

HOW DO NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN TURKEY MAKE USE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN SHAPING THE PUBLIC SPHERE? EXAMPLE: THE FIELD OF EDUCATION

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Abstract

In democratic countries in the literal sense, non-governmental organizations are the units that increase democratic capitals of those countries. It is not always possible for the developing countries to ensure that these organizations work efficiently and to make the citizens participate. On this head, it becomes also an important factor that these organizations sometimes can not fully and adequately introduce themselves. As for all public and private institutions, non-governmental organizations should absolutely apply public relations activities efficiently as well. Non-governmental organizations that introduce themselves adequately also gain a characteristic feature of shaping public sphere. For our country, it is obviously apparent that this situation is valid for non-governmental organizations that operate especially in the field of education. In this study, information will be presented primarily about the Civil Society Organizations (CSO) in Turkey, how they emerged, and their current status; following which we will try to inquire into the phases which the 'public sphere' concept has gone through in this country, and how it is comprehended. Later, efforts will be made to clarify the public relations activities of the Contemporary Living Support Association, the best known among the CSOs with extensive activities in the field of education; and the impact of such activities on the public sphere.

Key words: Public relations, non governmental organizations, public sphere.

Öz: Türkiye'de Kamusal Alanı Şekillendirmede Sivil Toplum Kuruluşlarının Halkla İlişkileri Ne Şekilde Kullanıyor? Örnek Olarak Eğitim Alanı

Sivil toplum kuruluşları, gerçek anlamda demokratik ülkelerde, o ülkenin demokratik sermayesini artıran birimlerdir. Bu kurumların etkin bir biçimde çalışmaları ve vatandaşların katılımını sağlamaları, gelişmekte olan ülkeler için her zaman mümkün olmamaktadır. Burada kimi zaman bu kuruluşların kendilerini yeterince tanıtamamaları da önemli bir faktör olarak devreye girmektedir. Tüm kamu ve özel kurumların olduğu gibi, sivil toplum kuruluşlarının da mutlaka etkin bir biçimde halkla ilişkiler faaliyetlerini uygulamaları gerekmektedir. Kendisini yeterince tanıtan sivil toplum kuruluşları aynı zamanda kamusal alanı şekillendirici bir niteliğe de bürünmektedir. Ülkemiz açısından bu durumun özellikle eğitim alanında faaliyet gösteren sivil toplum kuruluşları açısından geçerli olduğu görülmektedir. Bu çalışmamızda öncelikli olarak Türkiye'de Sivil Toplum Kuruluşları, ortaya çıkışları ve günümüzdeki durumları hakkında bilgi verdikten sonra, 'kamusal alan' kavramının bu ülkede geçirmiş olduğu aşamaları ve bu kavramdan anlaşılan incelenmeye çalışılacaktır. Daha sonra ise yaygın olarak faaliyet gösteren eğitim alanındaki STK'lardan en fazla tanınan Çağdaş

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Yaşamı Destekleme Derneğinin halkla ilişkiler faaliyetleri ve bunların kamusal alan üzerindeki etkileri ortaya konmaya çalışılacaktır.

Anahtar sözcükler: Halkla ilişkiler, sivil toplum kuruluşları, kamusal alan.

INTRODUCTION

The non-governmental organizations are now considered as significant and trustworthy institutions shaping the public sphere in all developed countries. This can be once again witnessed in the recent "Fifth Annual Trust Barometer" by Edelman Public Relations. Public opinion leaders in UK, France, Germany and Brazil have more confidence in non-governmental organizations than they do in the government. However, although they have become widespread in the recent years, the NGOs in Turkey are not efficient enough. This may be a result of the fact that democracy based on civil administration stabilized only after 1980's in Turkey. Nevertheless, parallel to the changing world, the number of NGOs in this country has started to increase slowly. Non-governmental organizations that operate especially in the field of education in Turkey have the characteristic feature of shaping public sphere. Many campaigns of NGOs for supporting education have given the education opportunity to many children and youngsters. In this regard, it would be appropriate to say that NGOs make significant formations in public sphere when they are supported by public, although they are not so powerful.

The aim of this study is after giving an overall information about the civil society organizations in Turkey identifying their roles in shaping the Public Sphere and show the public relations activities of a Civil Society Organization 'Çağdaş Yaşamı Des-

tekleme Derneği' that is known for especially its work in the field of education. We also used an questionnaire, which was answered by 240 people in Istanbul, to find out how effective the public relations campaign was.

Civil Society Organizations in Turkey

The bodies named as 'Non-Governmental Organizations' throughout the world, are called 'Civil Society Organizations' in Turkey. The term 'non-governmental' which describes what is not rather than what is, might have a negative connotation in Turkey. Thus, a denomination like 'non-governmental organizations' was not found to be very agreeable with the Turkish language.

The word civil in the context of the 'Civil Society Organizations' concept is used among ordinary people to describe any individual among the populace who does not wear a uniform. The word civil is used in Turkish to mean non military (without a uniform) (Bekaroğlu, 2000:ix).

An attempt to make an analysis of the 'Civil Society' concept reveals the vast extent and numerous elements of this concept, the attainment of which requires the participation of classes, groups and individuals in political existence. True democracy and the formation of civil society can be possible as an outcome of such participation only.

Development in the social mentality plays a significant role in the formation of the civil society, besides the availability of proper social settings for the cooperation of economy and politics. The consideration of epochs marked with the development of science and philosophy as periods of 'democracy'; and the use of the word democracy as a synonym of civil society both in the East and in the West is an indication of how such a formation has come into existence.

Civil society is closely related to philosophical thinking. 'Civil society', the natural outcome of the formations and changes in every social area, is a concept which should be perceived in the context of the Renaissance, the Reformation, and particularly the Enlightenment phenomena in the modern era of the Western Civilization (Davran, 1998:31).

Habermas expresses the organizational core of 'civil society' in terms of various bodies which can be named as 'civil society organizations'. Examples cited by Habermas include non-governmental and non-economic voluntary assemblages extending from churches, cultural associations and academies to the independent media, sports and recreation associations, debate clubs, citizen forums; and from citizen initiatives to professional associations, political parties, labor unions, and alternative organizations (2003:52).

The civil society organizations concept should be perceived as "organizations set up at a given space and time on the basis of knowledge with the purpose to respond to a need or a bunch of needs, rendering nonprofit services, thus participating in civil administration" (Kuçuradi, 1998: 29).

As mentioned earlier, the term 'non-governmental organizations' has a negative connotation in Turkish. Attempts were therefore made to describe such organizations with activities corresponding to this concept as 'third sector organizations' or 'voluntary organizations'. The term 'third sector organizations' however, displays a rather economic approach, while civil society organizations adopt a rather political-social approach. Anyhow, the term 'Civil Society Organizations' has found grounds in the Turkish language for quite a long time.

"Associations, foundations, political parties, sports clubs, unions, professional chambers and similar organizations which are not under the control of central or local governments" is a description brought out recently for CSOs. According to Alkan however, this should not mean an out of control status (1998: 59-73).

This description made by Alkan gets some criticisms again from Alkan himself: CSOs should be close to local governments rather than the central government in order to protect their features in the real sense; and they should be very careful because any CSO which develops close relations with the center is apt to lose its non-governmental status. In this sense, political parties which might be considered CSOs should not come into power. Again, it would be difficult to describe professional organizations as CSOs because of the membership obligation in order to practice a certain profession, i. e. membership of lawyers in the bar association, hence contradicting the voluntary participation concept. As a matter of fact, any CSO certainly involves volunteering. Thus, for an organization to become a CSO, or to gain the qualification of CSO,

volunteering should constitute one of the basic elements of its structure (1998: 59-73). In short, the number of CSOs bearing all the characteristics of the CSO description is close to none.

According to the World Bank Report, *CSOs in Turkey* published in 1997, Civil Society has developed in Turkey together with the volunteering concept which goes back to the Seljukians and the Ottoman States. Various foundations instituted in these eras performed activities independently from the central government, with the objective of meeting the various needs of the people. The foundations motivated by the Islamic tradition of giving a helping hand under a religious structure, had rendered social and infrastructure services as the means of local governments in the areas where the central government failed or was inadequate in fulfilling such services. Moslem seminaries, guilds and sects of the Ottoman era have appeared as the civil elements of their period. According to official records, there were more than 15.000 foundations at the beginning of the 19th century (stgp, 2004). Naming these as CSOs in the real sense however, is disputable because such bodies lacked one of the requirements of a civil society, namely: making an impact on government.

A rise in the rate of literacy and an increase in the number of CSOs is observed with the development of industry and trade in the modernization process.

One of the most significant factors in the formation of CSOs in Turkey is the simultaneous creation of complex urban trade circles while CSOs were responding to social needs; and the uniting of individuals

working in these circles as employees, employers and tradesmen according to their professions in the attempt to guard their interests. Participation and activities in such organizations as an outcome of cultural richness along education has accelerated the formation of pressure groups in the name of guarding individual needs. On the one hand, such secondary groups offer to the individual a safe and strong position before the society, and on the other hand fulfill the function of protecting the individual against the state in the capacity of a civil society organization (Turan, 1998:197-227).

People in various groups, e.g. females, have formed such groups to guard their individual rights and liberties, thus contributing to the development of CSOs.

The expression 'civil society organizations' means to us an extensive range of organizations including associations, foundations, professional chambers and bar associations, unions, cooperatives and citizen initiatives (Gönel, 1998:1). There are 80.757 (dernekler, 2004) associations and 4547 foundations in Turkey according to the current data from the Interior Ministry, and the records of the Foundations General Administration respectively.

An attempt to make a general analysis of the present CSOs in Turkey reveals the following data (Demircan, 2004):

- Turkey and Europe have different historical backgrounds concerning the organization of the public. In Turkey, people coming together and organizing around their basic needs/problems is a rarely witnessed phenomenon.
- No support from the base line is observed in many of the existing CSOs.

The founding of such CSOs is rather bound to individuals and they survive under the leadership of those individuals.

- Many of the organizations which show existence as CSOs lack both the consciousness of and the desire to be 'a civilian' and 'a social guard'.
- Many of the CSOs have not developed a democratic management structure and understanding.

Communication and Public Relations Activities of Civil Society Organizations in Turkey

It is a known fact that CSOs should emphasize communication and public relations activities when addressing their target groups or probable target groups. CSOs can make themselves heard and gather around them more followers for the realization of their objectives only in this way.

According to Van der Ghinst, communication activities of CSOs can be analyzed under three basic categories (1998: 221):

- Communication for a specific issue: Communication activities for an emergency case, or a call for helping the people of a country who are in danger. Collective or individual communication activities of CSOs for helping the people who were compelled to emigrate from Sudan might be an example to this category.
- Public education: Includes the activities to give training to the public on a certain subject, e.g. activities to inform people about AIDS.
- Fund raising: CSOs need financial resources to perform their activities. They have to make themselves heard in order to raise the required funds, which can naturally be realized through systematic communication efforts.

Further to the above, communication activities are emphasized to increase the number of followers, and to put pressure on the political authority.

It is known that all communication and public relations activities should have target groups which should be addressed. Such groups will of course show differences according to the activity of the concerned CSO. Basically however, we might identify target groups of CSOs as follows:

It is possible to increase/decrease the number of such target groups depending on the CSO's field of activity. CSOs might of course have various target groups as well as becoming the target groups of various sectors. As an example, an organization which performs activities at a sector with a probable impact on the environment will try to get the support of CSOs active in this field, for the early elimination of various protests.

One can say that the communication and public relations activities realized by CSOs which have spread out in Turkey in recent years is not yet at the required level in the real sense. According to the 'Needs Analysis Report' of the Civil Society Development Program which gives support to the Civil society Organizations in Turkey and makes various researches in this field, the organizations from which CSOs receive financial support reveal that CSOs are not quite experienced in public relations projects. Various organizations which give funds to CSOs have been grouped in the report as 'the private sector', 'the public sector', 'international organizations', and 'supranational organizations'; and the relations of

these sectors with CSOs were analyzed (Figure 1, s.:139).

This analysis indicates the following expectations and considerations of such different sector groups with respect to CSOs (STK İhtiyaç Analizi Raporu, (stgp,2004): Existing problems based on interviews made with the public sector:

- Nobody owns the results of completed projects realized jointly by the private sector and CSOs. Since associations or foundations do not have executive power, the results remain as a report without action.
- CSOs are not successful in the public relations activities of projects. In cases where public relations activities exist to some extent, they hesitate to use the sponsor's name, while the private sector enters into such a cooperation to improve and strengthen its image.
- Most of the time, expectations between the sectors (private sector-CSO) are not compatible.
- There is a lack of professional understanding in the management of CSOs.
- CSOs do not have positive relations with the state which in turn is reflected on the joint projects with the private sector.

Opinions of various government agencies on the relations with CSOs have been summarized in the report as follows:

- Compared to government agencies, CSOs are swifter and more practical (this is because of the cumbersome structure of government agencies).
- CSOs are not good in communicating with the public (they do not have public recognition and are not listened to).

- Projects are affected by internal problems and conflicts.
- Many companies are now establishing associations in order to get project support from the state without participating in bids.

International donors on the other hand, have made the following comments:

- CSOs are very inexperienced and weak in advocacy.
- They do not think strategically and are choked in too much detail.
- They are good in tenacity, voluntary participation, and creativity compared to the other countries.
- They are inexperienced in project preparation and reporting.

Comments of supranational organizations are included in the report of the Civil Society Development Program as follows:

- CSOs are in competition, make ruthless criticisms against each other and refrain from cooperation.
- They do not attach importance to human resources. They think what they need is money only and neglect the development of their individual capacities.
 - They are not successful in establishing and maintaining a network because of the competition among them.
 - They do not know how to communicate with the state and the public.
 - They are ambitious, enthusiastic and diligent but they do not know how to institute connections.

When we take a look at the information above as a whole, we can say that CSOs own a dynamic structure but lack experience and professional management; and serious shortcomings exist because they are not aware of the fact that different message

strategies should be developed for different target groups. In this context, it can be said that CSOs need a more strategic thinking, management, communication style and public relations implementations. The shortcomings will be eliminated to a great extent if CSOs address the various target groups indicated above by designing a message and communication system compatible with each target group.

Contacts have been made with various media groups under the Civil Society Development Program and problems of these groups in carrying the CSOs to the media were identified. Accordingly, CSOs are unable to support press releases with visual materials; their relations with the press remain weak during the campaigns; they have difficulties in presenting the issues in a way to attract public attention; it is difficult for the Istanbul press to send reporters to CSOs in Anatolia; announcements for the press are not communicated in time; and CSOs lack information about the priorities of the press.

According to the same report, various public relations agencies expressed the difficulties experienced by CSOs in public relations as follows:

- CSOs lack knowledge concerning the communication of their messages to the public and they do not use a language favorable to the populace.
- Many CSOs lack communication knowledge and are unable to develop a strong communication strategy.
- They are not willing to employ professional staff or receive support from professional organizations.
- They are careless about the production of visual materials to be used

in public relations. Most probably, the reason is their lack of education in this respect. Communication is not realized by paying consideration to the expectations of the people they address.

- They attempt to develop projects for the people but in spite of or contrary to such people. Participation is lacking in such projects.

Opinions from various fields (donating organizations, media and PR organizations) indicate that CSOs have a large number of shortcomings. And lack of knowledge and training is the reason for such shortcomings to a great extent. In spite of all these negative aspects, CSOs in Turkey display a progressive dynamic structure and will have a promising future provided that they receive and implement training in the areas of communication and public relations.

The concept of 'Public Sphere' is assessed among many people in Turkey as the 'sphere of public organizations' and is often kept as an order of the day through discussions in Turkey on whether turbaned women can or cannot have access to such areas. As expressed by Göle, "When we speak of public sphere in Turkey, we do not in any way think of a 'common ground' or a bourgeois ground, but very often a sphere which belongs to the state" (2003: 90-91).

Only members of certain social groups would participate in discussions "in the public sphere" of their periods ranging from the agoras of the Antiquity to the coffee-houses in the Britain of the 17th century. These were people with the right to citizenship in the Antiquity; and the bourgeois segment in the Britain of the 17th century.

Although inequitable, such participation hosted the spirit of opposition indispensable for a sound democracy formation in the community which is the basic function of the public sphere (Uğur/Bilici, 1998-448-496). It is doubtless that such social settings acting as a pool of different opinions made significant contributions to democracy. On the other hand, the chances of people for openly verbalizing various problems in the public sphere are enhanced proportionally with the diffusion of democratic social settings.

In the era of the Ottoman Empire, different opinions have been discussed at coffeehouses in similar fashion with the West.

A short review of the history of coffeehouses shows us that Peçevi, the Ottoman historian cites the year 1554 for the opening of the first coffeehouse in Istanbul. In a short time the number of coffeehouses has increased and people from different social segments came to these places to chat and have coffee. While there were fifty coffeehouses in Istanbul in the late reign of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent, this number reached six hundred in the era of Murat III (1574-1595) (Aydın, 2004).

Coffeehouses have turned into places where members of the intelligentsia gathered and discussed various subjects including literature; where very few books and newspapers were read; and where games like backgammon and chess were played. Besides hosting cultural activities, coffeehouses were also used as places of amusement and recreation.

18th century particularly, marks the naming of coffeehouses according to their individual

areas of activity. Types of coffeehouses originating in this century and addressing different social segments and different economic and social groups can be summarized as minstrel coffeehouses where two minstrels made musical dialogues accompanied by stringed folk instruments; 'storyteller coffeehouses' where simple plays were performed; 'coffeehouses of trades people' where members of the trades sector gathered; and 'parish coffeehouses' (Aydın, 2004).

Although coffeehouses of the 18th century started to offer to their guests the chance of reading books and newspapers, it is not possible to make a comparison in this respect with the corresponding coffeehouses in Europe; the reason being the printing of books and newspapers in the era of the Ottoman Empire much later than in Europe and the slow rate of increase in public literacy. Thus, it is possible to consider coffeehouses as places where oral culture prevailed to a great extent.

Furthermore, it is observed that coffeehouses have played an important role in the lives of people (men particularly). Charles White points out that "those who are interested in gossip and being aware of everything that is going around gather at coffeehouses to discuss both private and public affairs" (Kırlı, 2000: 58-79).

Coffeehouses can indisputably be described as the major 'public sphere' of the Ottoman State. Perspectives of state administrators about these public places have varied in the course of time. Mass shutdown of coffeehouses has been frequently observed between the middle of the 16th century when the first coffeehouse was opened in Istanbul

until the middle of the 17th century. In the following eras individual coffeehouses were shutdown rather than the realization of mass shutdowns 'to serve as an example', though this does not mean that the State ceased to view such places as 'unsafe' (because opinions against the State may pop up and gain ground). This 'unsafe' concept is rather based on the fact that most of the coffeehouse owners were 'janissaries' (janissaries could be described as members of powerful troops who revolt against the state from time to time); and the opinions made public in these coffeehouses were heard by various secret denouncers and reported to the state (Kırlı, 2000:58-79).

With the discovery of the public and public opinion concepts by the state in the 19th century, there was a growing willingness by the state to know about the acts and deeds of this public. Thus, the political power made efforts to keep under supervision and control the daily life of the man-on-the street to such an extent of overhearing household chats, e.g. the private sphere. Such widespread control and supervision operation was not limited to Istanbul only but attempts were made to cover the provincial districts of the Empire also. One or two secret reporters have been appointed to each district within the boundaries of the Empire as from the second quarter of the 19th century in order to ensure an effective control in the province (Kırlı, 2000:58-79). As a matter of fact, in this period developments and opinions put forward in the public sphere have drawn the attention of the political power to a great extent, and efforts were made in order not to lose the social control.

In the first years of the Republic, we observe some activities for the formation of a certain public sphere with the contributions of the single party regime. The result of these activities has appeared as the 'community centers'. The function of such centers has been described by İsmet İnönü as "places where the public gathers without any difficulty to discuss the issues of the country and their individual opinions" (Abdullah 2003:61).

The founders of the Republic have also made attempts for the formation of public opinion at community centers by using literature, art and mass media. In this period, creation of publicity through community centers has been a maneuver for the creation of a 'monistic' publicity (Abdullah 2003:61, 65).

The 'public sphere' assumed to have been formed through coffeehouses in the Ottoman era is not a product of the 'industrial society' (Çaha, 2003: 79) defined by Habermas. The public sphere in that era was spontaneous rather than structured.

Attempts made through 'community centers' in the first years of the Republic however, were for the structuring of such a sphere. Thus, it would not be possible to talk about a public sphere in the real sense in the Ottoman era and the first years of the Republic.

Public Sphere-Public Relations Relationship in Turkey

According to Ronnenberger and Rühl, there is an interrelation between public relations rating and qualitative and quantitative public sphere (Ronnenberger/Rühl 1992:58). One of the inferences to be made out of this

statement is that cultural, intellectual and economic levels of the public, in short its development level determines the demand, requirement or non requirement for public relations.

After 1980s, the number of private sector units offering public relations activities in Turkey has increased. It is said that foreign companies starting operations in Turkey have contributed to such increase which in one sense, is the result of the willingness to 'copy' the activities of foreign companies to some extent. As a matter of fact, when the conditions of the period is considered (coup d'état) it could not be said that there was an increase in the needs of the public for public relations activities.

Ronnenberger and Rühl mention the reader evolution in Germany along with the public sphere and present the following data (1992:58):

- The ratio of potential readers to non readers among German people has changed from 1:3 (year 1800) to 3:1 (year 1870).
- There was a growth in the rate of book production. While 4181 books were published in 1805, the number has increased to 14.059 in 1843 which means an average annual increase of 700 published books.
- The number of inexpensive daily newspapers and magazines increased.

As a result, people of the period started to read these publications and come together to discuss their contents.

We now, would like to present some corresponding figures from the Turkey of a few years ago, rather than those years in Germany given above (Table 1):

As the Table 1(p.:139) indicates, the number of books printed in Turkey in 2000, e.g. 157 years after the year 1843 when 14.059 books were published in Germany, is only 8905; furthermore, there are irregular increases/decreases rather than a regular annual increase. The same is true for periodicals too. When the annual population increase is considered, it can even be said that there is an actual decrease in the number of books per capita. When we take a look at the figures in Turkey with respect to the Internet, the global public sphere, interviews made with 300 people above 15 in 20 provinces indicate that only 13% are internet users, and 87% had never accessed the internet (hurriyetim,2004). Cultural level in Turkey is not sufficiently high as displayed by the figures also.

All these indicate the reasons for the inadequate development of public relations in Turkey on the basis of inferences we have made from Ronnenberger and Rühl. The following would serve as an example in the context of public relations: after various accidents and crises realized in Turkey, no post-crisis management is implemented by organizations causing such accidents/crises. The reason in this case could be pointed out as the inadequate economic and cultural development as mentioned above; as well as the yet inadequate level of civil society organizations. Although civil society organizations which can be named as one of the builders of democracy in the real sense are expected on the one hand to be on the side of the public to advocate its rights in such crisis events, on the other hand such an expectation is superfluous because of a lack of sufficient awareness in the public itself in this respect.

According to the revealed results, the public sphere is not only consisted of places where people gather and put down their opinions. The public sphere is now diffused even in our private spheres through mass media, and the line between the public and private spheres has become vague. With such an admission, we can deliberate on the approach of individuals to social problems, discussion of issues and presentation of certain issues in a way to draw public attention; and a community in general, sensitive to what is happening around. Such sensitivity of course should be read as not only individual sensitivity but organizational sensitivity as well.

Successful public relations campaigns have been implemented in Turkey in recent years. The underlying reason is an enhanced awareness of corporate responsibility, particularly the responsibility of international organizations to the society, as much as the social developments of recent years. The answer to the question however, 'are such campaigns adequate?' is 'No'.

SAMPLING AND METHODOLOGY

The Civil Society Development Program mentioned earlier, has a databank in its internet site for CSOs active in various fields in Turkey. A search of CSOs in the field of 'education' shows us about 387 CSOs excluding those with the same name but with different branches.

We made an inquiry in 2003 among the youth whom we consider as the primary target of CSOs active in the field of education. The inquiry covered 176 students at the public universities in Istanbul. 48.3% of the participating students consisted of females, and 51, 7% of males. The

questionnaire included questions about the attitude of university students to CSOs; whether students know about CSOs; and about the Contemporary Living Support Association (CLSA) which is their favorite CSO for membership.

FINDINGS

The inquiry results revealed that 85.2% of university students are not members of any CSO. The question of which CSO they would prefer for membership was left unanswered to a great extent (41.5%). CLSA was the most preferred for membership (13%) among those students who answered the question. The inquiry indicates that the youth in Turkey is disinterested in CSOs and are not too willing to participate in such organizations. Both the delay in the development of CSOs in Turkey, and the fact that these organizations are inadequate in making themselves heard has a part in such lack of interest.

Contemporary Girls of Contemporary Turkey Campaign

The *Contemporary Girls of Contemporary Turkey* project has been started in conjunction with Turkcell, considering the fact that girls are unable to receive adequate education because of traditions and socio-economic deficiencies suffered in the rural areas within the priority development regions, and economic powers available are used primarily for boys, and in line with the mission and principles of the Contemporary Living Support Association (Çağdaş Yaşamı Destekleme Derneği -ÇYDD) pursuing the goal of safeguarding, enhancing the rights vested by Atatürk reforms and principles, by accomplishing the contemporary individual and society through the contemporary educational path (Okay/Okay, 2004:24).

The project of letting girls living in rural areas go to school, which can be called the initial phase of the whole project, was initiated in 1997 with CLSA's awarding 17 female students scholarships in Pervari, district of Siirt, where no girl has been sent to school ever since 1989. When the budget of the association was found to be unable to suffice to expand the scope of the project as a result of the increased interest in the project, a professional PR firm that rendered the consultancy services for this project, suggested the association to seek further support. In 2000, Turkcell found out that its customers want it to give support to educational projects according to a survey conducted amid its customers. So, Turkcell saw fit to give support to such a charitable project, and launched the *Contemporary Girls of Contemporary Turkey* in cooperation with CLSA. This project, which stepped into its third year in 2003, led Turkcell to pick up the First Prize in the social responsibility category of the Excellence Award in 2001, and The Crystal Obelisk Award from WEPR in 2002 (Okay/Okay, 2004:24).

With this project, CLSA and Turkcell have made considerable contributions to the educational progression, as well as the entire society as they unveiled the conditions of girls living in rural areas, why they are not sent to school, and their families' priorities, as well as the socio-economic and cultural situation in rural areas.

Objectives of the Campaign

The campaign aimed at raising aware and highly educated girls by ensuring their education and preventing their disposal in marriage at earlier ages. The objectives of this campaign are listed below in brief:

- To ensure girls can benefit from the equality of opportunities in education,
- Make them professional individuals, and open new prospects to them,
- To ensure that girls are able to pursue their educations, attend high schools and universities, by preventing the disposal in marriage of girls at early ages, and the early motherhood
- To ensure that girls are able to educate themselves, as well as the environment they live in,
- To contribute to the elimination of interregional economic imbalance,
- To contribute their efforts to become intellectual and aware citizens able to produce proper solutions to their country's problems,
- To make considerable contributions to the education and progression of qualified human resources, which is one of the fundamental problems of Turkey.

As seen, the project not only removed girls' educational shortfalls but also served a social function.

Publicity of the Campaign

At the Turkcell's meetings with CLSA, it was resolved to hold a press conference in Turkcell auditorium on August 28, 2000, to publicize the project.

An advertising agency that Turkcell cooperated with at that time handled the logo and printed materials of the project. The invitation letters intended for informing journalists of Turkcell's position and priorities in this project read the importance Turkcell attaches to qualified human resources, and desire in promoting social development, and journalists were asked to support this project. All these informative

letters were sent to 350 journalists, including editor-in-chiefs, and big names in the media (Turkcell Evaluation Report, 2000-2001).

CLSA and Turkcell invited the Minister of State in charge of women and family affairs, Internal Affairs Minister and Health Minister to the press conference. Governors and kaimakams of provinces that contributed the generation of the project were also invited to the press conference (Turkcell Evaluation Report, 2000-2001).

The press conference held on August 28, 2000 was attended by 59 journalists, and its press coverage included 43 news in media. A brief scan of the project's press coverage between August 1, 2000 and January 7, 2001 showed that 95 news appeared in media about the project, of which 32 on national media, 13 on local media, and 2 on news portals. The project also appeared on 13 TV channels (50 minutes 2 seconds in total) as news, as well as on live broadcast of two channels (Turkcell Evaluation Report, 2000-2001). This shows the project had considerable press coverage. Therefore, both CLSA and Turkcell have reinforced their reputation and images in public through such coverage.

The Selection of Students and Deployment of the Project

At the beginning of each semester, students benefiting from that project were awarded TRL 100 million for the education year 2000-2001, and offered clothing, educational materials, and bags in the first year of the project. The project covered students at grades 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11, as the objective is to encourage students that finished the elementary school to continue their secondary education and go to high school

(Turkcell Corporate Communication Project Managers interview, December 26, 2003). Those proceeding further will continue to benefit from such scholarship during all their education.

The project initially targeted 5000 girls who could not continue their education due to lack of economic privileges in rural areas of 28 cities in priority development regions, then its scope was extended to include 35 cities. In 2001, Turkcell donated 251 computers and 31 printers to 63 schools in 33 cities, with emphasis on the schools in which 5,000 girls participated, in order to contribute their education and create a modern educational environment (Turkcell Corporate Communication Project Managers interview, December 26, 2003).

The amount of scholarships awarded by Turkcell was increased to TRL 180 million in 2002, and TRL 225 million in 2003¹.

The scholarship quotas has been determined depending on the number of the city's districts, and their populations. The teachers and principals of the schools pick up girls with no economic power but eager to continue their education, which are then approved by kaimakams and governors. These girls are reported to CLSA which decide on who will be scholarship holder within the limits of quotas. Only one girl from a given family is entitled to the scholarship (Minibaş, 2003). These scholarship amounts are either deposited in bank accounts opened in the name of scholarship holders at the beginning of each semester or given to students in cash during scholarship distribution ceremonies.

At the beginning of each semester, urban centers hold 'scholarship distribution'

ceremonies attended by CLSA and Turkcell representatives, vice governors, kaimakams, provincial/district national education directors, national education branch office directors, teachers, scholarship holders and their families.

Scholarship holders and their parents have very positive views on the project. Parents find the opportunity to spend, for other members of the family, the amount that they would have spent if their children have not won such a scholarship. Especially mothers seem to be much more determined to allow their daughters to continue education.

A requirement has been imposed on scholarship holders with respect to population planning, one of the most important and serious problems in Turkey. They are required to make their mother enroll in events on family planning and send a document proving their parents use a reliable birth control method (Minibaş, 2003), which may be viewed a useful step for these areas where modern birth control methods are unknown.

At the beginning of the project, in order to cause girls to try to read and write, they are considered to be asked to read 5 literary and social-issue books to be sent to them, and provide a summary of these books, but this failed to become true. Moreover scholarship holders were also required to attend 10-day 'Community health and family planning' courses to be held by the ministry of health in summer. The objective of such a practice was to ensure that they could share useful information they acquired with their families and others in their social environments.

The scholarship holders' attendance and efficiency status are continuously tracked, and those who got certificate of achievement are given presents such as books, etc. As will be observed, this campaign of CLSA has been communicated to a great number of girls and their families particularly in Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia. We carried out an inquiry among 240 people in Istanbul in order to identify campaign effectiveness. We were careful in selecting a participant group consisting of an equal number of females and males as far as possible but of various professional groups. The inquiry gave the following results:

56.25% of participants were females and 43.75% males. While 31.6% of participants said that they were not aware of such a campaign, 65% indicated they remember the name of the campaign. 29.1% of participants, who expressed that they first heard about the campaign on the TV (40.4%), did not answer the question on campaign effectiveness; and 16.2% said that they have read about it in newspapers. The majority of participants have been aware of the campaign through the TV rather than newspapers.

After 70.4% of the subjects expressed that they did not remember the period of the campaign, we asked them the question, who has realized the 'Contemporary Girls of Contemporary Turkey Campaign'?:

I don't know	43.3%
Turkcell	28.3%
Contemporary Living Support Association	9.1%
Ministry of National Education	2.5%
Others	4.1%
No Answer	12.5%

According to the above results, a vast majority of participants was not aware of the campaign organizer, and the name Turkcell was recalled at a higher rate (28.3%) than the actual organizer CLSA (9.1%). This indicates that the donator organization has followed a more effective communication strategy than the CSO which has realized the campaign; and the CSO has remained in the background to some extent. As a matter of fact, these types of campaigns should be considered as a significant opportunity for such SCOs in making themselves known to the public who would take up these SCOs seriously.

With respect to the achievement of the campaign, the majority of the participants found the campaign very successful (23.3%) and successful (27.5%); and 44.1% said that they have no idea about the achievement of the campaign. An interpretation of this data would be that the campaign initiation and implementation process was adequately announced but the results were not communicated to the public in a way so that they could make an evaluation of the level of campaign achievement. Under the circumstances, both Turkcell of the private sector, and the campaign owner CLSA should have implemented a more effective communication strategy concerning campaign results. 70% of participants found the campaign useful to the community while a high rate of participants (17%) did not answer the question about the usefulness of the campaign, which we think is based on a similar attitude with the one indicated above.

On the basis of the above data, it is not possible to identify clearly whether the CLSA campaign has or has not structured

the public sphere. As we know, education is a long term process and it is not too easy to identify definitely how these educated girls would later be able to change the cultural and intellectual structure in their regions. As an initial step however, it is clear that the campaign has created an opportunity for the participation of the women in the region in public living and that it is an important step for the development of the region when one considers the mothers included in the family planning project for instance. When we consider the large families (families in Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia have in general a crowd of children) of these girls who receive education, we should think that they might change their families and environments in a positive way.

From our point of view, this has been a campaign with the capacity to have an impact on the public sphere in the real sense. After this campaign was initiated, CLSA has undersigned other similar campaigns upon the interest shown by the community, but could not announce such campaigns because of a lack of sponsor support. As an example, we can point out to the project 'I have A Daughter in Anatolia, and She Will Become a Teacher'. The objective of this project initiated in 2002 is to support the education of girls, and make contributions particularly to their higher education. A similar project of CLSA is 'The Contemporary High School Girls of the Boarding School'. The aim of this project is to provide for the high school education at a boarding school in Istanbul, of girls who are not able to attend or have difficulties in attending high school in Anatolia, mainly in Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia because of financial reasons; and to contribute to their growth as informed and educated individuals with a

career, standing on their own feet, who are not daunted by problems but produce solutions to them. Still another project is 'Children in Anatolia Are Going to School'. Under this project, support is given to the children of families in financially tight position, applying from every corner of Anatolia with the willingness to go to school.

As observed, CLSA is in an important attempt to compensate for the education deficit in Turkey. Contemporary Girls of Contemporary Turkey has both led its own activities and motivated the government to deal with the issue. Thus, following these campaigns, The Ministry of National Education started the 'Come on Girls to School' campaign in cooperation with UNICEF, and became Class's follower in the activities for shaping the public sphere in the field of education. 'Come on Girls to School' campaign was initiated in June 2003 in 10 provinces with the lowest rate of literacy. At the initial stage, the aim was to ensure the participation of girls in education by including 20 more provinces in each of the years 2004 and 2005. This campaign which intends to deal with the problem of refraining from sending girls to school, primarily aims at the education of parents and enhancement of social awareness. The ultimate objective has been defined as increasing the percentage of school registration for girls to the level of boys until the 2005 – 2006 training- education term.

Besides this campaign, the Ministry of National Education has further initiated the '100% Education Support' campaign in order to increase the construction of school buildings in Turkey. Under this campaign tax relief rates of 5% will be increased to 100% for individuals and corporations; to

serve as an encouragement to such individuals and corporations in giving support to this campaign.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Civil society Organizations have become an indispensable element of democracy in developed countries. These organizations draw the attention of people to different areas and supply them information, and try to motivate action in favor of their fields of activity by applying pressure on the administration when required.

CSOs are conceived as a natural phenomenon in liberalized and democratic societies in the real sense. Individuals are willing to participate in such organizations with the awareness of citizenship. The present status in Turkey indicates a gradual diffusion of CSOs. Following the interference of military governments in civil governments from time to time (e.g. in 1960 and 1980) in the course of our democratic process following the declaration of the Republic, and with the settlement of various political controversies in the country, CSOs have diffused and continued their activities during the last 15- 20 years which has been too short a period for many CSOs to present and make themselves heard adequately, and to create in the people the willingness to be a member of such organizations.

In dealing with the contribution of CSOs to the public sphere, we would say that such organizations shape this sphere in democratic countries. In the minimum, the polyphony and the discussion of different opinions among people is ultimately effective.

Shaping of the public sphere by citizens who participate in this sphere is directly proportional to the democratic, economic, and intellectual development of a society. The same is true for the effectiveness and increase in the number of CSOs. Social transparency brings along a sharing of opinions and joint action on common grounds.

In underdeveloped or developing societies where development is not experienced in the three fields cited above, public relations activities also remain at the same level, e.g. developed or underdeveloped. In the light of all this data, we can say that there is a direct relationship between the diffusion of the public sphere and the diffusion of public relations. In countries where the state is able to ensure the convenient participation of its

citizens in the public sphere, public relations activities are performed effectively.

We would say that the development of the democratic medium, and the economic and intellectual structure in Turkey is not completed at Western standards and under the circumstances, the public sphere and public relations are not yet adequately diffused. It is possible to express that CSOs have a substantial impact on the public sphere, particularly education in Turkey. Education however, is a long term process and we will be able to observe the results of this impact, particularly the activities performed by CLSA and then of the campaign initiated by the Ministry of National Education, in the following decades, making the public sphere more open to participation (particularly in Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia).

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TABLES AND FIGURES

Figure 1: Target Groups of CSOs

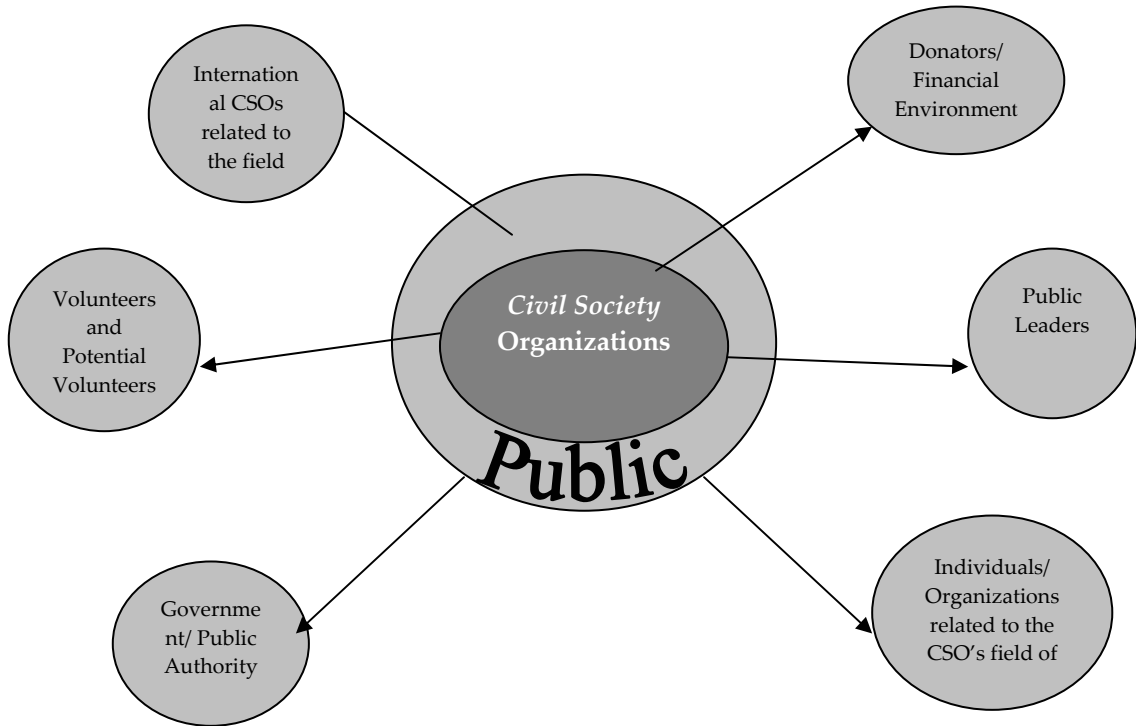


Table 1: Number of books and periodicals between the years 1993-2000

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Books	5978	5631	5172	8207	8352	9383	9763	8905
Periodicals	2734	2763	2594	2405	2499	2515	2235	2357

Source: (Kültür Bakanlığı, <http://www.die.gov.tr>)

¹ Based on \$ 1=TRL 1,430,000, exchange rate posted on December 24, 2003, each student is awarded \$ 157 in 2003.