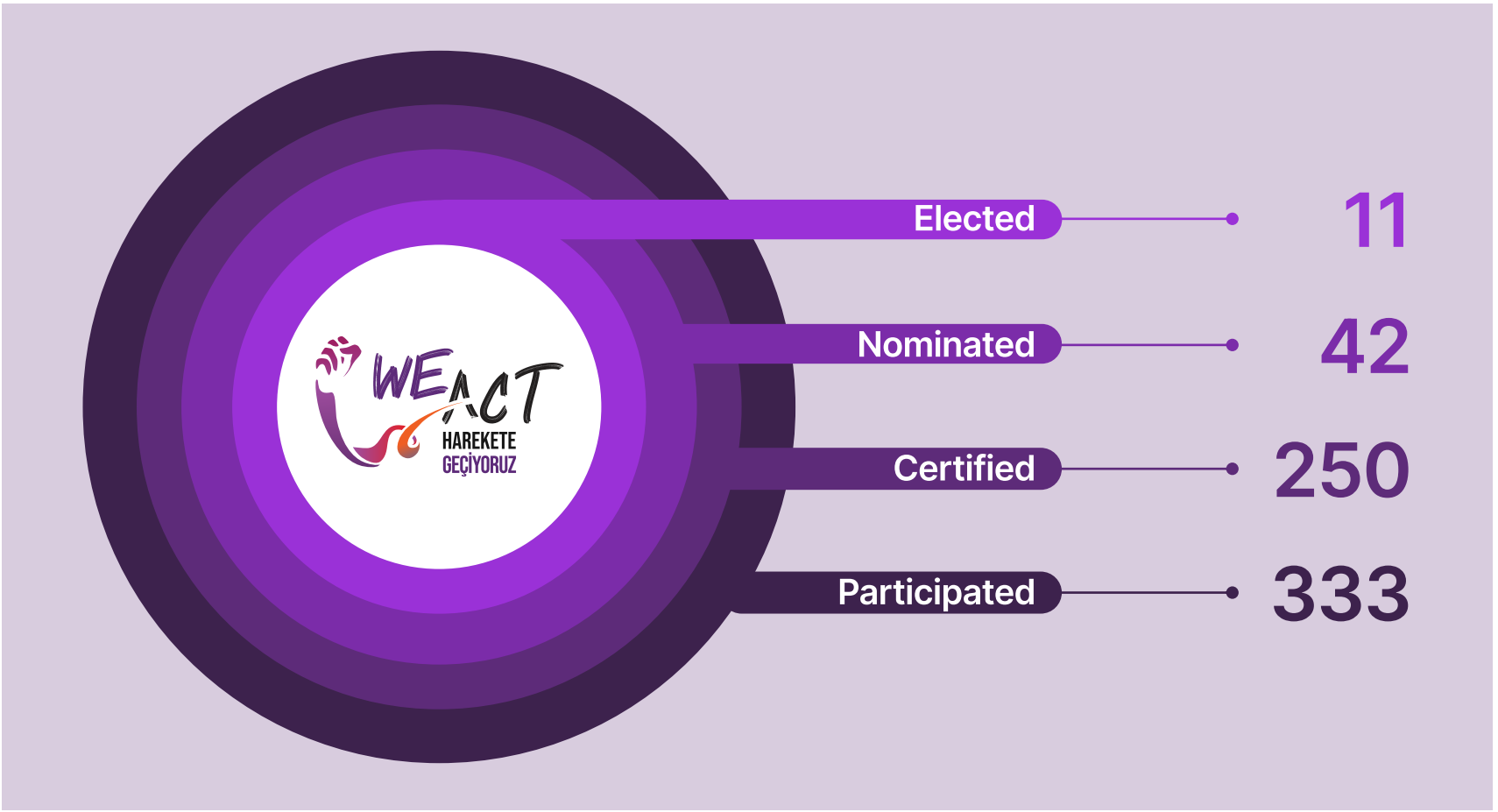
The dissemination strategy has demonstrably reached a broad and diverse audience, extending the project's impact beyond its initial scope. Additionally, two dedicated gender equality training modules were developed, tailored for specific fields. These modules are now available for future use by civil society organizations (CSOs) and local authorities, further enhancing the sustainability of the project's outcomes.

Overall, it can be concluded that the WE ACT project achieved substantial reach and impact, with added value through strategic dissemination and the creation of reusable educational content.

[8] https://youtu.be/nnYx_uVgdpk?si=JhG-InnghVpKhYoZ
[9] https://www.udemy.com/course/herkes-icin-feminizm/

SUCCESS STORIES OF WOMEN CANDIDATES

Throughout the initiative, one of the most striking aspects was the ideological and political diversity among the women candidates who took part. Participants came from a wide range of political parties and backgrounds -some from conservative, others from progressive movements- reflecting the broader polarization in Türkiye's political landscape. This diversity occasionally led to tensions and conflicts during the training sessions, particularly on sensitive topics such as gender roles, LGBTI+ rights, and secularism. However, rather than derailing the program, these moments became opportunities for dialogue, reflection, and empathy. The shared experience of being women navigating political spaces helped bridge these divides over time. What emerged was not uniformity, but mutual respect and a sense of solidarity grounded in the common challenges they faced as women in politics. These difficult yet transformative encounters underscore the project's added value -not only in building individual capacity, but also in fostering democratic dialogue across political lines.



According to the United Nations Global SDG Database, prior to the recent local elections held in March 2024, Turkey had the lowest percentage of seats held by women in local governments [Indicator 5.5.1 (b), a global SDC sub-indicator for UNECE countries], 10.1%, among 46 countries with latest available data[10]. Despite pre-election polling and the divisive atmosphere following the 2023 general elections, women sent a powerful message of democratic resilience in Türkiye's 2024 local elections. Most notably, the number of women as provincial mayors rose from 4 to 11 with many of them relatively young or new to politics, and there was a 90% increase in women's representation compared to local elections in 2019. Among the 14,110 individuals who ran for metropolitan, provincial, and district mayor positions in the 2024 local elections, only 1,624 were women - representing just 11.51% of the total candidates.

[10] https://w3.unece.org/SDG/en/Indicator?id=141

During the WE ACT project, 333 women participated in the training, 250 were trained by following the entire programme and 42 were on the official candidate list and got nominated for 2024 local elections in Türkiye (7 as mayor, 20 as municipal council members and 15 mukhtar candidates). The WE ACT project proudly celebrated the election of 11 of its women participants.

Name and Surname	Province	District	Neighbourhood	Position Elected To
Aysun Kuru	İzmir	Karşıyaka	-	Municipality Council Member
Ceren Benli	Gaziantep	Şehitkamil	-	Municipality Council Member
Cevahir Yıldız	Adana	Yüreğir	-	Municipality Council Member
Duygu Atikaslan Ayçe	Adana	Seyhan	-	Municipality Council Member
Elif Öztürk Kaygısız	Sinop	Gerze	-	Municipality Council Member
Nurgül Doğan	Gaziantep	Şahinbey	-	Municipality Council Member
Mine Donma	Adana	Çukurova	Bozcalar	Mukhtar
Nazife Tuzlar Elaldı	Adana	Seyhan	Yeşiloba	Mukhtar
Nurten Sağlam	Van	İpekyolu	Bahçıvan	Mukhtar
Selma Kaman	Ankara	Yenimahalle	Batı Sitesi	Mukhtar
Suna Kotan	Van	Edremit	Erdemkent	Mukhtar

Table 2: *List of women who have participated in WE ACT Training Program were elected as municipal council members and mukhtars in the 31 March 2024 Local Elections in Turkey.*

Trained through WE ACT, these women overcame significant challenges to win public office across seven regions of Türkiye. Their successes spanned the country -from determined candidates in Southeastern Anatolia, to others winning city council and muhtar seats in bustling western cities and small towns alike.

Ayşe Tayakısı's journey exemplifies the frustration many skilled women professionals face when entering politics. With thirty years of experience as a civil engineer in state employment, she found herself constrained by Law No. 657 on Civil Servants, which paradoxically places civil servants "in the middle of politics while telling us 'you can never engage in politics yourself.'" Despite warnings and the realization that "politics wasn't a place for genuine relationships," Ayşe persisted. **"With our projects, education, equipment, and life experiences," she declared, "I say WE EXIST and you MUST SEE US."** Her determination shows how women are transforming professional expertise into political capital, despite institutional obstacles.

Politics also called to women seeking systemic change aligned with their values. Özlem Bozkaya felt politically adrift until finding a party whose principles aligned perfectly with her ideology. Despite facing threats from male candidates, harassment, and economic pressure, she persevered with a clear mission: **"My only goal in politics is to return our homeland, the Turkish State, to the Turkish Nation."** Her experiences demonstrate how women across the ideological spectrum are breaking barriers, united in their determination to shape the country's future despite opposition.

Gülhan Akyol, who ran as a mayoral candidate for İzmir Menderes, discovered unexpected benefits from the diversity within the WE ACT program itself: **"When I began my training, I met women candidates from different parties across a wide spectrum. My enthusiasm increased, I started experiencing a change in vision, a change in perspective, and learned how to further develop myself, what else we, as women, could do differently. All the candidates I met helped me grow."** Her experience highlights a crucial aspect of women's political advancement, the power of cross-partisan networks and shared learning, even among women with different political views. The WE ACT project created spaces where ideological differences became secondary to the shared experience of being women in politics.

Gamzegül Kızılcık Aykanat expressed the transformative vision driving many women in politics: "I think we should enter politics and properly clean up this masculine political scene. I believe that an individual start is necessary for general change and improvement... hope follows a contagious and expansionist policy, and I also know that **we are not as few and alone as we feel.**" This approach shows how women are not only succeeding in politics but also redefining its nature.

Despite their diverse backgrounds and political affiliations, these trailblazing women faced **similar obstacles**:

- Institutional barriers including restrictive laws, particularly for civil servants
- Economic constraints that requires many to cut back on kitchen expenses to continue their journey
- Gender-based skepticism where constituents and colleagues sought male counterparts
- Direct opposition through poster vandalization, social media harassment, and threats
- Media exclusion, limiting their visibility and voice

Their success despite these challenges makes their achievements even more remarkable. As one candidate put it: **"First we fight only for being a woman, then we fight for our rivals in elections."**[11].

[11] https://daktilo1984.com/yazar/we-act-projesi/

Each story stands as a testament to extraordinary resilience[12], courage, and dedication. By overcoming obstacles, these newly elected leaders also broke new ground for regional representation in local governance. Their inspirational achievements underscore the transformative impact of the WE ACT program and the mission to empower women in politics.

The majority of women who were part of WE ACT Program elected as municipal council members and mukhtars have continued to advocate for gender equality and have started to transform municipalities and mukhtarships they were elected to. For the first time in the history of both Yüreğir[13] and Seyhan[14] Municipalities in Adana, the municipalities have committed to adopt and implement local equality action plans (YEEP). Moreover, In September 2024, Yüreğir Municipality became the 71st municipality in Turkey signing the The European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life (CEMR)[15]. Only in one year, Karşıyaka Municipality in İzmir has opened its second Women Counseling Center providing psychosocial and legal services[16].

Some of the women who were candidates for nomination but were not nominated in the end for March 2024 Local Elections, have continued their political journey and taken important leadership positions. For example, Hazal Mintaş [who was a candidate for nomination for Kadıköy (Istanbul) Municipality Council] was elected as Vice-President of Women's Branch of CHP in August 2024[17]. One of the youngest participants of WE ACT's Training Program, [who was a candidate for nomination for Gaziemir (İzmir) Municipality Council] received the award of 'inspiring and promising politician of the year' from İzmir Union of Women's Institutions[18].

These stories, rooted in diverse regions, ideologies, and life experiences, reflect not only individual triumphs but a broader democratic awakening. The WE ACT program empowered women to claim their space in public life, often in the face of deeply entrenched political, economic, and cultural barriers. What makes these stories remarkable is not just that these women were elected -but that they are now transforming the institutions they joined. By taking on leadership roles within their parties and communities, they are reshaping what political leadership looks like. Their collective success reveals that inclusive, cross-party, rights-based empowerment programs do more than prepare candidates —they nurture a generation of women who redefine political culture, bridge divides, and bring democracy closer to the people it is meant to serve.

[12] Yerelde Kadın Aklı - YouTube
[13] https://yuregir.bel.tr/yuregirin-esitlik-yol-haritasi-olusturuldu/
[14] https://seyhan.bel.tr/upload/meclis-kararlari/2024_Aralik.pdf
[15] https://www.tbb.gov.tr/Tr/icerik_cemr-avrupa-yerel-yasamda-kadin-erkek-esitligi-sarti_304
[16] https://www.egedesonsoz.com/karsiyakada-ikinci-kadin-danisma-merkezi-hizmete-acildi
[17] https://artigercek.com/politika/chp-kadin-kollari-baskani-asu-kaya-secildi-313330h
[18] https://www.yeniufuk.com.tr/izmir-de-isildayan-genc-siyasetcilere-odul-84654-haber/

BEST PRACTICES FROM THE SUB-GRANTING PROGRAM

The project applications were based on these two main questions:

- How can we empower women and LGBTI+ as active actors in policy making and community building?
- How would women and LGBTI+ empower themselves ?

Later starting the program, as a result of the financial and social crisis, the Turkish civil society has been faced with challenges and four of the subgrantees had to withdraw from the program due to financial and human resources problems, which reflects the challenges currently experienced by civil society organisations in Turkey.

Therefore, the subgranting program played a crucial role in Türkiye's current context, where women's empowerment is increasingly marginalized and gender equality is often overlooked; by directly supporting grassroots initiatives, it ensured that critical, community-based efforts for inclusion and equality could continue to thrive despite a shrinking civic space. For the acknowledgement of the projects' best practices, this chapter presents them under **three key themes;**

INNOVATION FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

- Global Equality And Inclusion Network Association
- Barrier-Free Life Association
- Çaplı Foundation (Just A Girl)
- Liberty Law Tolerance Association
- Roof Coliving
- Dicle Firat Journalists Association
- Equality And Truth Studies Association

CAPACITY BUILDING FOR GENDER EQUALITY

- Buldan Foundation
- Women Self-Defence Association
- Limited And Liable Karabük Working Women Production And Business Cooperative (KABUK)
- Civil Society Research Association
- Innovation, Entrepreneurship, Education And Research Association
- Van Hearing-Impaired And Families Association
- İstanbul Economic Research Association

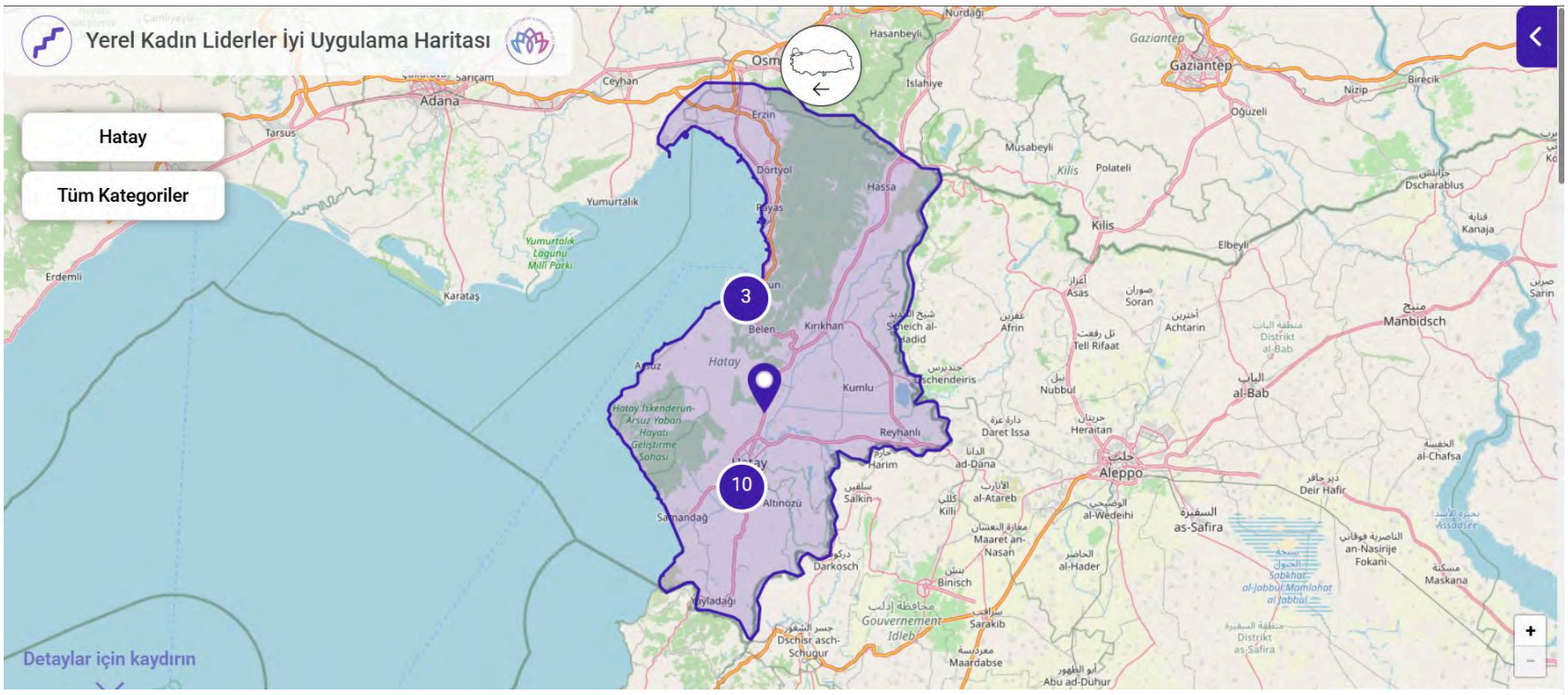
SOCIAL IMPACT AND INCLUSION

- Association For Access To Fair Trial Rights
- Women Employers And Industrialists Association
- We Need To Talk Association
- Women's Solidarity Foundation
- Social Policy, Gender Identity And Sexual Orientation Studies Association
- Yalova Russian Speaking People Association
- Hope Women Solidarity Association

INNOVATION FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Innovation for Women Empowerment demonstrates how creative and inclusive approaches can advance gender equality in diverse and impactful ways. From digital education platforms and participatory urban design to multilingual awareness campaigns and media advocacy, these initiatives reflect a strong commitment to reaching underserved communities and reshaping traditional power dynamics. By introducing new tools, perspectives, and methods for engagement, each project not only responds to immediate needs but also builds sustainable pathways for women's empowerment in Türkiye's evolving socio-political landscape.

GLOBAL EQUALITY AND INCLUSION NETWORK ASSOCIATION



After the 6th of February earthquake, the Turkish society created solidarity networks to support each other in that time of crisis. Especially the women leaders in the disaster zone showcased exemplary bravery to sustain their communities. Recognizing the importance of documenting and amplifying these efforts, the association developed an online platform to showcase best practices led by women. This project is particularly significant as it highlights the transformative role of women in crisis response and recovery, ensuring their visibility in policy and public discourse at a time when gender equality is increasingly at risk in Türkiye.

BARRIER-FREE LIFE ASSOCIATION



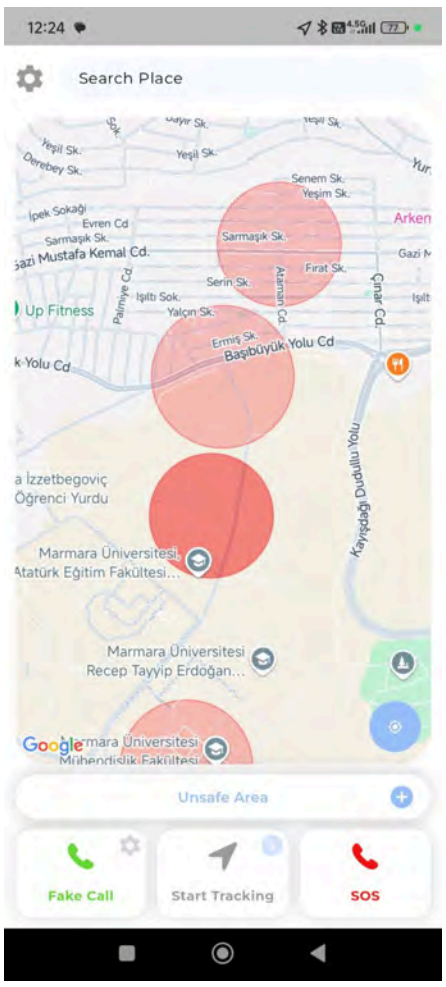
They provided several training sessions for women with disabilities strengthening their capacity on participatory mechanisms and digital tools. They also connected with the local governments, and learned alternative ways for participation in the decision making process. A powerful outcome of this initiative was the election of the association's chairperson to the city council, exemplifying how inclusive empowerment strategies can translate into tangible political representation and lasting impact.

ÇAPLI FOUNDATION (JUST A GIRL)



"Just a Girl", already counting on half a million followers on their social media accounts, it has an online training page on Udemy. They have published a special course named "Feminism for all!": it defines the feminist ideology, but also highlights the importance of women leadership in the changemaking process. This course is accessible to the whole country, therefore representing valuable resources to any Turkish person who would like to access more training on the topic. It stands out as a best practice for its innovative use of digital platforms to normalize feminist discourse and reach large, diverse audiences across Türkiye, particularly in a climate where gender equality is often misrepresented or ignored.

LIBERTY LAW TOLERANCE ASSOCIATION





The project is the second phase of a mobile application; the beta version of the "We are here!" app was completed with the support of WE ACT. The application was built up on the idea to make streets safer for women and LGBTI+ people. Istanbul and Ankara are already covered by the application, and any person not feeling secure about a street can open it and check its degree of safety for women and LGBTI+ people to walk through it. Thanks to this application, valuable information can be shared especially for the benefit of vulnerable groups, helping them reclaim their right to free movement in the cities without fear.

ROOF COLIVING



This best practice emerged from the experiences of women domestic workers who, for the first time in their lives, had the opportunity to take part in designing their neighbourhood. Following a series of walks through their everyday routes, a workshop was held in which they collaboratively redesigned these spaces based on their needs. Their active participation in the urban design process culminated in the presentation of the proposed designs to the municipality. Women domestic workers are often forgotten actors when it comes to the fight for gender equality, and their specific experience must be taken into account to ensure inclusiveness. This initiative is recognized as a best practice for centering the voices of one of the most marginalized groups in urban planning and demonstrating how inclusive design can be a tool for empowerment and visibility.

DICLE FIRAT JOURNALISTS ASSOCIATION



The association interviewed six journalist women that work in media outlets to share their experiences of being a woman in one of the most challenging professions in Türkiye, facing discrimination because of their backgrounds. The journalists are prominent and vital for a functioning democracy, and especially in media language there is a strong need to shift away from toxic narratives. This project is showcasing the working conditions of journalists, highlighting gender inequality in the sector, and suggesting new policies to adapt to protect the profession as a pillar of democracy. It is considered a best practice for amplifying women's voices in the media sector and advocating for structural change in a field essential to democratic resilience.

EQUALITY AND TRUTH STUDIES ASSOCIATION



The association prepared videos for women that speak Turkish and Kurdish on participatory mechanisms in local governments, gender equality, public aid and support mechanisms, and what to do when facing violence. To realize the project, the association prepared a literature review on these subjects from the experiences of the women, and created a script to disseminate the information. These videos are meant to support any Turkish and Kudish-speaking individual living in the country who is missing valuable information to access their rights to participation. This initiative is recognized as a best practice for its inclusive, multilingual approach to rights-based education and for addressing information gaps that disproportionately affect marginalized women.

CAPACITY BUILDING FOR GENDER EQUALITY

Capacity Building for Gender Equality features impactful initiatives aimed at equipping women and marginalized groups with the knowledge, skills, and confidence needed to navigate and challenge structural inequalities. From rural gender equality education and digital empowerment, to economic skill-building, mental resilience, and political mentorship, each best practice reflects a tailored approach to strengthening individual and collective agency. These projects go beyond technical training -they create safe, inclusive spaces for learning, foster peer support, and promote long-term change through local ownership and multiplier effects. Whether by reaching underserved rural women, NEET and LGBTI+ youth, or refugee communities, these initiatives show how capacity building can become a powerful tool for social inclusion and systemic transformation.

BULDAN FOUNDATION



Buldan is a rural area of the city of Denizli in the Aegean region. The Foundation worked with the university and developed a special course for gender equality for women that live in rural areas of Türkiye. 93 people from the region participated in the training. To increase the impact of the project, they organized a Training of Trainers, allowing participants to multiply the effect of the project and share their knowledge with their own communities. This initiative was selected as a best practice for its sustainable, community-based approach to capacity building, ensuring long-term impact through local ownership and peer learning in underrepresented rural areas.

WOMEN SELF-DEFENCE ASSOCIATION



The project aimed to empower young women in gender equality themes, but most importantly it contributed for them to increase their capacity in digital tools like digital activism, such as law, art, education, politics and media. The digital forum that organized for their project also created a digital community for the young women to share experiences. This is a best practice because it ensures that the women not only learned valuable digital skills but also had a platform for continued growth and shared support.

LIMITED AND LIABLE KARABÜK WORKING WOMEN PRODUCTION AND BUSINESS COOPERATIVE (KABUK)



They provided pasta and pie making courses for the economically disadvantaged women located in Karabük, to strengthen their economic capacity, as the cooperative itself provides jobs to these women. KABUK also provided courses on increasing self-esteem and on coping with anxiety. For the women participating in this project it was important to come together as there isn't any other space for it in their context. They cooked together, they learned together and they produced together. It doubled the impact of the project as it also contributed to community building.

CIVIL SOCIETY STUDIES ASSOCIATION

The association designed a three-month training program for NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) and LGBTI+ youth, featuring sessions on mental empowerment, resilience, CV preparation, labor law, communication, and conflict resolution. As the term NEET is not widely recognized in Türkiye, the project played a key role in raising awareness around the concept and contributed to the formation of a supportive community -particularly for young LGBTI+ individuals who face discrimination.

INNOVATION, ENTREPRENEURSHIP, EDUCATION AND RESEARCH ASSOCIATION



Mukhtar

The association provided mentoring sessions for women mukhtars elected in 2024 local elections. The sessions contributed to the actual actions of the mukhtars and their future plans and ideas. As the mukhtar role is often women's first and most accessible entry point into politics and allows them to experience community-based leadership.

İSTANBUL ECONOMIC RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

This association provided the Syrian refugee women that live in the Sultanbeyli neighbourhood of Istanbul the necessary tools for economic development and psychosocial training to support them in the challenges of their daily lives. The training program intertwined sessions on migration, gender equality, psychology, and economy, introducing the basis of the concepts together with the relation with the daily lives of those women, and as well how to manage these challenges when they face it.

VAN HEARING-IMPAIRED AND FAMILIES ASSOCIATION



The project focused on creating a safe and inclusive environment for women with hearing and visual impairments, as well as for undocumented Afghan women. This project serves as a best practice in fostering strong inter-community relations around the issue of gender equality.

SOCIAL IMPACT AND INCLUSION

Social Impact and Inclusion widens social impact in the community to increase the chances for the dialogue, social acceptance and civic involvement are the key actions to increase participation and societal change. In this section, the activities are directed to for people in vulnerable situations to support them with mechanisms such as capacity building programs designed especially for the groups' needs, secure environment, and consultations with the health professionals.

ASSOCIATION FOR ACCESS TO FAIR TRIAL RIGHTS



A legal network for LGBTI+ people can create a butterfly impact in all sections of the society. It can change perceptions, and increase tolerance in small communities. This association achieves this by giving legal consultancy for free for the LGBTI+ people in one of the most difficult regions in Türkiye, and creates a safe space for their clients on a pro-bono basis. By providing free legal consultancy, this initiative plays a crucial role in creating safe spaces for LGBTI+ people and driving broader societal change through justice and visibility.

WOMEN EMPLOYERS AND INDUSTRIALISTS ASSOCIATION



The Association, at first, developed a gender equality training especially for men that work in industrial zones in Türkiye. Industrial zones are technical business areas that are typically male-dominated and often unwelcoming to women, that's why it was important to reach them out and include them into the narratives. Reaching men in male-dominated industrial zones, this project stands out for challenging entrenched gender norms where change is most needed but least expected.

WE NEED TO TALK ASSOCIATION



Championing menstrual health for a decade, within the sub-granting program this association had reached more than 300 women in disaster zones to explain the basics of women menstrual health. They specifically targeted refugees, seasonal workers, and women from vulnerable communities, organising as well training sessions for CSOs professionals working in disaster zones to increase the impact of the project. Focusing on menstrual health education in disaster-affected and underserved communities, this initiative breaks taboos while equipping women and CSOs with life-changing, practical knowledge.

WOMEN'S SOLIDARITY FOUNDATION



During the project, 6 art workshops were organized with migrant women in Istanbul and women from Hatay who were impacted deeply by the 6th of February earthquake. These women not only participated in these workshops but also rewrote the fairytales with a feminist perspective by challenging the "unchangeable." The project contributed to shifting narratives of the stories that have been told for ages, giving hope for the women that are in extremely vulnerable situations to change the world.

SOCIAL POLICY, GENDER IDENTITY AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION STUDIES ASSOCIATION



Amid recent constitutional debates, concerns have intensified regarding the potential deterioration of conditions for LGBTI+ people. In response, the association established a network of LGBTI+ rights CSOs to develop a strategic approach to counter emerging discriminatory narratives. The strategy focuses on directly engaging decision-makers through advocacy visits to Members of Parliament (MPs). As a result, the network successfully held meetings with MPs from across the whole political spectrum, ranging from center-right to left. This effort is especially impactful for mobilizing LGBTI+ CSOs into a unified advocacy network that directly engages lawmakers across the political spectrum, amplifying their collective voice at a critical time.

YALOVA RUSSIAN SPEAKING PEOPLE ASSOCIATION



This association started a Business Turkish Course for the Russian speaking women in Yalova: More than a language course, it included sessions on business Turkish, CV preparation, and job interviews. At the end of the language courses, as an indicator of success of the project five women found jobs in local businesses. The project also contributed to the foundation of a community in the Yalova region.



Some women had previously never left their homes; through the project, they had the opportunity to visit key landmarks in Yalova and socialize with other Russian-speaking women. This also made their children also meet up as they are also struggling to integrate with the local community and feel otherized. It combined language learning with social and economic integration, empowering isolated women and building a supportive migrant community.

HOPE WOMEN SOLIDARITY ASSOCIATION



In Gaziantep, Syrian Women Network held a workshop to introduce international conventions and develop gender policies for associations that work on women rights in an intersectional approach, including women who are experiencing being a refugee or migrant, a seasonal agricultural worker, or living in a rural area. This initiative is notable for its intersectional approach, uniting women's organizations to co-create inclusive gender policies that reflect the realities of refugee, migrant, rural, and seasonal worker communities.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, the WE ACT project with its wide public reach had the opportunity to collect ideas, recommendations, and future projections in regards to local participation, inclusiveness, and civic engagement in Türkiye.

These ideas and recommendations were the result of 30 months of work, more than 335 hours of training for candidate women, more than 100 hours of training for CSOs representatives, more than 10 hours of coaching sessions, and 21 grassroot projects. It shows how inclusive the project was, with strong participation and a broad spectrum of opinions represented.

In the light of these achievements, the project results are;

- The project successfully brought together women from diverse political ideologies and cultural backgrounds, fostering cross-party dialogue and mutual support. This helped build solidarity among women who are often isolated in their political journeys.
- Local CSOs were equipped not only with technical tools but also with the ability to engage meaningfully with elected officials, advocating for gender and LGBTIQ+ rights in their communities.
- Through events, media appearances, and published content, the project contributed to the discussions about the importance of women's political participation and gender equality.
- Women candidates gained experiences in media visibility, professional campaign materials, and public speaking. The project showed that training programs on these subjects were pretty much lacking and inaccessible for women.
- Both formal training and informal events created safe environments where women could exchange experiences, build confidence, and develop strategies to overcome gender-based political barriers.
- By supporting local micro-projects tailored to regional needs, the initiative promoted community-led solutions, amplified marginalized voices, and sparked localized activism in areas traditionally underrepresented.
- Several participants have been elected or integrated into decision-making platforms, and had the chance to directly influence local governance from a gender-inclusive perspective.

Women empowerment plays a vital role in achieving **sustainable goals** and **community building** to support decentralization and local democracy. The WE ACT project showcases that **local networks** are the main pillars for learning, capacity building, and meaningful civic engagement. By bringing together diverse and previously unconnected people, the project assisted to build bridges among citizens that are polarized by the misunderstandings, and to help a culture of democracy at the grassroots level flourish.

Gender equality not only tackles inequality in gender related issues; it also promotes **mutual understanding**, equal access for people in **vulnerabilities**, and **safe and just** environments. That's why achieving gender equality brings justice in every aspect of life, even contributing to **peacebuilding** efforts.

Bearing this in mind, the WE ACT project proposes the following **recommendations to the European Union:**

- The European Union shall increase its efforts on impacting small communities and supporting their struggles by using innovative tools and approaches; i.e. strategic mapping before implementation or selection processes, simulation workshops, role playing, and other tools that increase participation.
- Achieving gender equality for a sustainable peacebuilding can be the main component in development strategies.
- Civil society shall be supported by new granting schemes that can generate acceleration in assisting essential needs of civil society for democratization.
- Women politicians should be supported not only before the election process, but also after or in case they do not get elected, to ensure the sustainability of their motivation and efforts for future elections.

The WE ACT project results also give following **suggestions to the Committee on Equal Opportunity for Women and Men of the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye;**

- Political parties promote gender equality by using methods like quotas, but they don't promote capacity building programs for women to remove hidden obstacles for them. The Committee can assess and present the needs of women candidates and women politicians to increase participation of women and achieve gender equality.
- The Committee should support initiatives that promote equal opportunities for women and men in politics to increase women engagement in decision-making mechanisms.
- The Committee should explore ways to build connections with young women in politics by, for example, providing access to mentorship or coaching opportunities.
- The Committee should promote gender equality in local governments such as women mukhtars, and women councillors in municipalities.

Finally, the WE ACT project propose a series of recommendations for national level policy-makers, think-tanks and civil society organizations;

- Economic empowerment efforts can directly contribute to the participation and inclusion of women and LGBTI+ people in vulnerable situations.
- Democracy, etymologically, means "people's rule". To accomplish this, inclusion of all voices is essential which can be supported by safe environments to start a community based dialogue.
- Women community leaders should be assisted and supported in their initiatives by acknowledging their efforts and increasing their visibility to the wider public.
- Enhancing meaningful social impact is the primary role of decision-makers. To achieve this, new programs should be developed and capacity building sessions should be organized.
- Experience sharing and its visibility in the media should be facilitated by the decision-maker to acknowledge the efforts and disseminate the correct information.

The WE ACT project has made significant strides in advancing gender equality, participatory democracy, and women's political leadership across Türkiye. Yet, as the project concludes, we are more aware than ever that many steps remain ahead. The courage, creativity, and determination shown by the women candidates, civil society actors, and journalists we have met are both humbling and inspiring. We hope that this handbook not only preserves their stories but also fuels future efforts to dismantle invisible barriers, bridge divides, and amplify voices still unheard. Our aspiration is to see more inclusive institutions, better representation, and genuine equality as the cornerstone of democratic life. We wish continued strength and success to all those who carry this vision forward -especially the women and NGOs who have turned adversity into action and commitment into change.



WE ACTed together — for change, democracy and equality.

Thank You For Taking The Time To Explore The Journey With Us.