THE STATUS OF CIVIL SOCIETY
AND THE EFFECTS OF COVID-19 IN SOUTH EASTERN TURKEY

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KURDISH STUDIES CENTER

CONTENTS

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ABSTRACT
FOR EXECUTIVE

The survey named as **'The Status of Civil Society in Eastern and South Eastern Anatolia and the Effects of Covid-19 Pandemic'** is carried out to make visible the current situation of non-governmental organizations in these regions, their studies, the evaluations of NGO representatives on the field of civil society, how they are affected by Covid-19 and their expectations for the future. In the qualitative phase of the research that conducted between August and September with the use of qualitative and quantitative research methods, the documentation of different civil society areas in the region has carried out and the in-depth interviews have made with 40 NGO representatives in a way to include plurality in terms of world view and field of work. These in-depth interviews lasted an average of 60 minutes, while the quantitative phase was conducted with 379 people working in various positions in the field of civil society.

According to the results of the research, it is observed that the representatives of non-governmental organizations consider the civil society of the region relatively effective and evaluate their capacity of influence in relation to the political conjuncture. It is reflected in the negotiations that the effective capacity of human rights organizations, which act as the locomotive of civil society in the region, is in line with political and social developments, especially the Kurdish issue. It is emphasized that the influence power of the civilian area decreases due to the pressures targeting the civil society area, the state narrowing the area, and appointing trustees to local administrations.

The decrease in the activeness and visibility of NGOs is also reflected in quantitative data. 3 out of every 5 people think that NGOs are not active and effective. Participants often think that the reason why NGOs are not active and visible is the political changes. Since the coup attempt on July 15, there has a pressure on civil society, NGOs closed with decrees and this situation resulted in a gap in the field, mainstream media organizations do not convey the voice of NGOs to society, NGOs have financial difficulties, and civil society cannot be active and visible for these reasons. This is being repeated. It is emphasized that media visibility focuses the civil society on the internet, but this also has disadvantages.

The Effect of the Pandemic on the Civil Society of the Region

The results of the research reveal that both civil society workers and the field they work in are negatively affected by the pandemic, their well-being gradually deteriorates, and their productivity and motivation decrease. Even the associations engaged in advocacy have to work in areas such as hygiene, health and assistance during the pandemic process; it is important in terms of showing how much social segments are affected by the pandemic process. Again in the same manner, as set forth findings indicate that the civil society across the region as well as across the Turkey needs resources and support to overcome the process of pandemic which predicted to be long-lasting.

In the research, it was determined that NGO representatives made plans to continue their activities during and after the pandemic and they expect support from the resource providers in line with the new normal period. According to the results, participants think it may take one to three years for NGO activities to get back to normal, as before the pandemic. NGO representatives also point out the importance of solidarity and cooperation within civil society in order to overcome the pandemic process without any damage. It is stated that there is a need for studies that will keep the morale of the civil society community high by sharing labor, space and opportunities and that these should be encouraged. These expectations are put on the table as important agendas for both funding organizations and organizations that work to strengthen civil society.

BACKGROUND

Civil society has a turbulent period over the last 10 years in Turkey. The civil society, which gained momentum in the early 2000s with the taking of democratization steps, experienced a major shrinkage with political and social transformations, especially after the July 15 coup attempt in the state of emergency. During the Solution Process that continued between 2013 and 2015, a wide public space was possible for civil society organizations which were studying on Kurdish issue and who were active in Kurdish provinces. However, the end of the solution process in 2015 and the onset of conflicts, this time in city centers and more violently, narrowed the public sphere of civil society. The coup attempt in 2016 and the subsequent state of emergency implementations almost completely eliminated the narrowed public sphere of civil society. According to the data of the **Human Rights Joint Platform (IHOP);** as of **20 March 2018**, **1419 associations, 145 foundations, 174 media / broadcasters were closed.** Considering this situation together with the dismissal and / or trial of more than 100 thousand people from the governmental body and the appointment of trustees to municipalities, it would be remembered that the mobility in the field of civil society has come to a halt rapidly.

The civil society dynamics in **Diyarbakir** which is one of the important centers of the Kurdish issue, especially human rights struggle and civil society studies in general, and other cities in the region, have been devastatingly affected by the state of emergency declared after the conflict and the coup attempt. Appointment of trustees to municipalities, dismissal of municipal and public employees, closure of NGOs stopped civil society activities in the region to a great extent. While the prohibition decision made by the governorship on September 1, 2018 regarding the sit-in action of **Saturday Mothers in Diyarbakir** is still valid; "prohibition of action and activity" announced for the first time by the **Governorship of Van** on November 21, 2016 has been continuing for approximately 1500 days with 15 and 30 days extension decisions.

The civil society area, which is trying to recover to compensate for the decline it experienced in **2016-17**, has also been deeply affected by the **Covid-19** pandemic, and it is focusing on remote / online work by stopping most of its physical work. The consequences of this new situation have negatively affected the motivation of civil society in the recovery phase. While the problems, needs, interests and fields of work and identity of the civil society are changing, such a study has been started with the hope that a study focusing on this area will fulfill an important need.

The study of **'The Status of Civil Society in Eastern and South Eastern Anatolia and the Effects of Covid-19 Pandemic'** based on both qualitative and quantitative field research. This study was carried out in order to understand what kind of experiences that non-governmental organizations, which were quite active in the region between the years of 2013 and 2015, have had since 2015. In addition, it aims to make the needs and potential of civil society visible. We hope that the views on the structural problems, the potential of civil society, and which areas should be strengthened, expressed by the representatives of civil society, will help both non-governmental organizations and public and non-governmental organizations.

CHAPTER 1
SCOPE
OF THE RESEARCH

1.1. The Methodology of the Research

In this study, we aim to depict **the situation of non-governmental organizations in the Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia**, their work, the evaluations of NGO representatives on the field of civil society, how they are affected by **Covid-19**, and their expectations and evaluations about the future in different dimensions. Both qualitative and quantitative data collection tools were used as the methodology. The research was carried out in two stages.

In qualitative stage; Documentation of different civil society areas in the region was carried out and in-depth interviews, which lasted an average of 60 minutes, were held with **40 NGO** representatives in a way that could include plurality in terms of both world view and field of study.

In quantitative stage; Data was collected through a questionnaire from the managers, members and volunteers of the NGOs in the region, especially the NGOs which in-depth interviews were conducted. While the online questionnaire form was disseminated through NGOs, a certain percentage of non-NGO members / volunteers were also included. With the questionnaire form that remained open for four weeks, 379 questionnaires suitable for analysis were reached, following various quotas. **Quantitative data were collected with a 95% confidence interval and +/- 4 margin of error.**

Information on the Sample of Quantitative Research
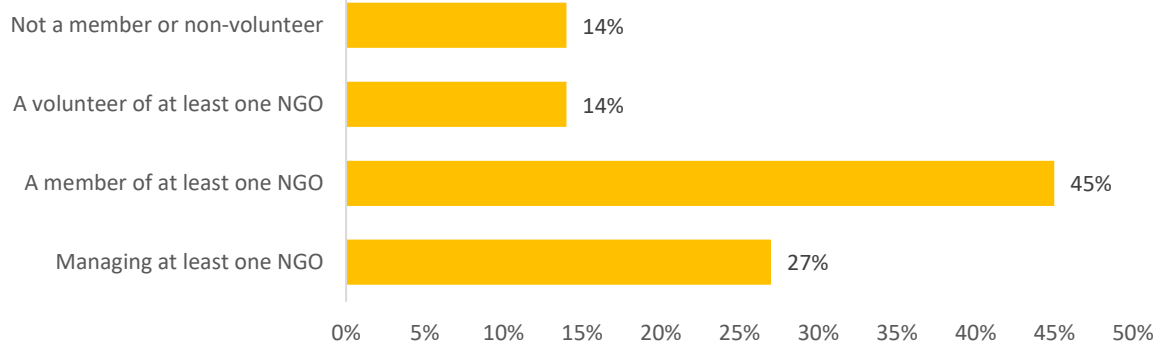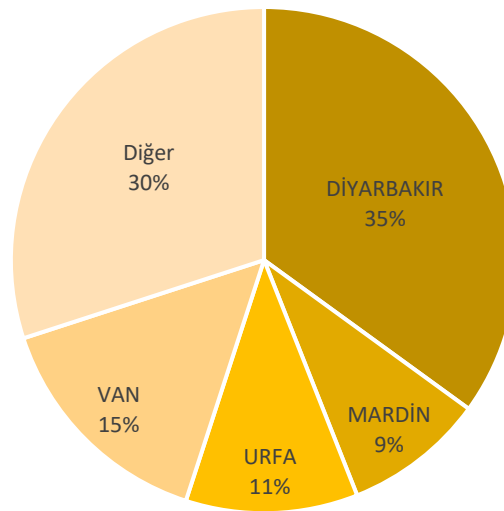
Woman	41%	Under High School	8%	18-29 age	%39
Man	56%	High School and Vocational High School	21%	30-49 age	%53
Unwilling to Indicate	2%	University+	71%	50+ age	%8

1.2. Limitations and Challenges of the Research

Both quantitative and qualitative data of this study were obtained from the evaluations of NGO managers, members and volunteers and those who do not have a membership or volunteer relationship with any NGO in the Eastern and Southeastern regions.

This study carried out with non-governmental organizations in a period that NGOs had lost physical contact with their members and volunteers, projects and works were disrupted, financial problems were tried to be dealt with, and therefore the effect of **Covid-19** was most severe. The lack of websites of some NGOs made it difficult to communicate with them. Approximately five to ten NGOs were tried to be reached at different times via e-mail and social media accounts, but no response was received.

It has been attached importance to the variety in terms of both their fields of study and political or world views of the NGOs whose contribution will be requested for the study. While most of the NGO representatives gladly agreed to contribute to this study, which deals with the last years of civil society in the region, some NGOs did not accept the meeting, some either canceled the appointments or stopped the meeting and gave up. It has been observed that this situation mostly stems from the part of the research that wants to discuss the solution process and the situation in the conflict period.

The interviews were carried out online due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and the surveys were prepared online and distributed over NGOs. The questionnaire form remained open for a month and NGOs that were thought to be unable to be disseminated were asked once a week, and their participation was increased. Interviews were conducted in Turkish and Kurdish according to the request of participant.

Like every study, this one also has certain limitations and includes a certain representation. Therefore, although this report has an important representation quality about the civil society of the region, it does not claim to be the only truth.

CHAPTER 2
UNIVERSE OF CIVIL SOCIETY AND ITS EFFECTS IN THE REGION

2.1. NGO Topography in the Region

Cuma Çiçek mentioned that the historical process of the NGOs in the region was parallel with Turkey's general, in his article **"Civil Society Organizations in Democratization Processes: The Southeast as an Example of Field Research"** that published in 2004.

YADA Foundation within the scope of **TUBITAK 1001 Research Projects** program which carried on between the years of 2007-2009, in **Middle East Technical University, Department of Sociology,** performed a study which name is **"Civil Society Culture in Voluntary Organizations in Turkey".** In this research, it is tried to examine the profile of the associations, cooperatives and foundations that established by the status of **"Voluntary Organizations"** and their managers. In this study, a concept called **"civil topography"** was developed that focuses on the orientations of voluntary organizations and their roles in their organizations. Accordingly, non-governmental organizations are classified as follows.

"This study which aims to develop a new proposal for the classification types of Voluntary Organizations, questioned the possibility of a qualitative classification. The qualitative classification developed by **YADA**, which we introduced earlier in conceptual transfers, was the starting point of the study. This classification has been discussed in detail with quantitative and qualitative field studies and has been moved to a new point in various stages of the study. The chaotic, multidisciplinary and multicultural structures of Voluntary Organizations significantly limit the classification possibilities. In the conceptual evaluation sections, we discussed the various classifications and their strengths and weaknesses. The conclusion we reached with the findings of this study is that the classification we call **"Civil Topography"** is more different than the current classifications and it is a valid one. At the top of the analysis levels that guiding this classification is what organizations are established for (to serve) and operate. The answer to the "for what" question here has also been sought from a functional perspective, not from a sectorial perspective or in other words not from a field of activity. For instance, the answer to this question "to act in the field of disability" is not an answer that falls within the category of answer that the classification of civil topography seeks. A disability organization may have aimed to collect aid for the disabled, another to provide socialization among the disabled, one to operate as a sports club, another to carry out rights-seeking activities, one to protect the disabled people in need, and another to produce expert knowledge in this field. Therefore, it is the question that the Civil Topography Classification seeks the answer with which activities a disability organization provides which function in the field of disability. The 12 categories suggested by the evaluation of the findings are as follows:

1. Self-organization, 2. Advocate, 3. Political Tendency, 4. Expert, 5. Charity, 6. Making, Sustentation, Beautification, 7. Citizenship, 8. Club, 9. Socialization, 10. Subsidiary, 11. Market-Oriented, 12. Profession / Sector-Oriented

Considering the activity and working areas of the non-governmental organizations in the region, it is observed that they comply with the said classification.

In the researches and in-depth interviews conducted, it is seen that the region is predominantly based on charity, advocacy, profession/sector-oriented and expertise. Charity-classified associations concentrate on fundamental rights such as humanitarian aid, education and

health. Scholarship support, trainings, awareness seminars and workshops are among the activities of these kinds of institutions. In addition to the organizations established in the region and producing activities only in the provinces of the region, the representative offices of national institutions also serve intensively. In addition to national institutions such as **IHH** and Dissemination of Wisdom Association, local NGOs such as **Ay Işığım** can be counted among these organizations.

In the region, there are many rights based organizations working in the field of advocacy, especially human rights and democratization. Institutions that advocate in areas such as women, children, refugee rights, ecology, space, sustainable transportation **(Bar Associations, Human Rights Association (İHD), Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (TİHV), Rights Initiative, Özgür-Der, KAMER, MOKİD, Yaka-Koop, 1K1U, Colorful Hopes, Mesopotamia, First Children, Tigris, Pedals, CİSAD DKVD etc.),** however, it is observed that some of these institutions carry out aid-based activities by considering the socio-economic needs of the region as well as advocacy activities. The activities of institutions such as bar associations and think tanks **(Diyarbakır, Urfa, Mardin and Van bar associations DİSA, DİTAM etc.)** also play an important role in the field of human rights.

Activities such as mother tongue, music in mother tongue, pedagogy, etc. are among the activities carried out by non-governmental organizations in the region. The activities of associations working in human rights, advocacy and cultural fields intersect in mother tongue-based studies. **Ma Music, Mesopotamia Foundation**, etc. can be the examples of the organizations that studying in that area.

Associations that focused on profession and expertise are also operating in the region. In addition to mixed business organizations, there are also associations that carry out economic activities established only for women. **(Medical Chambers, TSOs, DİSİAD, VOSİAD, SHUDER, DERMEZ, DİKAD, DOGÜNKAD,)**

For the participants in the quantitative part of the research, it is reflected that they do not think differently from the NGO representatives: In the quantitative research, the answers for the open-ended questions that given by the most important NGOs of the region are concentrated as follows.
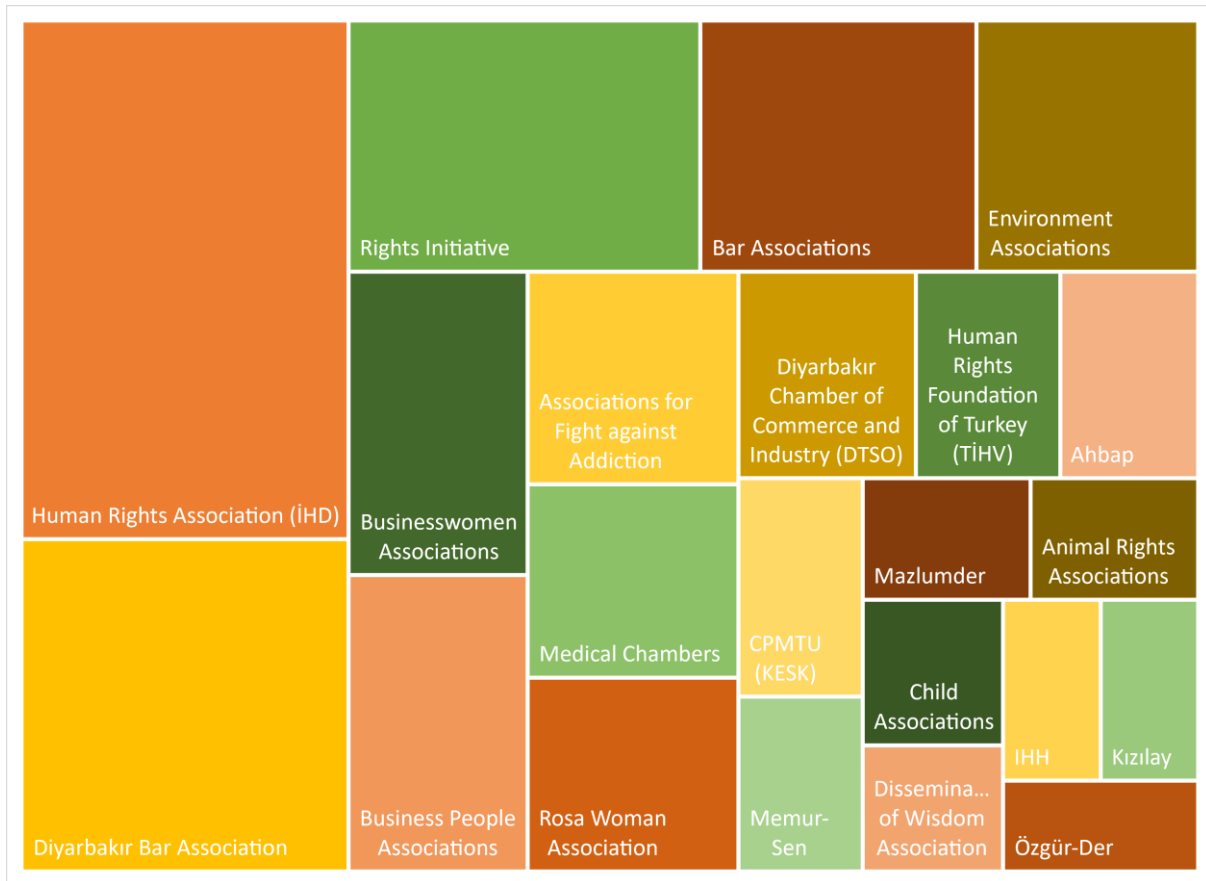
According to the survey participants, the motivations of people to become a member of a non-governmental organization are as follows; to come together with like-minded people, to obtain information, to fulfill their social responsibilities, **"to create an impact together in areas where they cannot have an individual impact"**, to gather and institutionalize the power of people against the state, to fight against injustice, to strive for a good world can be listed as.

"When people want to eliminate social problems or change something in human, animal, nature-related matters and they believe that this will happen in an organized way rather than individually, they become members / volunteers in accordance with their own ideas, values and stance."

"There are so many violations of rights in the place where we live that people turn to NGOs because these violations of rights are not covered by the administration and sometimes they are restricted by the administration. People organize through NGOs and start a struggle for rights. "

"When people want a solution to a problem, because they know that they cannot solve it alone, they try to solve it by coming together with other people. In my opinion, this is the founding purpose of NGOs."

"To learn to share, to remember equality, to discharge the responsibility to each other ..."

"Since we have the opportunity for the action that we want to do and cannot do personally and institutively, through NGOs."

"People become members / volunteers in a NGO because they feel debted to humanity / people and nature and to be able to do what is necessary, to reflect their religious motivation / energy in this field, to make an effort to eliminate grievances, and to combat all kinds of injustice."

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"*I think a person has duties towards society. For a more livable society, it is necessary to work voluntarily in order to improve oneself, feel good, and be beneficial to others for their individual spiritual needs. Life is very beautiful, it is necessary to live this quality, to add value to our environment. For this reason, one has to work voluntarily.*

Fieldworks of Civil Society Organizations

| Human Rights | Humanitarian Aid | Environment | Business | Refugees |
| Woman | Children | Education | Cultural Rights / Freedom of Speech | Youth / Animals / Disabled |
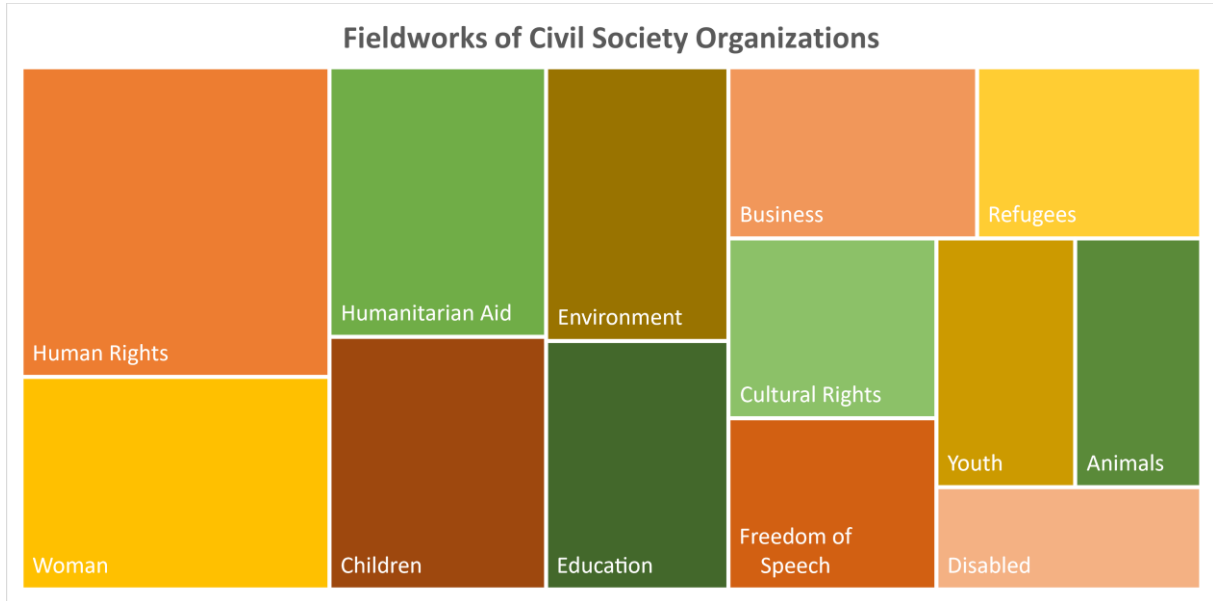
Time allocated by members / volunteers for the NGO they are a member of	
I don't spare any time.	9%
2 hours or less per week	29%
3-5 hours per week	30%
6-10 hours per week	14%
More than 10 hours per week	18%

Donation by members/volunteers for the NGO the yare member of	
I do not pay at all.	30%
20 TL and less per month	9%
21-50 TL per month	17%
51-75 TL per month	11%
76-100 TL per month	13%
101-250 TL per month	13%
251-500 TL per month	4%
More than 500 TL per month	3%

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2.1.1. The Outlook of Regional NGOs on Each Other and Civil Society Studies

Participants especially underline the importance of civil society studies in the region, and they attach importance to the work of civil society and their own institutions. They consider that the problems related to human rights and democratization are the biggest problems in the region, as both the current situation and a process that has been going on since the past. For this reason, they consider the institutions which work in the field of human rights as important and successful both in the field of civil society and in terms of their working principles.

Human rights institutions such as **İHD**, Rights Initiative, **Mazlumder[1], TİHV, bar associations and especially Diyarbakir Bar Association,** are frequently mentioned by the participants on the occasion of their work and especially the reports they have prepared. In other words, NGOs working in the field of human rights are considered important by both institutions in their field and other institutions. While the political differences of institutions in the field of human rights are considered important in terms of reaching more people, this situation is interpreted as "a civil society dynamic that makes up for each other." On the other hand, the situations in which political differences turn into political engagement are criticized, and it is expressed as both a criticism and self-criticism that this situation negatively affects the dialogue within civil society.

Other civil society studies that the participants rank as important after the field of human rights are labor-based organizations and institutions in the field of economy. The emphasis of Diyarbakır Chamber of Commerce and Industry is reflected in the interviews.

> *"I can say the Diyarbakır Chamber of Commerce and the Diyarbakır Bar Association. Beyond being two professional chambers in their own region, these two institutions can both open space for civil society and have more specific weight.*

> *"If we look at the economic field, we can specify the Chambers of Commerce and Industry. It is one of the most competent authorities that concern all trade and industry professionals, who can reach the bureaucracy very easily and who do not have any problems to put pressure on the state ..."*

Most of the participants seem to be aware of the studies and activities of the institutions working in their field and emphasize the importance of these activities. Apart from the studies in the field of children, youth and humanitarian aid, it is reflected in the interviews that institutions in the field of culture and cultural rights fill an important area.

It is a remarkable data that a specific importance is given to the studies of woman organizations. The studies of these institutions is counted among "important studies" and it is observed that women's organizations follow and appreciate each other's work. In this context, **KAMER, Rosa**

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[1] Within Mazlumder, disagreements arose on the reporting of rights violations regarding the conflictual process that started in 2015, and eventually the Extraordinary Congress of the association was held by a three-person enrollment committee appointed by the court, and 16 of the 24 branches of the association, most of which were operating in Kurdish provinces, were closed at this congress. With the closure of these 16 branches, including 12 branches in Kurdish provinces, the overwhelming majority of the members who signed the reports prepared during the conflict period were removed from the association membership. Rights Initiative Association was established under the leadership of the members who were removed from Mazlumder and rights defenders, previously known as Mazlumder managers, continue their work within the scope of the Rights Initiative. Although Mazlumder later opened a branch in Diyarbakır, almost all of the interviewees in the interviews refer to the current Rights Initiative by the word "Old Mazlumder" when they talk about Mazlumder.

Women's Association, DİKAD, DOGÜNKAD, VAKAD, which was closed with the decree law, are the most frequently mentioned institutions.

In the interviews the main point regarding the outlook of NGOs in the region on each other and on their working areas, stands out in the answers given to the question of "what kind of gap the NGOs in the region fill". In the evaluations of the participants; while emphasizing the points such as mediation, guiding, solidarity, being a voice to the society, in the current situation, they open to criticism the issues that they find negative in their opinion.

It is reflected in the comments of the participants that NGOs act as mediators between different political segments and act as a bridge. It is also stated by the participants that the impact and success of the bridge function changes with the current political atmosphere.

> *"Civil society takes an important domain in the region. How effective they are depends on the period. However, the functions of facilitating the processes when things are going well, and not giving up effort when things go bad are important, and to support and to be hope for the society. Civil society, as a body, can do things that we cannot do individually or that we hesitate to do. During the solution process, they became mediators, facilitators, observers and supporters of the process. Reporting violations in bad days and doing various tasks in their own fields both made it easier to heal the wounds and accumulated a memory for the future. The biggest handicap of civil society in the region is that of not getting enough away from politics and its polarization according to political engagements. This is a situation that harms the civil society."*

Participants mention the qualifications of NGOs to solve the problems in society, to represent them and to be the voice of the society, both in the field of human rights and humanitarian aid. It is also stated by the interviewees that NGOs undertake the task of overcoming the problems that the state and politics have not solved in this respect.

> *"NGOs are actually the voice of the society. It is a structure that can represent the society in all its aspects rather. For example, we, as an institution, represent people who have suffered from injustice; on the other hand, we provide to hire a lawyer for the people who cannot hire a lawyer and cannot represent themselves. When we look generally, NGOs sometimes have a great responsibility when there are situations that cannot be solved by politics. The situation of the society results in solving the problems with NGOs.*

> *"The aim of NGOs is to give a fillip to the state. It forces the state to act by showing the work it has done for the society where the state is lacking. "*

> *"For example, the man wants to be recognized. I mean, I saw that a well-known person was the provincial president, but I did not see a well-known person being the head of a non-governmental organization. People always become political leaders, political figures by being recognized in a non-governmental organization. This is actually a situation that NGOs should think and discuss within themselves, regardless of whether politics is something they want or not"*

> *"When we ask the public what the NGOs do; I'm sorry to say that there is a perception of earning money, obtaining a position, or using the NGO as a stepping stone for himself/herself. In my opinion, NGOs have gained significant momentum in seeking rights together with the leftist view, but in terms of NGO organization, it is perceived as the front step of congregation formation, organization and party formation.*

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2.2. Impact of Civil Society of the Region

It is observed that the representatives of non-governmental organizations which took part in the research find the civil society of the region relatively effective and evaluate its capacity of influence in relation to the political conjuncture. It is reflected in the negotiations that the effective capacity of human rights organizations, which act as the locomotive of civil society in the region, is in line with political and social developments, especially the Kurdish issue. It is emphasized that the influence power of the civilian area decreases due to the pressures targeting the civil society area, the state narrowing the area, and appointing trustees to local administrations.

"It significantly depends on the conjuncture how the civil society organizations can be effective. They are not very effective today. However, there are parts of this situation that are independent of the process. In order to be more effective in the final analysis, it should break out of political engagement, overcome thematic or political ghettoization, and protect civilianization against the state and actors like it. Only in this case can we talk about a real civility and a strong civil society. However, in this context, the supposed effect of civil society may come true. "

"There are many factors that prevent it from being effective. There are serious problems we face while carrying out the struggle for rights. For the slightest thing, the threat of the judiciary, threatening messages from the highest authorities of the state, criminalization efforts can narrow our fields of work or leave us in a difficult situation."

"NGOs used to be more effective, now actually they have been blocked. Many people stay away due to the atmosphere of fear and also NGOs do not have their previous energy."

It is emphasized that the political competition and polarization between the central government and local governments in the region, especially in **Diyarbakır**, narrows the civilian sphere and civil society is forced to be a party, while appointing trustees has brought the relatively dynamic relationship between civil society and local governments to a halt. While appointing trustees has resulted in de facto dissolution of municipal councils and eliminating the environment for consultation, on the other hand, a significant number of non-governmental organizations report that they refrain from communicating and doing business with the trustee due to the questionable social legitimacy.

"Diyarbakır is a political city and it is very difficult to be an NGO in this city. They are forcing you to do two things here either you will be pro-government or pro-HDP. You have a situation like being between the two fires. This is why NGOs cannot work efficiently. Therefore, the NGO culture in Diyarbakır is not fully established. I should be able to go to the municipality or district governorship as I want in my work."

"Civil society generally goes through a bipolar process both in Diyarbakır and in the region. Both HDP and AK Party know that we are not at one of these poles and that we stand in the gray area. However, we had relations with the municipality since it was an elected local government. Facilities of the municipality such as halls and advertising signs were given to some non-governmental organizations. Now, when a trustee is appointed, we do not want it. We cannot give legitimacy to the trustee institution."

Compared to 5 years ago;
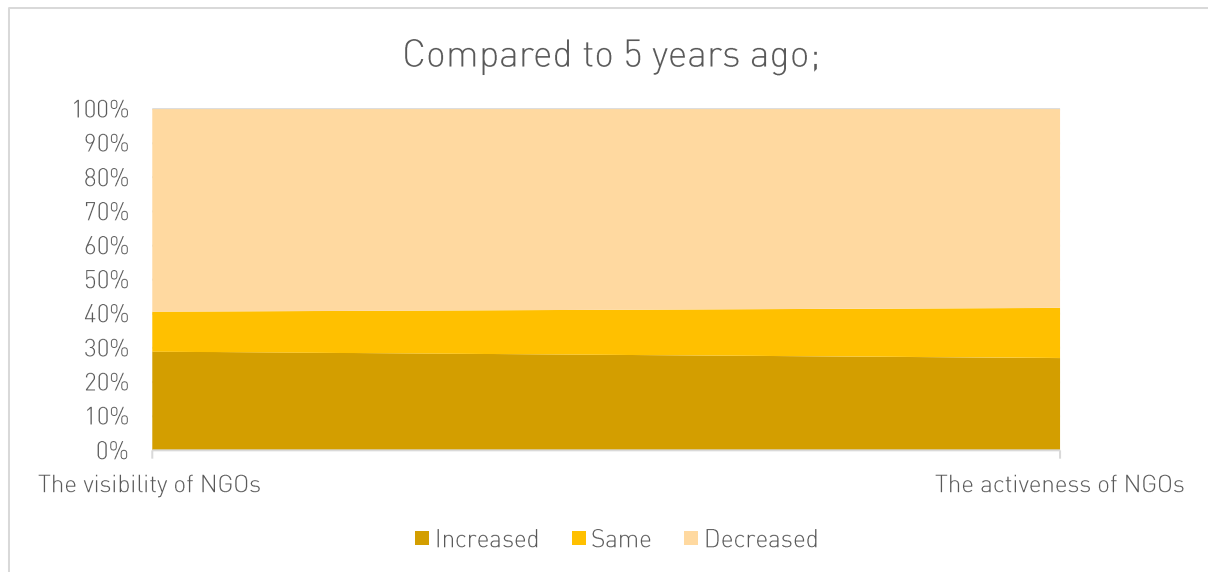
Looking at the quantitative data of the research, participants state that the activity and visibility of NGOs have decreased compared to the past five years. **3 out of 5 people think that NGOs are not active and effective compared to the previous five years.** Participants generally attribute NGOs not being active and visible to political developments. After the **coup attempt on July 15**, there is a pressure on civil society, the closing of NGOs with decrees, leave a gap in the field, mainstream media organizations do not convey the voice of civil society to society, NGOs have financial difficulties, and civil society cannot be active and visible for these reasons. It is emphasized that the case of media visibility focuses civil society on the internet, but this also has disadvantages.

> *"Even the activities of NGOs such as their work and press releases that should take place in the media are not covered especially by the mainstream media. For this reason, the visibility of NGOs is also damaged. It is possible to say that the number of NGOs that actively use social media and which carry out activities on the internet has increased recently. However, although they use these methods actively, I think that the society cannot be contacted at a sufficient level in terms of reaching only those who use the internet. In this context, this is a successful way to reach young people or people who use the internet. Although this is a successful way and must be pursued, ways should be sought to reach more actively to the middle-aged and elderly segments of the society."*

One of the issues that the participants cite about impact after the current political environment is the limitations of human and financial resources. It is emphasized in the interviews that the problems experienced by the regional NGOs at the financial resource point due to the Elazig earthquake and pandemic process have reduced the impact power. In the quantitative phase of the research conducted with surveys, the participants confirm the civil society representatives regarding the financial situation of the civil society.

> *"NGOs are not effective enough in the region and the reason behind this issue is that they are not economically independent in Turkey. Their lack of economic independency causes them to be dependent on somewhere and prevents them from acting freely. Therefore, it restricts the service of the dependent institution. "*

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How is the economic situation?
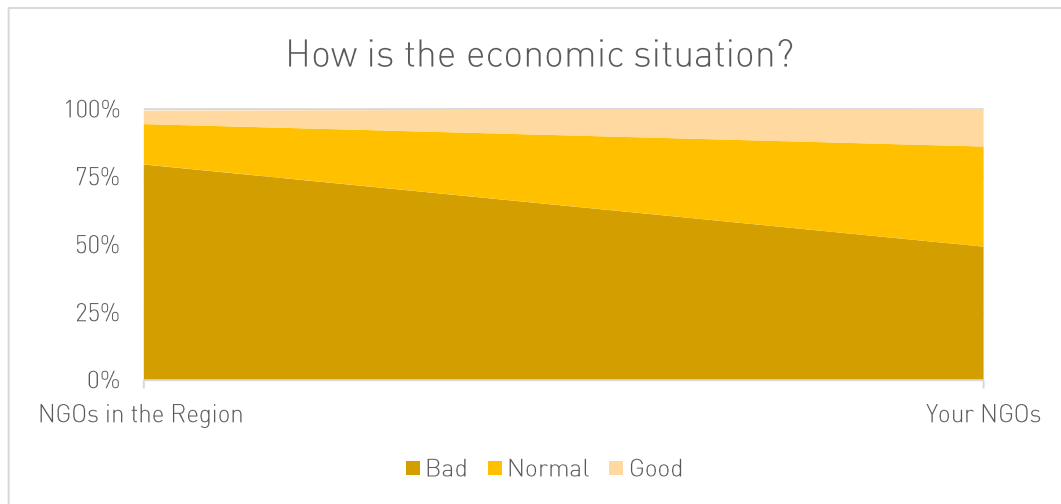
Half of the survey respondents, who are NGO members or volunteers, describe the financial condition of their organizations as bad, while their evaluation for NGOs across the region is even more pessimistic. **4 out of every 5 participants think that the civil society of the region is in bad economic condition.**

The civil society actors who was interviewed, think it is important that the potential and energy of non-governmental organizations should be devoted to one area and different points of that field. It is stated that the power of civil society increases if it specializes in its field. However, it is also stated by the participants that the regional NGOs are not effective enough because they operate in many areas instead of specialization. Under this heading, it is also emphasized that civil society studies should not be seen as a tool.

> *"For civil society to be effective in the region, non-governmental organizations should not go beyond their own fields. The NGO does not have to deal with every field, it should only deal with its field. The problem of NGOs in our region is that they try to make themselves visible, so they go beyond their sphere. In this case, it reduces productivity."*

> *"NGOs have an undeniable effect that changes the living rights and standards in the region. The biggest factor in the inability of an NGO to be effective is that it uses the structure it represents not as a goal, but as a tool! "*

One of the primary needs expressed by the participants for the activities of the civil society in the region to be more effective is the establishment of a democratic and secure atmosphere. In addition, improvements such as economic, institutionalization, technical capacity and infrastructure are required.

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2.2.1. Collaboration

Civil society in the region has been going through a period of ups and downs in terms of the opportunity and motivation for collaboration since 2015. In 2013, when **"The Solution Process"** started, non-governmental organizations in different political tendencies came together and established platforms. These collaborations, examples of which are seen in provinces such as **Diyarbakır, Urfa, Van and Malatya,** were affected by the course of the process, and dissolved spontaneously. The conflicts that started in cities in 2015, the coup attempt in 2016 and the State of Emergency process that followed it, brought about a period in which civil society was closed, weakened by decrees, suppressed and excluded from the public sphere. The civil society habitat, which could be left from all these experiences, has started to establish collaborations again because of the necessity of starting over some things and this difficult process. In Diyarbakır, the center of the regional civil society, apart from the group named **"Right Five"** by **İHD, Rights Initiative, TİHV, Bar Association and Chamber of Medicine,** non-governmental associations such as Child Studies Network, Network for Struggle with Violence against Women, Language and Culture Network were formed. The coexistence of organizations such as trade unions, regional bar associations, regional Chambers of Commerce and Industry became more visible in this process. Participants consider this as a lesson taught by the process and state that being together increases the sound and reduces the risk by spreading.

"Before, we didn't see working together as such a big need. But the process itself has pulled us down. Therefore, it has been reached to the point that it is necessary to gather human resources and labor together. In addition, if a statement will be made, for example, when an institution makes it, it will be directly targeted, but the risk will decrease when five to ten institutions do it together. "

"Now, mostly what the process has taught, and now, because of the support of these efforts, civil society unions and networks are reactivating. They are established in Diyarbakır, but I think they can be opened to the region and the general public. On the other hand, I am not sure how inclusive these networks and platforms are. "

While evaluating the efficacy power of the regional NGOs, the necessity of collaboration in the civil field and the negative effects of situations where this does not exist are also emphasized. In addition to strengthening coordination and cooperation of networks, especially in the field of humanitarian aid, it is stated by the interviewees that the activities can be made more effective and inclusive and will provide convenience at the point of follow-up. It is emphasized that collaboration increases the power of efficacy, so that the institutions will come together and increase the chance of impact on politics.

"NGOs are not effective enough because they appeal to the same people. For instance, some provinces have negotiated this, under the coordination of the governorship. For example, we may not know if another aid organization has helped to the same family we help. We cannot detected if any other assistance or Social Assistance Foundation help to that family. Urfa overcame this problem among the provinces of the region. With a system established with the coordination of the governorship, more people can be reached, because the assistance received becomes visible through this system by entering the person's Turkish ID number."

Despite the above-mentioned partnerships, some participants think that the cooperation among regional NGOs is weak and they are mostly competitive to each other, and this prevents the

spread of cooperation culture. It is emphasized that life style polarizations as well as political biases negatively affect dialogue and cooperation.

Collaboration, networking and organization of institutions are considered as the most important needs in the meetings, and it is also emphasized that this should be avoided from ideological divisions and political engagements. **Participants consider that this situation has caused the civilian area to shrink further due to political reasons.**

"The most important need of NGOs is that they cannot distinguish themselves politically and ideologically. In other words, NGOs are constantly seen as the backyards of a political party, which goes against civil society's own purpose of existence. "

"There is a structure in the region that the competition culture is dominant. There is no culture of collaboration. We see the consequences of this as disrupting each other's work area."

"Communication among NGOs in the region is weak and there is a marginalization to each other. To put it in a different way, there is a serious lack of communication between the Islamic segment and the left. For example, you cannot re-unit an association close to the HDP with an association close to the AKP. Therefore, political conflicts in the region create a serious gap among them. There is a lack of communication between congregations and NGOs. Actually, it is not difficult to communicate or to combine at the minimum point."

"Between the two sections in Diyarbakır and the region, except for the exceptions, which there is not any, there is indeed a thick wall and one does not see and almost does not know what the other is doing. This is a huge problem for civil society. On the other hand, it is not easy for those who try to do business together. Those with the same environment or in familiar circles, communicate more often, while less communicating with others. It is said that we can establish a platform without hierarchy, but within the process we observe that everything goes under the initiative of those 2-3 people who were the starter or the association that started the process .The others become inactive and passive. In other way, if s/he doesn't want you to be there, s/he doesn't call you and leaves you out. Despite this, of course there are many examples that can be brought together. This is due to the existence of a protocol culture in Diyarbakır. "

2.2.2. The Relationships with Media and the Visibility

While the importance of visibility in the media on the efficacy power of civil society is confirmed by the participants, it is also emphasized that efforts are made and relationships are established for this, but this is not enough due to the problems caused by the media itself. In some provinces, the interest of local media in the field of civil society is partially positive; in particular, reference is made to the fact that the national media has become dysfunctional with partisanship and monopolization. It is also among the evaluations that there is no professionalism in the media, research and rights journalism has decreased, and a populist approach has become widespread.

"Some media organizations and some NGOs act as the spin-doctor of the government. There are organizations that worship power that ambition for power, and the situation of enthuse about someone rather than their principled and journalistic identities. Unfortunately, I cannot see a journalistic case that independently highlights the important problems of the city. I think more original independent actors will emerge when conditions are suitable."
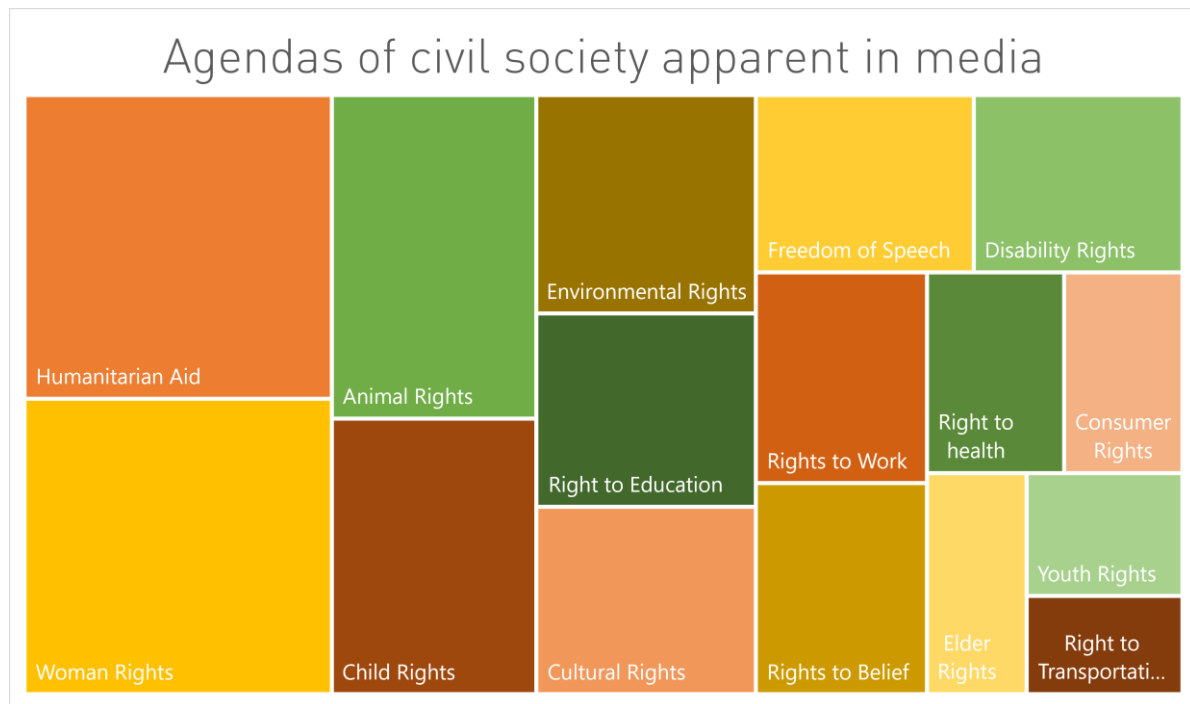
However, it is possible to see that there are some right categories in the media by favour of both quantitative and qualitative data. Accordingly, the civil society agendas that mostly have media coverage are those **humanitarian aid, women's rights, animal rights, environment and children's rights.**

It is stated that the participants follow the developments in the field of civil society though the channels such as **Civil Pages, STGM, Civil Field**, partially online news sites and mostly NGOs' own social media accounts.

"We do not mean mainstream media in Turkey, whether or not their influence with the local civil society, we observe that any ties with them is not established and they don't make any news directly from the source. We can say that local and opposition press, radio and televisions operating on satellite,

channels broadcasting on social media platforms take a more active role in this process. Although I say that the number of these channels is low in this area, I can also add that they communicate well with us. However, there is a point that we understood once again in the process, we saw that the media could not have an original and research-based objective work in the period when there was little contact with institutions working in the field of civil society and human rights. I think that reaching the source of the news, and the more the media reach the civil society, the more qualified and objective news is produced. "

"Our relations with the media are currently weak. We have our own platforms. People who advocate anti-system opinions have not been in the media for a long time and there is a boycott situation. There is a mono-voice media right now and it does not speak anything other than its own official discourse."

Participants who stated that they had good relations with the media, especially for the dissemination of the reports, mentioned that whether the dissemination of the media increased the effect of their work, and that they "questioned" due to the reasons indicated above and also stemming from the media.

"Some media outlets see you every two or three years. They will find you because you are doing a job that will benefit the party they are engaged in. There are mainstream media outlets that won't even hear our gut, they don't show much interest, but we have relations with others. While making the work of the media easier with news texts, we pay attention to the reflection of our own language in the news. I think our communication is at a good level. "

"As an NGO, we are good with the media. We contact the media to publish the reports of our work, they share it on social media channels, but I am hesitant if it reaches a sufficient audience. "

Non-governmental actors working in the field of humanitarian aid express that they are uncomfortable with the populist approach of the media and its way of broadcasting harms human dignity.

"The media communicates according to its own needs. There is a populist approach in Turkey and all media try to contact, if there was something popular and they bring into open it by exposing it. "

Representatives of NGOs share that they are trying to use social media channels effectively to overcome the problems mentioned by the media, they follow the sites that do civil society journalism on online platforms and produce their own content to reach the correct information about the fields they work in. However, they complain that these channels are not very functional in reaching the public and only civil society follows them.

"While the news is being made, we are trying to generalize our own texts. We try to share our work that we produce and get results with, as possible, with the texts we create. Because the language we establish is different than the use of the language of the media. That's why we are attentive to create texts in the "language" we use. "

"Since I do not approve the media in the last period, some alternative media institutions and online newspapers are not sufficient in terms of relations with NGOs. Since, there is a certain difficulty in reaching the target audience. You cannot reach people only through the internet. Before Covid, NGO-media relations were good during the solution process over the Kurdish issue, but it deteriorated when the solution process was over. After all, the media is extremely cautious about this. "
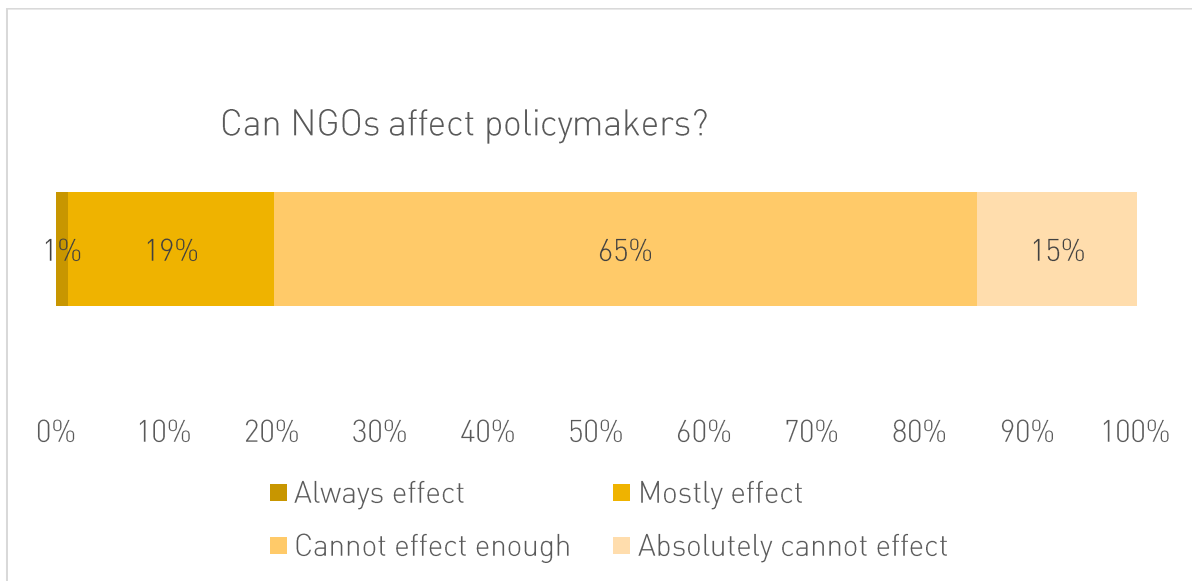
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Among the interviewees, there are also those who stated that relations with the media were positive, especially during the pandemic, and that the media attach importance to the field of civil society in this process.

> *"Lately, I see that the media lean towards non-governmental organizations. Because the Covid process taught people togetherness and unification, NGOs gained value here, and talking about it also gained value. Media's news about NGOs increased people's trust in civil society. "*

An evaluation regarding the ineffectiveness of the relations that civil society has established with the media is also related to the fact that NGOs appear in the media with political issues, not their fields of expertise.

"The main motivation of all non-governmental organizations in the region is to be talking about the Kurdish issue, so every non-governmental organization has something to say against violations of Kurds, but they have a political perspective. It is a different thing for NGOs working in this field to speak out against the problem, it is a different thing to move directly to general politics. Therefore, the place where relations with the media are established is actually to be telling big sentences to politics. "

2.2.3. Capacity to Influence Politics

Can NGOs affect policymakers?

| 1% | 19% | 65% | 15% |

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

■ Always effect   ■ Mostly effect
■ Cannot effect enough   ■ Absolutely cannot effect

Before consideration the impact of civil society on politics and the issue about having a say in decision-making mechanisms, it is important to reveal the participants' point of view about **Turkey's** problems, how to be involved in politics in the existing problems and solutions the roles falling on civilian areas about the solutions. In the interviews it determined that on the agenda of the politics there are more different and **'populist'** issues instead of **Turkey's** current problems, and media has an important effect on decomposition of the agenda. According to the participants, the most important problems in **Turkey** are the democratization, security oriented approaches in the field of human rights, lack of an independency in judiciary, unemployment (particularly youth employment) and the basic rights such as economic, health, and education. However, these problems could not have a space on the agenda of politics, even when there is an important global pandemic like Covid-19, "magazinish" issues are often the focus of the discussions.

According to the participants, in these circumstances, it is a problem for the civil society to affect politics and to put these issues into their agenda. It is argued that even strong economic-based organizations cannot be effective in political processes where decisions are made by a single person, not the majority.

> *"A system which is decided by one person, not the majority, is operated. Although one of the most important institutions in Turkey is DİSK, it does not have any impact on decision making mechanism. When DİSK has an opinion that different than the state, it is not possible to express this opinion. Likewise, NGOs do not have a power in order to effect on the agenda. "*

Criticisms of civil society representatives on the field of civil society centre on the issues of political attitudes, polarization associated with it, and seeing the field of civil society as **"a springboard to get into politics".** Participants think that it is necessary to be in communication and cooperation with politics, but that the relationship should not turn into an engagement relationship, and they criticize both politics and civil society representatives on this issue. It is

determined that the engagement relationship established with politics distorts the fabric of civil society and damages its civilianization, this situation erodes the feature of civil society as a subject and lost its effectiveness and makes it passive. Participants express that in such a relationship, the political institution drags civil society from behind and civil society "lags behind politics", and that a change of mission is experienced in the form of bringing the agenda of politics to the society instead of carrying the demands of the society to politics.

It is put forward as a situation where the engagement relationship established with politics weakens the communication and cooperation between non-governmental organizations close to different politics, builds invisible walls between civil society **"ghettos",** and draws the attention of participants who see themselves both on this side and on the other side of the wall.

> *"In the Solution Process, first a dialogue based consultation was established with politics. Meanwhile, NGOs from different world views started to meet with each other more frequently and to do more work together. Later, NGOs that close to a political party began to bring the agenda of the political side they are close to, not the demands and contributions of civil society. After that point, the unity of civil society was inefficient. Anyway, those common platforms broke up on their own. "*

> *"Civil society cannot affect politics very much. Because NGO come behind the politics. It is trying to come behind a step taken by politics and fill it. However, what NGOs need to do is to pave the way for politics and wait for politics to complete that step. But in our country, this have a reverse situation."*

> *"Its capacity to affect the agenda is little if any. Because NGOs are not taken as an object and unfortunately, many NGOs have come to a backyard position according to them because they take sides with power. "*

On the other hand, when questioning civil society in terms of being "civil", it is again referred to close engagement with politics. According to some participants, the engagement relationship established with politics stems from the lack of institutionalization in civil society. It is emphasized that in institutions where institutionalization is not established, the operation is carried out through one or a few people, this situation brings people to the front of the institution and the political engagement of individuals extend to the institution.

> *"If a chairman of …… can go and market himself in politics, of course it means that it has an effect. They are just marketing themselves and bringing up the needs of their members and display these to power and bureaucracy. Unfortunately, many non-governmental organizations [representatives] occupying the seat are in search of their personal benefits and are concerned about marketing themselves as such. This also works for politics. Instead of convincing a lot of people, politics says, let me convince the president of the association, the members are already convinced by that person. Therefore, there is a mutual system. I am saying this for all [parties]."*

While some participants agree that civil society is partially effective in regulations on women, environmental policies and studies in the field of children, they also mentioned that the multi-bar debate is interpreted as an effort of politics to narrow the civilian space. The practice of multiple barons is considered to be the process of neutralizing the active civil society activities of the bar associations and designing the civil society.

It is stated that in addition to the fact that decision-making mechanisms and politics do not listen to the voice of civil society, the capacity shortage of non-governmental organizations in

recent processes has also negatively affected on their power of effect. However, despite this situation, it is considered that the mainstream of some rights categories facilitates the commonality of the struggle and can provide a motivation to the civil society. For instance; In the discussions that started in the context of the withdrawal from the **Istanbul Convention**, it is cited as a positive example by the interviewees that the civil society effected the field of politics and the decision to withdraw from the convention was suspended.

> *"The capacity of NGOs to affect the agenda of politics has been weaken. Both NGOs had weakened and the politics tuned out the voice of the civil society as well as political atmosphere in Turkey has evolved to this point. Still, we see that the rights of women, children, animals, and environment are somewhat mainstream. Civil society has an important influence on this. In the new era, civil society should show a will to affect politics and the politics should to pay attention to the voice of civil society."*

> *"During the process [of discussion of the Istanbul Convention], we can have an effect in the Assembly. I think NGOs have an impact on the agenda of politics. The opening of shelters was the result of NGOs' voices and active work."*

It was stated in the interviews that if the civil society does not establish political engagements, it could have a greater impact on politics. It is also emphasized that cooperation in the civilian field will also increase the momentum of this process. The participants who point out the importance of social organizations instead of individual initiatives, state that NGOs can affect politics only if they come together and make a strong voice. They also mention that civil society should pave the way for politics and affect the decision-making mechanisms by creating an element of pressure.

> *"When NGOs make a strong sound, they can influence the agenda of politics."*

> *"You can do the things that people cannot do individually, hand in hand. In this sense, the state should be more sensitive to civil society."*

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CHAPTER 3
PANDEMİC AND THE NGOs OF THE REGION

3.1. The Effect of the Outbreak on the Civil Society of the Region

Regional NGOs had adversely affected by the pandemic both in the context of their workers and their working area as in **Turkey**. Participants mentioned that as an initial decision they closed their offices in **March** when the first cases of pandemic was began to be seen, to protect their workers; they entered the period of remote and they canceled many activities during this process.

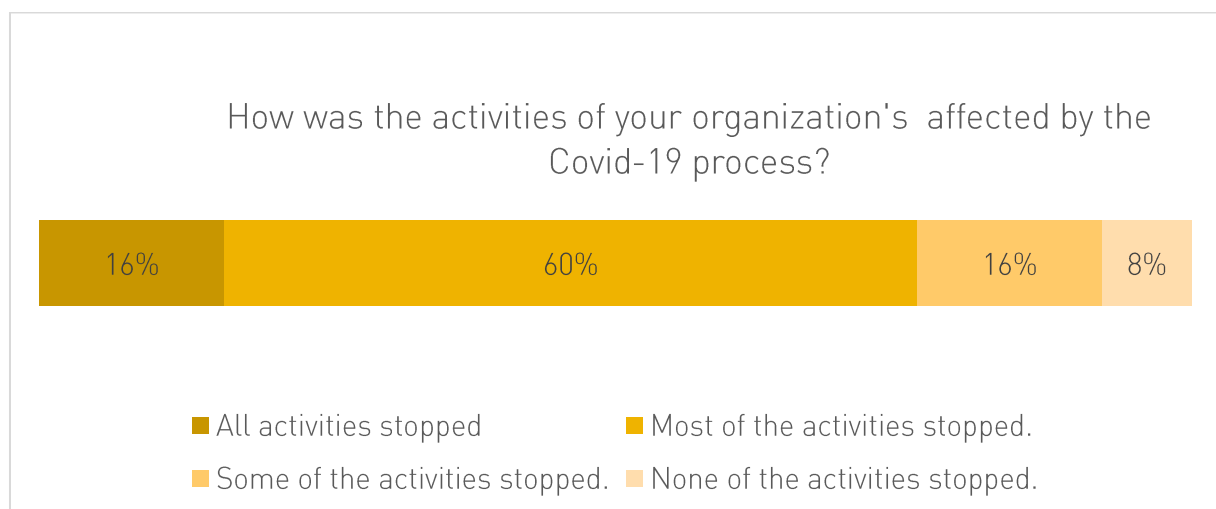> *"We had a literacy course. By Covid-19, the course stopped, it was not continued."*

> *"We had a summit; it was an activity that brought women entrepreneurs and business women together. We opened applications for the summit. This work has been postponed."*

> *"Before the Covid-19 pandemic, we had seminars and face-to-face work in schools, institutions. We stopped to work together because of pandemic."*

> *"We had psychosocial support activities. It was an activity for both parents and children that required closed group work. On the 11th of March, after we postponed our activities for an indefinite time, we were unable to conduct closed group work with parents and children."*

> *"We canceled our workshops, camps and training activities."*

> *"With the pandemic, many of our basic activities stopped. We had to quit our ongoing workshops and canceled our scheduled serial conferences. Our practice that we gave language training to foreigners and our library that young people can use for free has been closed."*

How was the activities of your organization's affected by the Covid-19 process?

16%	60%	16%	8%

■ All activities stopped   ■ Most of the activities stopped.
■ Some of the activities stopped. ■ None of the activities stopped.

After about two weeks of uncertainty, it is observed that NGOs have started to use online channels and social media more actively. However, it is also seen that the lack of technical knowledge and capacity for a significant part of the regional NGOs emerges as a problem at this stage. While some participants stated that they realized their shortcomings in digital information

and hardware during the pandemic process, they noted that they generally used online tools efficiently, heard about new tools and started to use them in their activity processes. However, in some organizations, technical inadequacy is an obvious problem at a level that they cannot do online activities. According to the quantitative data, only half of the NGOs can continue their activities actively online, a significant part of them reduced their activities and **15%** stopped all their activities completely.

> *"It took our time to organize and continue the meeting due to the lack of information in the meetings held by the Zoom application, we could hold meetings only with a certain number of people on WhatsApp, and we realized that our institution did not have technological knowledge. We experienced the difficulties of this."*

> *"There is a serious difference between face-to-face relationships and running or being together online. In online studies, there were times that connections were cut and from time to time there was a lack of communication. In a similar way, we got online help to use the technology. The advantage of online meetings was that it was speed up the decision making process, so I think online meetings should continue after Covid."*

Participants share the same view that during the pandemic period new problems have been added to the existing problems of civil society, such as the state's weakening of NGOs by dominating the civil society area, the problems caused by the political engagement of civil society, and the reduction of the contact of both political ghettoization and work-area-focused groupings.

Participants mention that after the recession that lasted for almost a month, they increased the holding of online meetings. This especially facilitated the administrative processes and online events provided the opportunity to reach a wider audience. However, it is thought that the continuation of this situation until today has brought some drawbacks. Participants note that even if time and space are saved with the activities during the pandemic period, these meetings are not as effective as face-to-face meetings. At this point, the participants state that face-to-face activities of civil society also create an opportunity for socialization and especially such activities that bring civil society together contribute to "well-being", but this is not possible in online studies. Organizations working in the field of human rights, violence against women and children, state that online work keeps them in suspense about data security and it negatively affects their studies. Participants observe that the productivity has decreased significantly due to too much online activity, and the motivation of civil society decreases when financial and technical difficulties are combined with uncertainty.

According to some participants, with the **state of emergency**, civil society was withdrawn from the squares to the halls, and due to **Covid-19**, they had to withdraw from the halls to the online platforms. At this point, the common concern is that of the restriction of the public sphere of civil society and its retreat to the online environment puts **civil society at risk of becoming an elite environment.**

3.1.1. The Effect of the Pandemic on the Study Areas

Although activities such as training, seminars and meetings were transferred to online platforms, activities such as visits and research, especially in the field, could not be conducted. Therefore, it is seen that the biggest problem with the pandemic is the NGOs, who should be directly on the field and who especially have socio-ecomically disadvantaged target group are the target group. In this context, the target groups that are mentioned most outside of general human rights studies are; women, children, refugees and disabled people. In the quantitative data of the research, the findings regarding the study areas most affected by the pandemic are as follows. Participants think that NGOs working in these areas mostly experience economic, technological and logistical insufficiency. Approximately one third of the respondents think that this situation negatively affects the NGOs psychologically.

Fieldwork of the organisations most affected by the Covid-19 pandemic
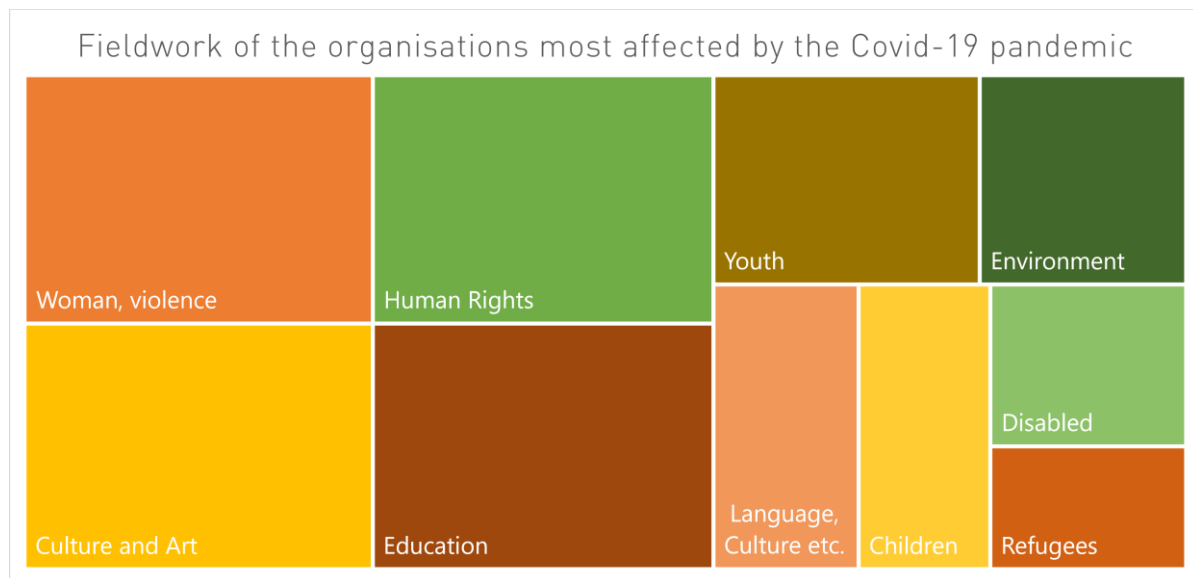
The participants who mention that domestic violence has increased during the quarantine process and children are deprived of many rights, including the right to play, also agree that women are more affected by the pandemic. They note that in addition to the increased domestic burden during the stay at home days, the online education processes are also undertaken by women, and they also state that women are withdrawn from working life or the first employees to be sacrificed are women as well as their psychological effects. On the other hand, it is also reflected in some interviews that gender roles have transformed positively during the pandemic process and the division of labor is made for the workload at home.

> *"As a necessity of working at home, the care of children has again become the responsibility of the mother, we experienced that working at home is an uncomfortable area for women. When we look at low income women, women in cooperatives, their situation was not observed enough. We have seen that men are more responsive about the division of labor, as they stay at home. Covid-19 made the concept of gender a current issue again for women and men."*

It is stated that economic-based organizations, especially women's cooperatives, are also adversely affected by the pandemic process.

"In the service sector, serious effects of pandemic have seen on the economic and family lives of women who work informally and women who are entrepreneurs. Besides, women are a large proportion of unregistered work. In the short-time work allowance for workplaces, we have seen that female employees quit the job without pay, or work at a low rate. Women's cooperatives had serious difficulties in natural gas, electricity and rent debts. We were already experiencing a significant economic restriction in Turkey. The overlap of economic troubles and pandemic caught us off guard."

It is reported that it is difficult for organizations that fight violence against women to receive reports of violence and to provide psycho-social and legal support to victims of violence with the pandemic. It is underlined that domestic violence increased, women victims of violence had difficulties in reporting the violence, and difficulties in providing psycho-social support during the period when households started to stay at home together.

Participants specify that refugees are the most affected by the pandemic process. Although the language problem of refugees is a factor that makes communication difficult about the measures taken regarding the pandemic, it is understood that this problem can be partially overcome, but economic deprivation has brought refugee children's access to education to a halt. It is emphasized that the needs of the refugees are not taken into consideration in the process regarding distance education, hygiene support and many more.

"The most affected group by the pandemic in our field of work is refugees. They could not benefit from the masks and education provided by the state. Failure to inform refugees about Covid-19 caused this group to be more affected."

It is stated that the activities of NGOs related to youth, especially organizations that carry out studies such as change programs, have come to a halt during the pandemic process, while the organizations that carry out activities in disadvantaged neighborhoods state that they encounter basic obstacles such as the lack of tablet and internet access in transition to online processes.

NGOs state that in parallel with the process of adaptation to the new era, they also monitor the effects of the pandemic on the field they work in and seek solutions by determining the needs of the target group and trying to address them. As the participants observe the problems faced by the disadvantaged segments of the society during the pandemic process, they differentiate their work area and have shifted to the field of humanitarian aid such as hygiene and food support. Even the associations engaged in advocacy have to work in areas such as hygiene, health, and assistance in this process; it is important in terms of showing how much social segments are affected by the pandemic process. It is also stated by the participants that some NGOs have difficulties in reaching basic hygiene practices, especially in masks, and they are lacking in meeting these needs of their target groups.

It is also noted that during the pandemic process, some institutions try to talk about the impact of the process and share experiences through online solidarity meetings. It is frequently stated by the participants that online studies have increased in this process.

"We made solidarity meetings with other women's organizations. We held meetings on how we can overcome this process with the least damage and tried to create a road map."

Human rights institutions note that monitoring activities during pandemic processes are affected and new tools should be developed in this regard. It is underlined that organizations

that actively work with target groups in the field, do not give up in the face of this desperation, resort to and seek for various ways to overcome obstacles.

> *"How to reach those who have experienced violations of rights, how to track violations remotely, how to develop technical and technological tools, these issues stand in our way. In this period that we can work online and cannot communicate face-to-face, there is a need for methods to keep the motivations of new friends who is new in the field. In addition, the struggle for rights needs innovations those go beyond classical methods and tools."*

> *"We made interviews by calling the mothers of the children, tried to find out what their needs were and what their possibilities were. It was understood that the pandemic reminded the conflict process. The psychology of children was damaged in that process. A psycho-support team was established quickly, and efforts were made to talk with the children. In different workshops, efforts were made with phone and video works in order to continue. An attempt was made to connect the internet to two neighborhoods because the children were deprived of the right to education. This problem was tried to be fixed. We aim to buy tools that enable them to use the internet in very large areas."*

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3.1.2. Overview to Measures in the Pandemic Process

While the participants did not make a negative assessment about the measures taken by the government during the field research was conducted at the pandemic times in **July-August,** they agree that the measures for the civilian area are not sufficient. It is understood that especially the application of short work allowance is considered as a necessary and positive step by the civil society and that NGOs benefit from it.

NGO representatives, who react positively to the practices in the field of health compared to the **world and Europe**, criticize the way the process is managed. The participants, who think that the **government** does not pay attention to the recommendations of the civil society, their knowledge on the field and does not cooperate with the civil society, expand their criticism from the focus of not being in partnership with the civil society as time goes by, towards the fact that the pandemic process is not managed well in general. The excerpts listed chronologically below point to an important change from **July to November** regarding the change of approach.

"The measures taken were very appropriate. Because non-governmental organizations are places where many people come together. The state restrictions on the activities of associations and foundations eased the struggle. We know that disinfectant studies are supported by governorships economically. This is an important situation. On the other hand, we benefited from short work allowance for our employees. "

"Postponing the declarations is actually a good thing, but although the normalization process has started as of June, this process may be delayed a little more with the increase in the number of cases at the current stage. So there is still a situation of uncertainty right now. At that point, I think the normalization process started early."

"It was a necessity the banning of general assemblies and gathering of human communities. However, while non-governmental organizations were already in a difficult situation and in a negative situation during this process, the government did not do the second step of the measures to be taken. It did not support non-governmental organizations in this context and did not research how they were affected and did not study how they would come out of these effects. No material, spiritual or technical work was done afterwards. Civil society organizations generally had to take care of themselves just like entrepreneurs. The government did not contribute to civil society as all its measures were aimed at protecting the business world and especially the construction sector."

"The government act in a way that they could help us but not consult. No idea was received from NGOs. The state had to exchange ideas during the pandemic process. In this process, NGOs were frozen up without experiencing a process as to how much [contribution of NGOs] can be provided. In this case, large-scale organizations may have had problems in terms of support mechanism."

"For instance, I am also a business owner. I have 36 employees, I pay my taxes, rent, and my electricity bill even though I am not working. I am not helped in any way; the state does not fulfill its social state duty. For example, we cannot see an approach like the French government that says "You take care of your health; we will consider your business.""

"It did not have a positive impact on the civil society. Because there was no financial resource transfer, there was not any plan to eliminate the problems experienced today."

"I do not think that the measures taken are sufficient; we have to take measure on our own and we find it difficult to do."

"I can say that the government's management of the process was good until July-August. But I don't think they do what we need for the time being. I cannot say that they are managing well now. Suspicion on the number of cases is increasing."
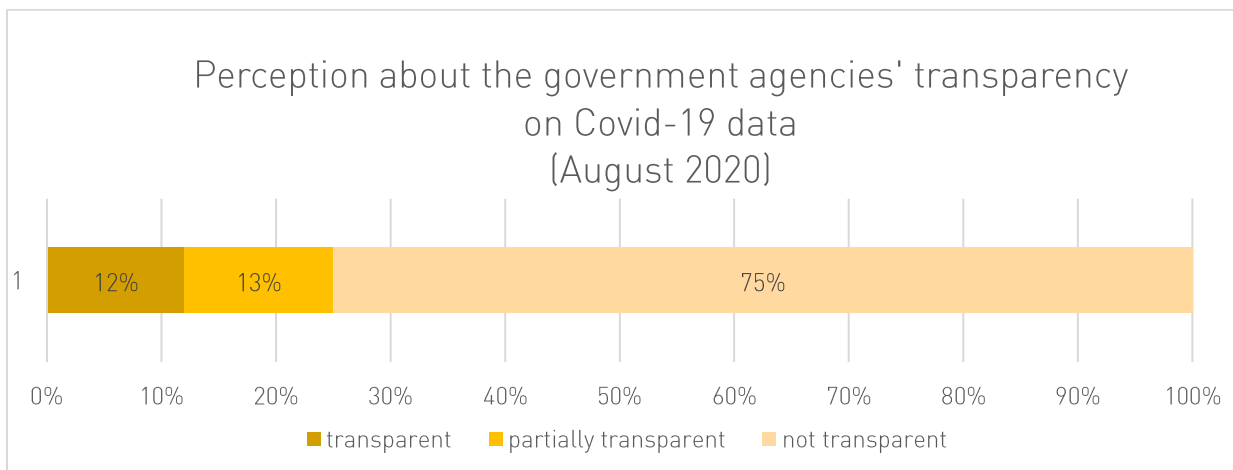
"When we examine the government's postponement of the general assemblies of the bar association today, we see that the justification of the pandemic has turned into an excuse. It is not possible to explain in good faith that they ban even outdoor activities while they are holding a public demonstration."

"Everyone experienced the second wave in pandemic but, we have not lived yet. The government tried to prevent this to some extent, but now the wave is growing. I don't think the government can do anything either."

"They cannot afford to shut down completely because the economy is going bad. Instead, they risk the worsening in terms of health and more people dying. In the meantime, they try to give civil society the impression that we are doing something by imposing some prohibitions that I can call arbitrary."

"I was thinking that the rates are low in Turkey, but I guess it's true what CHP and TMA. It is not very convincing that they say there are 1500 cases a day while it has spread so much. I think it's at least ten times."

As a matter of fact, **Health Minister Fahrettin Koca** announced the whole number of cases that were positive for the first time at the press conference held on **November 25, 2020. "Our citizen wants to know the number of all the cases that are positive, followed at home and kept in isolation. … We are planning to make public the number of our patients who do not have any symptoms."** said **Minister of Health, Fahrettin Koca**, and announced that a total of **28 thousand 351 people** were identified with **Coronavirus** in addition to the **number of 6 thousand 814 "patients" that day.**[2] The data that the **Minister of Health** had explained, provides information about the change in the evaluations regarding the management.

Perception about the government agencies' transparency on Covid-19 data (August 2020)

transparent: 12% · partially transparent: 13% · not transparent: 75%

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[2] https://artigercek.com/haberler/saglik-bakani-ilk-kez-vaka-sayisini-acikladi-28-bin-351

3.1.3. Pandemic and Resource Management

During the online working period due to the pandemic, it is recorded in the interviews that the need for digital tools of the Regional NGOs especially increased, while it is noted that there is no problem in the organizations working on the project basis in the field of employment, and the employees are not fired in this process. It is also emphasized that associations that do not carry out projects and work directly in the field experience difficulties in fixed costs, especially employment, in this process. Some institutions note that they had to stop their employment activities altogether. Among the participants, those who are among the organizations that work using funds, note that they have negotiated with funding sources, conveyed the current situations and provided flexibility. It is understood that almost all of the fund organizations are aware of the difficulties caused by the **Covid-19** pandemic and that they provide NGOs with the flexibility they need. Donation-based organizations report that they are negatively affected by the process.

The long duration of the pandemic process brings to the agenda especially the visits, changes, restructuring of the activities for the institutions doing fieldwork and of course the change in the search for resources. Some participants state that they are trying to develop their potential towards the international arena with the decrease of regional and national funding sources. This situation shows that the pandemic imposes the issue of 'sustainability' as an agenda for the civilian area in terms of both activities and resources, and that the institutions have started to work on this issue both within themselves and in national and international fields to keep up with the transformation.

> *"We need to search for new resources. We held interviews to evaluate the personal skills of our female friends. The upcoming period does not seem very bright both for ourselves and for the world, so this pushes us to search. We frequently hold meetings online. Funders should only prioritize grants because we are not very large organizations, we are provided with funds in proportion to the work we do. Small grants may be more institutionalized. Fund items can be expanded. And its continuity must be ensured."*

> *"We have given projects to many institutions during this period. We are waiting for the results of our projects. If there are positive returns to our projects, there will be positive developments in terms of our work for reaching a wide audience. We have created online donations on our website. Those who wish can donate by card, credit card or voluntarily."*

In the research, it is noted that NGOs do not have fundraising programs other than seeking funds and receiving donations, but that institutions make evaluations at the point of fundraising during and after the pandemic process, and that the pandemic has once again raised the importance of resource continuity in terms of both their own work and the needs of the areas where they operate. The concentration of searches on digital channels at the point of finding resources and the arrangement of websites accordingly can be considered as reflections of adaptation to the pandemic process. It is stated by the interviewees that the institutions put the continuity of resources outside of the fund into their agenda with the pandemic process.

"We had plans for fundraising. This was planned without a pandemic. It had been a strategic goal that we had to act on by the end of July. A child's expenses are 50 TL per month. We aim to work with regular funds by finding a person to cover this expense."

"We are not an institution that uses funds. All our work is voluntary, but the means available for them are also insufficient. For this reason, we have appointed a resource development manager. S/he will conduct a study on the annual budget and how it can be achieved."

"It is important for our institution to have an activity in which it can turn itself autonomously, independent of member donations and membership fees. We focused more on publishing and book sales. If we can do these, we will ease economically."

3.2. Outlook and Expectations of Civil Society on Post-Pandemic Period

Almost all of the NGO representatives participating in the research are planning to continue their activities during and after the pandemic process and underline that they expect support from the resource providers in line with the new normal period. It is generally stated by the participants that the digital knowledge and usage practice acquired during the pandemic process should be continued afterwards. In addition to this, especially at the point of returning to working areas, support expectations are recorded for both the well-being of the employees and the institutional capacity needs in order to provide more risk-free services in the fields of activity. In this context, according to participants the NGOs need support on rental and withholding payments, technical equipment and digital tools and the needs of the target group stand out.

> *"NGOs should have supports that will improve their institutional capacities, technical infrastructure and qualitative equipment. However, these must be studies conducted and followed by actors from the region. They must ponder on issues where technological disadvantage exacerbates inequalities. Poor children, for example, cannot make enough benefit of the distance education process."*

As stated by the interviewer above, increasing the activities in the fields such as inequality of opportunity in education, access to safe food, sustainable spatial arrangements, which have started to be discussed frequently with the pandemic, opening up resources related to these areas are expressed as new period expectations. The importance of institutional support in the civil area is also frequently emphasized.

> *"Institutions should continue their projects for developing their capacities. Civil society organizations should not end and should not be interrupted due to the pandemic. There are one or two programs [in terms of institutional support], but there are not many feedback in general. NGOs seem to be roasted in their own fat, because a solution cannot be developed in Turkey."*

It is among the issues that some of the participants mentioned that it is necessary to be more inclusive that funds as well as institutions can act with the effect of polarization while distributing resources. It's mentioned that the resources should be opened regionally and they should be transformed into a structure that can be used by more non-governmental organizations; again, within the description of one participant "in small slices instead of distributing them in large pies".

> *"For example, instead of a million-dollar project, maybe 20 projects worth 50 thousand dollars will contribute to the support of 20 different NGOs."*

Based on the assumption that the pandemic process may take longer than anticipated, the participants expect to generate resources that will prioritize especially disadvantaged groups. While prioritizing studies on women, children, refugees and low-income groups are the most voiced points by the participants, it is also emphasized that the field of human rights, which is the main field of struggle in the region, also should be strengthened. In addition to institutional capacity, human resources, fixed costs support and the expectation of flexibility in resources are reflected in the negotiations. Participants' suggestions about the needs of non-governmental organizations after the pandemic coincide with the expectations about resources.

"The basic things that society needs are its fields of activity. In order to strengthen the fields of activity, there must be a resource transfer. NGOs should be much more tolerated. In order to put into operation quickly the activities that institutions could not do during this period, and to make them stronger and more visible, the previously determined difficult conditions for resource and fund support should be kept more flexible."

"They should prioritize studies that provide income sources for the maintenance of employment, food aid and hygiene, community organizations, to keep the institutions alive, to strengthen the sphere of women and children, to support their language policies."

For a more effective civil society;	%
Economic and administrative strengthening should be provided	77%
Technological possibilities should be increased	49%
Successful experiences should be conveyed	39%
Visibility and impact studies should be done	37%
Communication with volunteers should increase	35%
Long-term plans should be made	33%
Collaboration should be encouraged	31%
Volunteering should be encouraged	28%
Legal processes should be facilitated	27%
Tax and SGK exemptions should be provided	20%

Survey respondents think it may take one to three years for NGO activities to return to normal, as before the pandemic. NGO representatives also point out the importance of solidarity and cooperation within civil society in order to overcome the pandemic process without any damage. It is stated that there is a need for studies that will keep the mood of the civil society community high through sharing of labor, space and opportunities and they should be encouraged. These expectations are put on the table as important agendas for both funding organizations and organizations that work to strengthen civil society.

"It is the key point for NGOs to listen more to each other and to show more solidarity."

"Civil society, particularly in Turkey, have developed the reflex can tackle all challenges. Because despite all this pressure, many of them probably will survive with this reflex. After the pandemic, these institutions will be able to survive. If there are no studies on the process, there would of course be failures. Therefore, all NGOs should come together and discuss their future and find a common solution."

RESULT

The research named as **'The Status of Civil Society in Eastern and South Eastern Anatolia and the Effects of Covid-19 Pandemic'** has focused on an overall assessment of the situation and the impact of pandemic processes since the solution process of the regional civil society. **In the research which qualitative and quantitative methods are used together, interviews were held with the plurality that could represent regional NGOs**. The experiences of civil society in the pandemic process and their future predictions on this subject are included in this research, with the view of the civil society of the region to each other, their working areas, the current problems of the country and the region.

The NGO representatives stated about the needs of civil society that are seen as lacking and need to be improved, they shared opinions on topics such as **financial, technical, human resources and institutionalization**. In addition to these technical needs, they expressed the need for improvement and progress in issues such as transparency, cooperation and division of labor. On the other hand, it was frequently stated in the interviews of the participants that the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic both affected existing studies and created new needs.

Participants stated that the **Covid-19** pandemic **negatively** affected civil society activities and increased the needs with problems. In this period, the activities of NGOs in the field were interrupted, so NGOs underlined that they had difficulties in transitioning to online channels and the need for strengthening technical infrastructure became more important. Again, the loss of face-to-face contact both weakened the communication of civil society with each other and thus negatively affected the socialization environments and brought the works for some organizations to a halt due to the interruption of the contacts with the target audience.

Even the associations engaged in advocacy have to work in areas such as hygiene, health, and assistance during the pandemic process, It is important in terms of showing how much social segments are affected by the pandemic process. In the same way as set forth findings shows that the civil society as well as the whole of Turkey also needs the resource and support to overcome the pandemic process which is predicted to be last long.

In the study, it was determined that NGO representatives made plans to continue their activities during and after the pandemic, and they expect support from resource providers in line with the new normal period.

Increasing activities on issues such as inequality of opportunity in education, access to safe food, sustainable spatial arrangements, which are frequently discussed with the pandemic, and opening up resources related to these areas comes first among the expectations regarding the post-pandemic process.

The importance of solidarity and cooperation within civil society in order to survive the process without any damage is also an important emphasis in the research. It was understood that besides the technical, financial, human resources and institutionalization needs of the civil society, the workers of NGOs also need psychosocial support for their "well-being".

Non-governmental organizations in the region stated that they could not get enough efficiency from Istanbul-based civil society support programs and trainings, and pointed out the necessity of local implementing mechanisms to solve the problem. Also related to this, the participants stated that even though technical training programs attended by relevant persons from NGOs are beneficial to the individual, the effects of this cannot be reflected in the institution and they also stated that it would be more beneficial to carry out these strengthening studies with short or medium term mentoring relationships, as well as including some organizations in the region to these training and strengthening programs.

ABBREVATION

İHOP - İnsan Hakları Ortak Platformu
YADA - Yaşama Dair Vakıf
İHD - İnsan Hakları Derneği
TİHV - Türkiye İnsan Hakları Vakfı
Hak İnisiyatifi – Hak İnisiyatifi Derneği
Özgür-Der - Özgür Düşünce ve Eğitim Hakları Derneği
KAMER - Kadın Merkezi Eğitim Üretim Danışma ve Dayanışma Vakfı
MOKİD - Mardin Ortak Kadın İşbirliği Derneği
Yaka-Koop - Yaşam Kadın Çevre Kültür ve İşletme Kooperatifi
CİSAD - Cilo Sat Gölleri ve Buzulları Dağcılık ve Doğa Sporları Derneği
DKVD - Diyarbakır Kültür Tabiat Varlıklarını Koruma Derneği
DİSA - Diyarbakır Siyasal ve Sosyal Araştırmalar Enstitüsü
DİTAM - Dicle Toplumsal Araştırmalar Merkezi
DİSİAD - Diyarbakır Sanayici ve İş İnsanları Derneği
VOSİAD - Van Organize Sanayi ve İş İnsanları Derneği
SHUDER - Sosyal Hizmet Uzmanları Derneği
DERMEZ - Mezopotamya Psikologları İnisiyatifi
DİKAD - Diyarbakır İş Kadınları Derneği
DOGÜNKAD - Doğu ve Güneydoğu İş Kadınları Derneği
VAKAD - Van Kadın Derneği
TTB - Türk Tabipleri Birliği
KESK - Kamu Emekçileri Sendikaları Konfederasyonu
İHH - İnsan Hak ve Hürriyetleri İnsani Yardım Vakfı