

Women's Empowerment Activities of Non-Governmental Organizations in Türkiye: Refugee and Local Women's Triple Role

Türkiye'deki Sivil Toplum Kuruluşlarının Kadını Güçlendirme Faaliyetleri: Mülteci ve Yerel Kadınların Üçlü Rolü

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ABSTRACT

Objective: Development is an essential concept of social and economic progress. In Türkiye, non-governmental organisations contribute to development and empowerment through their activities. The aim of this research is to respond to "What are the alterations caused by NGOs empowerment activities in the field of development of refugee and local women's triple role in society after the 2011 Syrian crisis?"

Method: This research article employed qualitative methodology with semi-structured face-to-face and online interviews. The interviewer was selected from 10 NGOs officers between the ages of 24-35 who graduated from social sciences and humanities and had at least 2 years' experience working in the social cohesion, livelihoods, and protection units of NGOs.

Results: The findings reveal that NGOs empowerment activities that considered "class and gender," "community participation," and "social cohesion, as concepts have effects on refugee and local women's triple role in society after the 2011 Syrian Crisis.

Conclusion: Development policies and NGOs activities have an important role in the civil society. It enhances women status in the society. Additionally, NGOs' activities that focused on women's empowerment and women's strategic life choices (resources, agency, and success), have positive impacts women's triple roles.

Keywords: Development, empowerment, refugee women, women, women empowerment

ÖZ

Amaç: Kalkınma, sosyal ve ekonomik ilerlemenin temel bir kavramıdır. Türkiye'de sivil toplum kuruluşları faaliyetleriyle kalkınmaya ve güçlenmeye katkı sağlamaktadır. Bu araştırmanın amacı "2011 Suriye krizi sonrasında mülteci ve yerel kadının toplumdaki üçlü rolünün geliştirilmesi alanında STK'ların güçlendirme çalışmalarının yarattığı değişiklikler nelerdir?" sorusuna cevap vermektir.

Yöntem: Bu araştırma makalesinde yarı yapılandırılmış yüz yüze ve çevrimiçi görüşmelerle nitel metodoloji kullanılmıştır. Görüşmeciler, sosyal bilimler mezunu, STK'ların sosyal uyum,geçim ve koruma birimlerinde en az 2 yıl çalışmış, 24-35 yaş arası 10 farklı STK yetkilisi arasından seçilmiştir.

Bulgular: Bulgular, STK'ların "sınıf ve cinsiyet", "toplum katılım" ve "sosyal uyum" kavramlarını dikkate alarak yürüttükleri güçlendirme faaliyetlerinin, 2011 Suriye Krizi sonrasında mülteci ve yerel kadınların toplumdaki üçlü rolü üzerinde etkili olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır.

Sonuç: Kalkınma politikaları ve STK faaliyetleri sivil toplumda önemli bir role sahiptir. Kadınların toplumdaki statüsünü iyileştirir. Ek olarak, STK'ların kadınların güçlendirilmesine ve kadınların stratejik yaşam tercihlerine (kaynaklar, temsiliyet ve başarı) odaklanan faaliyetleri, kadınların üçlü rolleri üzerinde olumlu etkilere sahiptir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Güçlendirme, kadın, kadınların güçlendirilmesi, kalkınma, mülteci kadınlar



Introduction

Following the devastating ending of World War II, developing and underdeveloped countries integrated their economies with interventionist policies focused on development. These interventionist development policies are the reason for perceiving development as a tool of industrialization and modernization for developed and underdeveloped countries nowadays.

In 1960 and 1970, development was one of the most powerful tools of economic progress, export growth, and social state policy for underdeveloped and developing countries that had been trying to industrialize (Chang, 2003). Following the next decade, gender issues became more industrialization, and development policies' focus changed. Therefore, "women in development", "women and development", and "gender and development" concepts were derived. Development and empowerment studies were shaped around these concepts in developing and underdeveloped countries. This change also affected NGOs' activities which were focused on gender and social cohesion in Turkiye aim to build social and economic independence of local and refugee women that facilitate freeing them from multiple forms of oppression such as tradition, family, and social norms.

This research emphasizes that women's triple roles with the gender and development approach: productive, reproductive, and community roles (Moser, 1989) should be considered for redefining women's status in society. In this sense this research was supported by interviews of ten different NGOs in Turkiye to answer this question; "What are the alterations caused by NGOs empowerment activities in the field of development of refugee and local women's triple role in the society after the 2011 Syrian crisis?" The remainder of this article is organized into four sections. First, I present a general literature review of development, development of civil society, and women empowerment. The second section I explain the data and methodology of the research. Third, I present the main result of the interviews. The final section contains concluding remarks.

Literature Review

Development has become a popular concept of a modern and powerful state (Ricz, 2020). It is a kind of social and economic transformation aligned with wealth (Yavilioğlu, 2002). Until today, there has not been an accepted international definition of development. Therefore, it is defined as progress, industrial development, growth, and economic and social progress

that indicates the presence of men and women in the labor market. Redistribute all of these definitions into strategies that rely on mobilizing the population for development, capitalizing on local opportunities through small-scale projects, and organizing the various groups in the community around effective institutions so that they (women and men) can articulate their demands, establish priorities, and collaborate for the common good (Stromquist, 1993). Alteration of daily practices and women's integration into the market changed women's involvement in the development process and policies. In this sense, Approaches to women's status in development are listed in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Approaches women's status in development

Concepts	Explanations	Reference
Women in Development	The focus of the approach is to only accept the productive role of women, which prioritizes traditional modernization and the linear progress of different social structures in society.	Boserup, Ester, Women's Role in Economic Development, Routledge, London,2007.
Women and Development	This approach emphasizes that women's integration into the economy is not just about working a paid job. It is about having an active part in the development process. Therefore, it argues that their labor inside and outside the home is a part of the economy.	Razavi, Shahrashoub, Miller, Carol, 'From WID to GAD: Conceptual Shifts in the Women and Development Discourse,' United Nations Research Institute for Social Development United Nations Development Program, 1995.
Gender and Development	The focus on the development of gender is, pointing out the importance of gender roles in social development as well as economic development.	Rathgeber, Eva M., "WID, WAD, GAD: Trends in Research and Practice", The Journal of Developing Areas,1990.

Women in Development focuses on the existence of women in the economic area. It advocates women's productive roles. The second idea, Women and Development, approaches that men are less affected than women by changes in the social structure, economic downturns, and class dynamics. However, gender and development support the acquisition of gender identities depending on the social and cultural structure. Biological differences have always been a reliable indicator of economic participation for males compared to women. As an idea, gender and development modernize production areas and empower women in society.

Development policies and activities have a crucial role in women's improvement. These have been represented by non-governmental organizations' activities at intersection points of "participation", "empowerment", and "social cohesion" in underdeveloped and developing countries (Davenport, 2005). Therefore, within non-governmental organization activities, women's strategic life choices that relate to freedom, and the decision-making process rather than economic empowerment of women became important. As Naile Kabeer mentioned in the diagram below, strategic life choices depend on women's status in the social structure, access to economic resources, and social mobility (Figure 1).

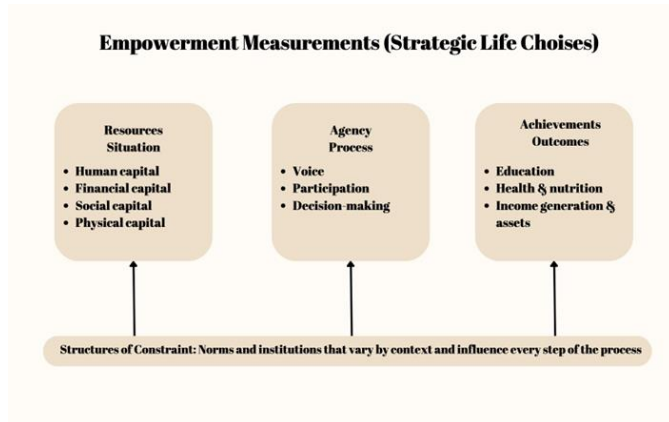


Figure 1. The diagram of the "empowerment criteria" conceptualization of Naile Kabeer (Glennester, 2018)

Women's social presence has a positive impact on decision-making and provides women more freedom to choose. These strategic choices have not remained a social commitment but affected each individual in society (Sen, 1999).

Nevertheless, social norms might have caused a crash between empowerment and free choice (Moghadam, 2007). Power relations in society are expressed not only through agency and choice as seen in the table above, but also through the resources available to women (Kabeer, 2002). The resources (situation) are not seen as a feature of empowerment but as a catalyst for agency (empowerment process). For example, many of the variables traditionally used for empowerment, such as productive reproductive and community roles can be better defined as influencing factors, resources, or empowerment resources.

Productive roles: Women's productive roles are defined as labor value in the market. Within this role women contribute household livelihood activities.

Reproductive roles: Biological reproduction, childbearing, and domestic labor are stated as a woman's reproductive role. Women undertake this care work unpaid.

Community roles: Women are public-free human resources physically and emotionally, they solve problems and contribute to the community voluntarily such as elder care, childcare, and housework.

These roles are derived from gender norms, and traditions without considering class, ethnicity, citizenship or refugee while political and legal dimensions tend to be combined at a fairly high level for all women in the country's social and economic dimensions (Narayan, 2005). As a facilitator of women's empowerment and development, non-governmental organizations operate development activities and provide services for enhancing women's status in the social and economic fields.

In this research, the scope of activities of non-governmental organization's impact on social and economic development, women's triple roles, and social harmony are accepted as a women's empowerment effort. Ten non-governmental organizations that are active in Turkiye were examined in terms of class, gender, community participation, and social cohesion to understand the impact on women's empowerment.

Method

The purpose of this research is to identify the contribution of non-governmental organizations which are working in the field of development, activities that focus on class and gender, community participation, and social cohesion impact on social economic empowerment. As mentioned above, this study is guided by the following research question: "What are the alterations caused by NGOs empowerment activities in the field of development of refugee and local women's triple role in the society after the 2011 Syrian crisis?"

A qualitative method was selected because it allows us to understand which activities interact with the parameters; class and gender, community participation, and social cohesion. One of the qualitative research methodologies used in the study was content analysis along with interviews. An important reason for using the interview technique is that feminist theorists, especially post-feminists, value it in studies on women's empowerment.

This research will use three methods- documentation, content analysis, and interview- as presented in Table 2.

For the selection of the sample, the purposeful sampling method was preferred. After the Syrian Crisis in 2011, the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) operations, activities for local and refugee women in economic and social empowerment which are common in Turkiye will be assessed in the research.

Ten NGOs were examined. Seven of the institutions were interviewed with semi-structured interview questions and three of them were sent documents after refusing interviews, and the documents were analyzed between November 2021 - February 2022. The interview transcripts are 87 pages. For this paper, all the quotations from Turkish and Arabic interviews have been translated into English. The interviews were conducted with participants between the ages of 24-35 who graduated from social sciences and humanities and had at least 2 years' experience working in the social cohesion, livelihoods, and protection units of NGOs with refugee and local women.

Results

Conceptually, women's projects in Turkey are inseparable from other projects carried out globally. The core ideas behind each of these initiatives are empowerment, efficiency, equality, welfare, and a reduction in poverty.

The international women's movement negotiates these core ideas. For example, women's empowerment emerged as the most sought-after goal of women's projects in the 1980s and 1990s, following the 1970s when these projects sought to promote equality between women and men (Baherirad, 2020).

While the number of civil society organizations in Turkiye was 88,007 in 2011, this number was 119,738 in 2020. After the mass migration most of the NGOs have begun work with refugee and local women's empowerment in the field of development regardless of class and ethnicity. The non-governmental organization employee, who has been a social worker in a non-governmental organization for 4 years after 2017, supports the differentiation:

"With the mass migration, the activities of the organizations which were cash delivery, in-kind assistance for emergency response have differentiated in 2017. The NGOs have started to provide services to refugees in health,

Table 2. Methods- documentation, content analysis and interview

Methods	Explanations
Documentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Permission from Ethic Committee - Information notes of research - Semi-structured interview questions
Content Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gender and women development reports - NGOs activities reports - Women empowerment projects
Interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interview with 10 NGOs - Foundation for the Support of Women's work (KEDV) & Oxfam, - International Blue Crescent Relief and Development Foundation (IBC), - Humanitarian Relief Foundation (IHH), - Red Crescent, - Support to Life, - United Nations Development Program (UNDP), - Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Immigrants (SGDD), - Refugees Association, - Human Resources Development Foundation (IKGV), - Mavi Kalem Social Assistance and Solidarity Association

legal, employment, livelihood management and education” (Social Worker, 26, Non-Governmental Organization Worker, Online, 2021).

Women's empowerment activities that support national and local development and the creation of safe spaces for women have enabled women to be active in development policies.

The purpose of this research was to identify the alterations that caused by NGOs empowerment activities in the field of development of refugee and local women's triple role in the society after the 2011 Syrian Crisis. Socialist feminism provides a theoretical basis for the gender and development approach. By considering the women's triple roles regarding the concepts of "class and gender," "community participation," and "social cohesion.", I confirmed with the answers given by the interviewees that the women's triple roles have a positive effect on women's empowerment in the NGOs' empowerment activities in the field of development in Turkiye, for example:

“Being economically independent or powerful is not enough for women as to stand on their own two feet independently. It's critical to realize oneself and form personal relationships in addition to achieving economic emancipation. At this point, women's solidarity centers become safe spaces for women” (Social Service Worker, 29, Non-Governmental Organization, Online, 2021).

Discussion

The discussion on women's empowerment in the field of development has been enhanced by feminist theories. The success of women's development and empowerment depend on recognition of women's triple roles in socioeconomic life (Moser, 1989).

Based on the literature the most relevant subject is 'women's triple roles' have been identified above as a part of women empowerment activities. Regarding the idea of gender and development, NGOs' activities on women's development has made it possible to talk about different types of social and economic oppression based on nationality, class, or ethnicity. From this context, the empowerment activities of non-governmental organizations encompass a wider range of topics, including social cohesion, community participation, and gender and class issues.

Class and Gender

The 4th World Women Conference emphasized on the roles of women who have racial, ethnic and class inequalities in society. Through this conference, the development of a class, gender-oriented empowerment factors were brought to the agenda. Socialist feminists, who advocate a gender perspective in development, have highlighted the necessity of evaluating women's reproductive and community roles together with the division of labor in the social sphere.

As an examined NGOs KEDV & Oxfam, highlighting women's triple roles in empowerment trainings:

“KEDV & Oxfam conducts empowerment programs and trainings to make women's domestic work from all class, visible outside the home and to increase awareness that it is a labour force rather than a duty” (Business Development Expert, 27, Non-Governmental Organisation, Face to face, 2021).

It is obvious that KEDV & Oxfam carry out their activities in accordance with Rowlands' concept of empowerment: 'awareness that it is necessary not only to access decision-making processes, but also to cultivate the impression that they are competent and capable'.

The other examined NGOs, IBC:

“IBC kept incorporating gender training and consulting services into her work and business endeavors in 2019, since reducing poverty is associated with women's early child marriages and accessing to education” (Social Worker, 25, Non-Governmental Organization Worker, Online, 2021).

IBC prioritizes social development in its gender-oriented approach to women's empowerment through its work with refugee women.

“The capacity for self-sufficiency exhibited by a woman is empowering” (Social Worker, 26, Non-Governmental Organization Worker, Online, 2021).

Women's empowerment includes the processes in the community are highlighted by the perspective that defines women's empowerment as the procedures by which taken charge of women's lives in terms of personal and human development.

Human Resources Development Foundation (IKGV), UNDP, ASAM, KEDV & Oxfam, IBC, Support to Life, Refugees Association, Mavi Kalem Social Assistance and Solidarity Association aim to empower women economically and socially through class and gender-oriented empowerment activities for refugee and local women. However, the Red Crescent, which was founded to conduct humanitarian aid-related activities similar to the Humanitarian Relief Foundation (IHH)'s activities, both have not taken gender equality for account when conducting its operations as an essential factor. For these two NGOs describe their operations 'people in need or needy-indigent people.'

Community Participation

Identifying women's needs by themselves effects women empowerments steps. As Oxaal and Baden (Baden, & Oxaal, 1997) stated that empowerment is a process that involves women's capacity to freely analyze and develop their own interests and demands, it cannot be limited to any particular actions or the results that follow. At this point, community participation is important for women to discover their needs and capacity.

"In our trainings, we prioritize the ideas women empowerment and equality. Our training focus on gender equality in the social realm, within a participative manner that have learned about women's own discourses" (Social Worker, 25, Non-Governmental Organisation, Online, 2021).

Providing interactive trainings that will enhance women personal empowerment has a positive impact on the calibre of their job and promote local development "from bottom to up." Contrarily, as an examined organization, the UNDP, an organization that supports local development, is shaped by the Building Resilience through Improving Employment Opportunities and Strengthening Social Cohesion for Syrian and Host Communities Project without assessing the needs of the women, community, and refugees.

The employee of the non-governmental organization stated that the work embraced by women is more permanent in the field:

"The fact that women are involved in every stage of the project work increases the sustainability of the projects" (Field Officer, 28, Non-Governmental Organization, Online, 2021).

As an examined NGO Support to Life gives built-in, limited space to community participation:

"Throughout 2019, we conducted all our work by adhering to humanitarian standards and encouraging community engagement. We provided protection, education, mental health, psychosocial assistance, social cohesion, and local rights activities for refugees. Members of the community helped us identify and carry out our activities." (Support to Life, Activity reports, 2019).

Community participation-oriented empowerment activities help to transform women's social position.

Social Cohesion

The Red Crescent, ASAM, Refugees Association, Humanitarian Relief Foundation, Human Resources Development Foundation (IKGV), KEDV & OXFAM, IBC, Mavi Kalem, Support to Life and UNDP focus their activities on social cohesion with refugees and local women by giving priority to local development.

IBC, ASAM and UNDP implement gender equality-oriented projects.

"Women's common challenges treated in the studies for social and economic development, promote social cohesion or women's empowerment. We have increased our efforts in this direction in the Social Cohesion Strategy Document and we learned that women face common issues but lack a safe space to discuss them" (Social Service Worker, 32, Non-Governmental Organization, Online, 2021).

Foundation for the Support of Women's work (KEDV) & Oxfam, Support to Life both in their works by giving women's community management positions priority, have highlighted their potential without diminishing the role of women as producers and reproducers within the framework of gender and class.

Social Assistance and Solidarity Association, Refugees Association and Human Resources Development Foundation (Human Resources Development Foundation (IKGV) have been setting up safe spaces for women's empowerment as a top priority since they were founded. They used solidarity centers to conduct empowerment initiatives.

The Red Crescent and Humanitarian Relief Foundation have started to carry out activities for the social and economic empowerment of refugee women, mainly after

the mass migration from Syria. The interviews indicate that, Humanitarian Relief Foundation (IHH) does not use the concepts of gender and class in the field of women's empowerment and does not include the women's triple roles in social and economic empowerment activities in accordance with its mission.

As a result of this research, the empowerment studies carried out in the field of development are contingent upon women's roles in the public and private realms expanding and improving. The work of non-governmental organizations has an impact on and modifies women's social status, as per their implementation processes.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Following the World War II, non-governmental NGOs implemented women empowerment programs, had a strengthening effect on women's agency in the community as well as social and economic empowerment of women.

As stated above, women in development support the idea that women should engage economic life. However, women and development, gender and development contexts are interested in women status in society.

These approaches that concerned women empowerment and gender equality enhanced the development vision of developing and underdeveloped countries (Chant & Sweetman, 2012).

Women's NGOs as the most important parts of civil society that take the responsibility of challenging women's situations, use the women's empowerment projects as a tool to change women's status in a patriarchal society (Baden, & Oxaal, 1997). I observed and interviewed NGOs works in development specially women empowerment based on the fact that Naile Kaber's expression of strategic life choices- resource, agency, success- refer to the women's triple roles.

NGOs have been facilitating social cohesion between the local and refugee women via women empowerment activities. Especially, in Turkiye, gender- and class-focused NGO initiatives empower local and refugee women to work together to build their common future together regardless of class and race. However, *sometimes* activities designed to strengthen women in the social structure, despite class, ethnicity, or gender, may have unfavorable effects as a result of poor choices

made by the public sector.

For instance, one interviewee stated the following during the interview:

"The public decisions made in the name of social cohesion studies that need to be put into action could have a negative impact on women's empowerment initiatives. For example, the closure of temporary education centers causes Syrian girls to marry at an early age because they cannot adapt to school." (Social Service Worker, 25, Non-Governmental Organization, Online, 2021).

It is hoped that this research inspires people to analyze NGOs' empowerment activities in the field of development in Turkiye. This relevant in that the women's triple roles have an impact on women's empowerment relation to the concepts of 'class and gender', 'community participation', and 'social cohesion'.

The non-governmental organization staff members who were interviewed said that public policy should encourage their work. There should be agreement among NGOs working in the field that women's empowerment initiatives should be organized so as to integrated into Turkey's ten-year development plan.

Future research should explore the analyzing of women's empowerment activities in the field of development that helps to reveal the importance of women's empowerment activities after mass migration by producing a new problem. This future research ought to be assist advocacy efforts on the public sector in development projects with local and refugee women. Additionally, there should also be research women who attending NGOs' women empowerment activities. How this should contribute to the social change and 'from bottom to top' development programs.

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Informed Consent: Verbal consent was obtained from all the participants.

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