

INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF SOCIAL ASSISTANCE
AND MEANS TESTING MECHANISMS IN THE POST-2001 PERIOD

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Title: Institutionalization of Social Assistance and Means Testing Mechanisms in the Post-2001 Period

This study scrutinizes the institutionalization of public social assistance and means testing mechanisms in the period after 2001. Along with the historical process of institutionalization, the thesis focuses on the attitudes towards means testing and social assistance of various actors, with examples from the case of Çorlu Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundation.

The process of institutionalization of social assistance and standardization of means testing started mostly with the initiation of the World Bank, along with the Social Risk Mitigation Project which was formed in 2001. There were important improvements in terms of the institutionalization in social assistance such as improving the institutional capacity, use of information capacities, and creating integrated database that connect the system of the SYGM both with the SYDVs and other public institutions. However, there were also persistent problems such as the fragmented social assistance programs, or being exposed to personal and political influence, despite these improvements. Furthermore, the issue is more complicated for the means test due to peculiar problems of Turkey similar to other late industrialized countries. Among these problems was lack of institutional capacity for making means test in the absence of reliable public records such as property ownership, social security and population records, as well as lack of databases on the applicants, and of the standardized and instructive criteria. Most of these problems were solved with the use of information technologies and increasing institutional capacity of other public institutions. However, the major problem of the means test, which is high informality, continues to be the main obstacle for estimating the incomes of the applicants. It constitutes the main reason of the means testing system with social investigations to be in an inhumane way.

The strictness of the means test and the ways of it, as well as the target groups of the assistance programs are all questions that are closely related to the varieties of approaches to social assistance which can be seen in the difference in attitudes of different actors in the social assistance such as the government, opposition, the civil servants in the SYGM, as well as the personnel in the SYDV.

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Başlık: Türkiye'de Kamusal Sosyal Yardım ve İhtiyaç Tespiti Mekanizmalarının 2011 Sonrasında Kurumsallaşması

Bu çalışma Türkiye'de kamusal sosyal yardımların ve ihtiyaç tespiti mekanizmalarının, 2001 sonrasındaki dönemde kurumsallaşmasını incelemektedir. Tezde, kurumsallaşma sürecinin yanında, Çorlu Sosyal Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışma Vakfı (SYDV) örneğinin de yardımıyla farklı aktörlerin sosyal yardımlar ve ihtiyaç tespitine dair tutumlarına odaklanılmaktadır.

Sosyal yardımlarda ve ihtiyaç tespitinde kurumsallaşma süreci büyük ölçüde Dünya Bankası öncülüğündeki Sosyal Riski Azaltma Projesi'yle 2001'de başladı. Bu dönem sonrasında sosyal yardımların kurumsallaşmasında bir takım önemli gelişmelerin olduğu söylenebilir. Kurumsal kapasitenin artırılması, enformasyon teknolojilerinin kullanılması, Sosyal Yardımlar Genel Müdürlüğü (SYGM)'nü SYDV'lere ve diğer kamu kurumlarına bağlayan bütünlüklü bir veri tabanının oluşturulması bunlardan bazılarıdır. Ancak, bu gelişmelere rağmen sosyal yardım programlarındaki parçalı yapının giderilememesi, vakıfların kişisel ve politik etkiye açık olması gibi problemler de devam etmektedir. İhtiyaç tespiti konusu ise geç-endüstriyelleşen diğer ülkelerdeki gibi Türkiye'de de daha karışık ve kendine özgü problemlere sahiptir. Bu problemlerden bazıları arasında güvenilir tapu, sosyal güvenlik ve nüfus kayıtları gibi kamusal kayıtların yokluğunda ihtiyaç tespiti yapılabilmesi için gereken kurumsal kapasitenin eksikliği; yardıma alanlar ve yardıma başvuranlar hakkında veritabanının olmaması; yardımlar için önceden belirlenmiş objektif standartlaşmış kriterlerin eksikliği sayılabilir. Bu problemlerin çoğu enformasyon teknolojilerinin kullanılması, kurumsal kapasitenin artırılması ve veri tabanlarının oluşturulması sayesinde giderilmiştir. Ancak ihtiyaç tespitindeki ana problem kaynağı olan kayıt dışı sektörün büyüklüğü, yardıma başvuranların gelirlerinin belirlenmesindeki en büyük engel olmaya devam etmekte ve hane incelemelerinin yapıldığı bir ihtiyaç tespiti sistemini zorunlu hale getirmektedir.

İhtiyaç tespitinin ne kadar sıkı yapılacağı, yapılma şekilleri ve sosyal yardımların hedef kitlesi gibi sorulara verilen cevaplar, sosyal yardımlara karşı sahip olunan tutumlarla yakından ilgilidir ve bu çeşitlilik kamusal sosyal yardımlar konusunda, hükümet, muhalefet, SYGM'deki bürokratlar ve SYDV çalışanları gibi farklı aktörler arasında da görülmektedir.

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ABBREVIATIONS

- ADNKS: Address based Registration System, *Adrese Dayalı Nüfus Kayıt Sistemi*
- AKP: Justice and Development Party, *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*
- ANAP: Motherland Party, *Anavatan Partisi*
- BDP: Peace and Democracy Party, *Bariş ve Demokrasi Partisi*
- CHP: Republican Peoples Party, *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*
- DDK: State Audit Council, *Devlet Denetleme Kurulu*
- DİE: State Statistics Institute, *Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü*
- DP: Democrat Party, *Demokrat Parti*
- DPT: State Planning Organization, *Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı*
- KİT: Public Economic Enterprise, *Kamu İktisadi Teşebbüsleri*
- MERNİS: Central Population Management System, *Merkezi Nüfus İdaresi Sistemi*
- MHP: Nationalist Action Party, *Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*
- ODTÜ: Middle East Technical University, *Ortadoğu Teknik Üniversitesi*
- RTÜK: Radio and Television High Commission, *Radyo ve Televizyon Üst Kurulu*
- SHÇEK: Social Services and Child Protection Institute, *Sosyal Hizmetler ve Çocuk Esirgeme Kurumu*
- SOYBİS: Social Assistance Information System, *Sosyal Yardım Bilgi Sistemi*
- SRMP: Social Risk Mitigation Project, *Sosyal Riski Azaltma Projesi*
- SYDGM: General Directorate of Social Assistance and Solidarity, *Sosyal Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışma Genel Müdürlüğü*
- SYDTF: Fund for the Encouragement of Social Assistance and Solidarity, *Sosyal Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışmayı Teşvik Fonu*
- SYDV: Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundations, *Sosyal Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışma Vakıfları*
- SYGM: General Directorate of Social Assistance, *Sosyal Yardımlar Genel Müdürlüğü*
- TÜBİTAK: The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey, *Türkiye Bilimsel ve Teknolojik Araştırma Kurumu*
- TÜİK: Turkish Statistical Institute, *Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu*

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Selecting the beneficiaries of social assistance is an important problem that became crucial with the early modern times. With the rise of capitalism new forms of poverty appeared creating an important social problem together with changing attitudes towards poverty and social assistance. The issue of selecting the beneficiaries, namely targeting has always been closely related to the kind of approach towards the poor, and social assistance.

Targeting and means testing are questions that were resolved to a great extent in the early industrialized countries, where the need for a central public social assistance mechanism appeared far earlier than the late-industrialized countries. The early industrialized countries had to cope with these issues of the institutionalization of a social assistance system and a means testing mechanism far earlier. However, in Turkey as in other late industrialized countries, the need for a central social assistance system together with the questions of who will be the beneficiaries and how these groups will be selected, is a recent problem that appeared as the result of changing forms of poverty due to the capitalist transformation. The previous mechanisms of traditional support disappeared with the dissolution of agriculture, increase in urban poverty, and urban transformation.

The institutionalization of social assistance and development of the methods for targeting emerged in the last decade in Turkey, which was also a period in which the social assistance distribution by the AKP became a serious point of discussion

among the opposition groups and in the media. With the uneven increase in the amount, with the newspaper articles on abuse and corruption in the distribution of assistance, the issue became a major topic and an important source of critiques on the social policy of the AKP by the opposition. However, despite the critiques and disturbance, there were also improvements. In terms of improving the institutional capacity, the use of information technologies, keeping records of the applicants and enhancing the cooperation among other institutions, there were improvements despite the continuation of problems.

Along with tracing the process of institutionalization, this thesis will reflect the process in terms of the ongoing problems and the debates around the issue with regard the differences in various actors. The ongoing problems such as the fragmented structure of social assistance programs, or being exposed to personal and political influence will be discussed. However, foremost, informality was a major problem which made it impossible to check for the accuracy of declared incomes, necessitating different forms of means testing with social investigations made through household visits.

Despite the fact that the social assistance has been discussed much, it is not possible to state that it has been evaluated in a deliberate way. The arguments mostly have ranged from the criticisms that the AKP distributed too much assistance and created a “culture of charity” by the opposition, to the opinions by the AKP supporters that equated social assistance with the social state.

On the other hand, on targeting and means testing most of the recent literature was produced by the World Bank, since means tested social assistance programs were prescribed for poverty alleviation. These types of programs and

literature were considerably influential in the institutionalization of social assistance and means testing system in Turkey. However, the World Bank literature mostly involves descriptions of individual programs or comparisons of programs on the basis of a single region or a single targeting method. They mostly deal with the questions of decreasing the costs, increasing the performance of programs, how to increase the efficiency and the problems about implementation. However, not many studies have been conducted on the place and meaning of targeting in the broader political economic context. There are more critical studies on social assistance and social policy, but targeting is not examined as a main issue in them. Moreover, means-testing and targeting are not the focus of studies on Turkey either.

Many studies have been done on social assistance and social policy in Turkey from various perspectives, and about Social Help and Solidarity Foundations, which are the main institutions through which social assistance is distributed. A wide variety of studies, mostly focusing on the institutional organization of these foundations have been published. However, despite the fact that there are studies on social assistance and social policy in Turkey, how the beneficiaries of the social assistance are defined and selected have not been studied in detail, beyond being mentioned in these studies. Especially a study on the changes in social assistance and means testing in from a historical perspective is an important gap within the literature on social assistance. Nevertheless, despite the necessity of such a broader historical study, in this thesis I will focus on changes and institutionalization in the post 2001 period when social assistance, hence targeting, the truly poor became a major issue for the first time in the history of the Republic. I will explain how targeting is being done in Turkey as well as argue whether it is effective or not. In addition, I will

discuss why targeting and means-testing became an important agenda of the government in the first decade of the 2000s, and how the issue was discussed in that period by the policy makers. I examine the efforts to systemize the process of selecting the recipients of the social assistance, namely the institutionalization process of means-testing. I also examine the problems and issues in creating an effective mechanism for targeting, especially the lack of institutional capacity of the state.

As emphasized, none of the studies on social assistance in Turkey has examined targeting of the beneficiaries. A broader historical study of how the beneficiaries of the social assistance selected in the history of Turkey is also beyond the scope of this thesis. For this reason, in the part on the historical background, I used secondary sources, and I constrained my research to the period after 2001, when the Social Risk Mitigation Project (*Sosyal Riski Azaltma Projesi, SRMP*), a project on social assistance that was conducted in cooperation with the World Bank, had started which later became a major part of institutionalization of social assistance.

For the historical background of social assistance and targeting, I greatly benefitted from Ayşe Buğra's *Yoksulluk, Kapitalizm ve Türkiye'de Sosyal Politika* (Poverty, Capitalism and Social Policy in Turkey)¹ in which she traces the changes in the attitude towards poverty and the poor in its relation with changing forms of capitalism in republican Turkey from a historical perspective. Also, Nadir Özbek's *Cumhuriyet Türkiye'sinde Sosyal Güvenlik ve Sosyal Politikalar* (Social Security and

¹ Ayşe Buğra, *Kapitalizm, Yoksulluk ve Türkiye'de Sosyal Politika*, (İstanbul: İletişim, 2008).

Social Policy in Republican Turkey)² was used for following the developments in the social assistance in the history of republic.

I also used some other master theses on social assistance and especially on SYDVs. Some of these documents offered the best completions and arrangement of information about the organization of the foundations even though they only deal with the organizational structure and the formal information on the foundations.

“Sosyal Politikada Dönüşüm ve Sosyal Yardımlar: Sosyal Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışmayı Teşvik Fonu Örneği”³ by Seyran Gürsoy was one of such helpful studies. “Social Assistance as a Poverty Alleviation Strategy: Case of Altındağ Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundation”⁴ by Aydın Apaydın was one of the few theses went beyond the formal and organizational structure of foundations. It dealt not merely with the process of applying and being a recipient of social assistance, but also how the whole process is perceived by the recipients themselves.

As primary sources, I mainly used news reports, parliamentary laws, parliamentary minutes, reports, and the publications of various governmental units on social assistance and interviews. First of all, I examined the main laws about social assistance and then the more detailed regulations about the Social Help and Solidarity Foundations and changes in these regulations. Then, I examined the reports and publications of the Ministry of Family and Social Policy, and Strategic Plans prepared for the future terms. I also benefitted from the reports and publications of the State

² Nadir Özbek, *Cumhuriyet Türkiyesi 'nde Sosyal Güvenlik ve Sosyal Politikalar* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı/Emeklilik Gözetim Merkezi, 2006).

³ Seyran Gürsoy, “Sosyal Politikada Dönüşüm ve Sosyal Yardımlar: Sosyal Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışmayı Teşvik Fonu Örneği” (MA. Thesis, Kocaeli Üniversitesi, 2011).

⁴ Aydın Apaydın, “Social Assistance as a Poverty Alleviation Strategy: Case of Altındağ Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundation” (MA Thesis, Middle East Technical University, 2001).

Audit Council (*Devlet Denetleme Kurulu*, DDK) and the State Planning Organization (*Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı*, DPT). Second, I examined, *Milliyet* between 2001 and 2014, especially for the news on the social assistance distribution. Lastly, I scanned the minutes of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey in order to examine how the issue of social assistance and poverty had been discussed among the parliaments and in the cabinet of ministers, also in order to see whether there are peculiarities or recurring themes in the way the issue discussed.

Apart from the written sources, I also conducted interviews with bureaucrats and SYDV staff. First, I conducted interviews with three officials of high rank from the General Directorate of Social Assistance (*Sosyal Yardımlar Genel Müdürlüğü*, SYGM). Two of them were from the Research and Development Department and one of them was from the administration. Second, I conducted an interview with seven personnel from the Ministry of Development; all of them specialized on social assistance and services.

Lastly, I conducted interviews with personnel from one of the SYDVs. I conducted these interviews in the SYDV in Çorlu, a district of Tekirdağ. Çorlu was 100 km far from Istanbul and one of the most densely populated areas in Turkey. At first, it was not my intention to conduct these interviews in Çorlu. I had planned to do them in Istanbul. However, when I tried to contact with the provincial directorate of the foundations in Istanbul, it became clear that it would be difficult to do the interviews in a region with which I was not familiar. It seemed almost impossible to get appointments with the officials without previous personal contact or mediators, and the workers in the directorate informed me that the only information that they were allowed to give could be found in their websites and that I needed a special

permission for more information. These difficulties directed me to the places that I would find and establish contacts more easily.

Çorlu, one of the larger cities in the province of Tekirdağ, was definitely such a place due to my personal relations, so it became a possible place for the interviews. Due to the rapid industrialization that began in the 1970s, Çorlu became a magnet for immigrants looking for employment in industry. The province of Tekirdağ was one of the three cities which have received migration the most. Along with industrialization another major reason of the population increase was the Bulgarian immigrants who came with the population exchange in 1978 and forced migration in 1989 and were settled in Çorlu and neighboring districts.⁵ As a result, the speed of population increase has risen to 45.47 per cent in 1985 and 63.91 per cent in 2000,⁶ which was much higher than average and Çorlu was the district which took most of these migration along with Çerkezköy.

However, despite the intense industrialization and the belief and hopes for wider employment possibilities, the rate of unemployment (11.9 per cent) was only slightly lower than the average unemployment of the country (14 per cent) and the 45th in the ranking within the 81 cities, in 2009.⁷ Despite being lower than the average of Turkey, the poverty rate of the region of the West Marmara⁸ was also, not so low

⁵Muzaffer Kaya, “The Emergence and Development of a Satellite Industrial Town at the Edge of the Istanbul Metropolitan Area: Çerkezköy” (M.A. Thesis, Boğaziçi University: 2013) 292.

⁶ TÜİK, “Genel Nüfus Sayımları Veritabanı,” accessed on 06 January 2014, http://www.tuik.gov.tr/PreTablo.do?alt_id=1047

⁷ TÜİK, “Bölgesel Göstergeler 2010, TR21 Tekirdağ, Edirne, Kırklareli,” (Ankara: TÜİK, 2011), 25. Accessed on 06 January 2014. http://www.tuik.gov.tr/Kitap.do?metod=KitapDetay&KT_ID=0&KITAP_ID=193

⁸ West Marmara is constituted from five cities; Tekirdağ, Kırklareli, Edirne, Balıkesir and Çanakkale according to “Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics” which is a classification of EU.

that it constituted an atypical situation. The regional poverty rate on according to income-based poverty lines was 13 per cent in the West Marmara while it was 9.6 per cent in Istanbul and 16.3 per cent in Turkey in 2012.⁹ The income distribution was also near Turkey's average: The bottom 20 per cent earned 7.1 while the top 20 per cent earned 44.6 per cent in Tekirdağ, Edirne, and Kırklareli.¹⁰

Despite the fact that Tekirdağ was regarded as a more developed city in socio-economic terms than most of the cities in Turkey, it was not an atypical example that constituted an obstacle to conducting research in it, as the rest of the statistics reflect. Moreover, Çorlu was important regarding a study of social assistance, since it had experienced a rapid and intense industrialization along with high immigration rates as a consequence. It would be the expectation to observe the impacts of the rapid and intense industrialization, which was said to create the new forms of poverty.

For the research in Çorlu, I interviewed four out of the ten personnel of the SYDV, one of them who had been working there since 1989. I also interviewed one of the members of the Board of Trustee of the SYDV, which was the board that makes the final decisions regarding the process of selecting the beneficiaries. Moreover, I accompanied the personnel of the SYDV on their “home-visits” to conduct household investigation, through which they try to collect information about the “real” income and conditions of the applicants for the means test. During the

⁹ TÜİK, “Bölgesel İstatistikler,” (poverty rates are calculated according to regional poverty lines), accessed on 06 January 2014. <http://tuikapp.tuik.gov.tr/Bolgesel/degiskenlerUzerindenSorgula.do?durum=acKapa&menuNo=414&altMenuGoster=1&secilenDegiskenListesi=#>

¹⁰ Bottom 20 per cent takes 6 per cent while top 20 per cent take 48.3 per cent for Turkey. TÜİK, “Bölgesel Göstergeler, 2010, TR21 Tekirdağ, Edirne, Kırklareli,” (Ankara: TÜİK, 2011), 80. Accessed on 06 January 2014, http://www.tuik.gov.tr/Kitap.do?metod=KitapDetay&KT_ID=0&KITAP_ID=193

visits, the personnel conducted three cases of means test for social assistance and six cases of income test for the General Health Insurance.

After this introduction chapter, Chapter Two evaluated the attitudes towards poverty and targeting from the early modern attitudes and ending with the World Bank's approach to targeting. The World Bank was a major institution that has been influential in the spread of means testing in cash social assistance programs to the late industrialized countries in recent decades.

Then, in Chapter Three a brief background for social assistance and means testing in Turkey will be given dealing with the AKP period in more detail. The Chapter Four discussed the institutionalization of social assistance and means testing, introducing the major problems, explaining the process, and then reflecting on to what extent these problems have been removed.

The Chapter Five introduces the discussions on targeting and social assistance in Turkey with the different positions of the actors during the institutionalization period and then examining the case of Çorlu SYDV. The problems that have been continuous in practice will be evaluated, and the chapter will end with an evaluation of the attitudes towards targeting.

CHAPTER 2

ATTITUDES TOWARD POVERTY AND TARGETING: PAST AND PRESENT

Institutions of Social Assistance and the Early Modern Problem of Targeting

Both poverty and selecting the truly poor that deserve social aid are not new phenomena. However, since the sixteenth century, beginning from the early years of capitalism, a change occurred in the attitudes towards the poor with the transforming economic structures.

Poor relief and charity in preindustrial Europe had functions in society. As Marco H. D. van Leeuwen writes, the wealthy had the obligation to help the poor, and the poor had to accept the legitimacy of the social order.¹¹ Giving alms, the rich had the chance to buy “salvation,” while accepting alms the poor secured their subsistence. For the wealthy, it was also a way to control the destitute, who were believed to become discontent easily. Relief was a tool with which the elites tried to “civilize” or “discipline” the poor.

Overall, poverty was seen as a moral problem that was a consequence of an immoral life, idleness, and lack of discipline. Consequently, relief was mostly given on the condition of work, which meant for the poor being subject to some form of

¹¹Marco H. D. van Leeuwen, “Logic of Charity: Poor Relief in Preindustrial Europe,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 14, no. 4 (Spring 1994): 593.

social control. Deserving aid required behaving “decently”; anyone who accepted relief could not be involved in illegal or illegitimate activities such as crime, begging or prostitution. Therefore, there has always been a tendency to differentiate between the “deserving” poor, and the non-deserving poor based on the criteria of morality.

Means-testing and poverty in the “modern” sense were thus phenomena of sixteenth century Europe. The increase in the number of the people who had difficulties supporting themselves due to changing social relations with the rise of capitalism together with the changing meanings of and attitudes about poverty made it necessary that of the public authorities intervene. Due to the transition from feudalism to capitalism beginning in the sixteenth century, the number of people in the cities increased who came from the countryside where they had been unable to survive due to the commercialization in agriculture. These rootless people also could not support themselves in the cities due to fluctuations in the labor market, which made regular work the exception. At the same time, the meaning attributed to poverty changed. Work was rising as a new source of social value, with the poor becoming the “reserve army” of society. In such a context, beggars and vagrants were no longer tolerated. Together with the people with no property they were seen as threat, and as sources of disease and moral deterioration in the cities.

As Bronislaw Geremek writes, several attempts were made to deal with the problem of vagrancy in the sixteenth century by the central authority in England, first by enforcing laws against vagrancy and begging, and levelling cruel punishments against them.¹² Driving vagrants out of the cities and closing the gates against them

¹² Bronislaw Geremek, *Poverty: A History* (Cornwall: Blackwell, 1994), 164.

were other methods of protecting the cities from the poor and the vagrant. However, prohibiting and punishment were not solutions to the problem, and were only a “prelude” to a much broader reorganization of social aid.¹³

The beggars and vagrancy became to be problems that necessitate a general system of control and regulating the poor. For instance, in 1531 an edict by Henry VIII, ordered towns to make lists of those unable to work due to old age, sickness, or infirmity. Those with these conditions received a certificate allowing them to beg in specified areas. In 1535, another edict was proclaimed which made it obligatory for local authorities and the wealthy to support the “genuine poor” who were unable to work.¹⁴ At the same time, for the able-bodied, there emerged special institutions called workhouses or poorhouses, where the able-bodied poor inhabit and received relief in return for work. However, the aim of these institutions was still more to discipline and deter the poor than profit or production, despite it being a time when capitalism was on the rise. Despite the enforcement of these edicts, which shows the concern of the central authorities on poverty and vagrancy, the responsibility to provide support was still that of the local community and voluntary contributions.

One of the most important developments was the “Poor Law,” which would be the basis of the social policy of England until its reformation in 1834. The law took its final formulation in 1601, as a result of intense discussion and a series of legislation between 1557 and 1601 in the aftermath of a series of revolts due to poor harvests from 1554 to 1457.¹⁵ Hence, the origins of the law, according to Geremek

¹³ Ibid., 163.

¹⁴ Ibid., 164.

¹⁵ Ibid., 165.

lay in the radical transformations in the social structure that took place with the emergence of a new economic system.¹⁶ Geremek writes that the three principles of the poor law, which was actually no more than a codification of the existing practices, were institutional aid to the poor, job creation, the imposition of work, and the repression of the vagrants.¹⁷

Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward established a relationship between the assistance to the poor and the concerns such as muting the civil disorder and regulating the labor market.¹⁸ Emphasizing the coincidence between the emergence of the “free” wage laborer and organized public provision for the destitute, they explain that in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries poor relief arose when a threat of civil revolt due to a bad harvest or high prices emerged.

Relief also was used to enforce work and regulate the labor market in various ways. The enforcement of work was a common feature of social policy throughout the sixteenth century England. Even an edict, “statute on artisans” promulgated in 1563 made work obligatory. All men between 20 and 60 who were unable to find work had to accept the work that was offered to them, mostly as servants in the households of the gentry.¹⁹ It was very common to make work the condition of social aid. Moreover, the relief was deliberately kept under the market wages in order to make people prefer to work. However, work enforcement, was actually a contradiction at a time when there was a direct link between poverty and

¹⁶ Ibid., 179.

¹⁷ Ibid., 166-67.

¹⁸ Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, *Regulating the Poor: The Functions of Public Welfare* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 8.

¹⁹ Geremek, *Poverty: A History*, 165.

unemployment. In any case, from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, the practices of indoor and outdoor relief were used together. Also, despite the disciplining aspect of the practices of the Poor Law of the seventeenth century, as T.H. Marshall writes, the Elizabethan Poor Law had an ambiguous position between the planned society and free market economy.²⁰ The Poor Law was “the last remains of a system which tried to adjust real income to the social needs and status of the citizen and not solely to the market value of his labor.”²¹ The traces of the social rights of the twentieth century can be traced back to the Poor Law, which was based on being a member of a village or a town.

The alms-giving and the charitable attitudes of both private initiatives and the church had always been widespread practices and selecting the poor who deserved aid had always been a concern. The elderly, women, and children, the disabled and decent families who were unable those were the ones who were regarded as “deserving.” However, as the social assistance became subjected to more central and systemized policies due to the changing forms and scope of poverty, so did the selecting mechanisms. Making lists of the needy, registering poor families, issuing tickets or relief, the surveillance of recipients and strict control of them, sometimes to the extent to make daily visits to their homes were all the practices that emerged in the early years of industrialization and continued to the present day.²²

The attitudes towards poverty changed in the nineteenth century. Karl Polanyi describes the century as a period in which the self-regulating market system

²⁰ T. H. Marshall, “Citizenship and Social Class,” in *Class, Citizenship and Social Development: Essays by T. H. Marshall* (New York: Anchor Books, 1965), 87.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 88.

²² Piven and Cloward, *Regulating the Poor: The Functions of Public Welfare*, 11.

dominated the society for the first time in history.²³ Indeed, nineteenth century society solved the problem of the separation between the deserving and non-deserving poor in a most radical way.

The dominant ideology of the nineteenth century was a merciless market system in which the markets were regarded as the main organizer of society. The social reality of the nineteenth century was a slight improvement of the living standards of the working class in general, but was accompanied by cycles of economic crises which caused pauperization among the working class and some other parts of the population. Uncertainty becoming a reality for most of the population.²⁴ Michael Rose writes that the general attitudes to the poor in the Victorian era were “unconcern” or “complacency.”²⁵ Whereas it was accepted that working people could be at the risk of being unable to provide subsistence for themselves and their family in the previous century, in the nineteenth century, the able-bodied were not regarded as deserving assistance. As Marshall writes, poverty was regarded as “a natural and necessary element in society, because it was the spur of poverty that induced labor to create riches.”²⁶ Destitution or indigence, lacking the means to live, was distinguished from poverty as “an evil which must be cured, or at least relieved.”²⁷ Hence, not the poor but the destitute were the target of the social

²³ Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), 135-162.

²⁴ Geremek, *Poverty: A History*, 235.

²⁵ Michael E. Rose, *The Relief of Poverty, 1834-1914* (Hong Kong: Macmillan Education, [1972] 1986), 22.

²⁶ T. H. Marshall, “Welfare State and Affluent Society,” in *Class, Citizenship and Social Development: Essays by T. H. Marshall* (New York: Anchor Books, 1965), 283.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 283.

policies of the time. The condition of the poor, which signified those who had to work in order to live, was not a matter of concern.

The dominant view was that it was not the responsibility of the state, but rather the philanthropic duty of the community to create jobs and provide for the survival of those who could not provide their means of subsistence.²⁸ In 1834, in England with amendments to the Poor Law, outdoor relief was abolished completely so that people who lacked the means of subsistence had to accept entrance to a workhouse to acquire relief. The two principles of the Act were the “less eligibility” and workhouse test. The former envisioned decreasing the eligibility through the deterioration of the conditions in the workhouse so that only those who were really in bad shape would seek enter a workhouse. However, with the law, the practice of outdoor relief continued, though to decreasing degree and was highly discouraged.

The Poor Law of the previous century had had a trace of the social rights of citizenship. A legacy of this Poor Law in the nineteenth century was treating the needy disassociated from citizenship status, taking the civil right of liberty from the people in the workhouse and depriving them also of any political right.²⁹ Therefore, Marshall writes that “those who accepted relief must cross the road separated the community of citizens from the outcast company of the destitute.”³⁰ With a belief in the free market economy without any intervention from the state, “self-help” and “independence” were the virtues of the Victorian society and those who were unable

²⁸ Geremek, *Poverty: A History*, 235.

²⁹ Marshall, “Citizenship and Social Class,” in *Class, Citizenship and Social Development: Essays by T. H. Marshall*, 88.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

to support themselves could not be saved from humiliation.³¹ For instance, in 1891, in a study on the people who stayed in the workhouses, it was noted “drink, immorality, laziness, pauper associations, or heredity” as “evident causes” of their condition.³²

The Rise of the Welfare State: Universalism and Targeting

After the Second World War, a different understanding of welfare provisions which was regarded more on the basis of a citizenship right than charity or the benevolence of society towards the poor emerged. In this almost 30 years, social policy emerged not as a tool directed merely at the poor; rather, it was more about the status of citizenship and social solidarity in the aftermath of a social catastrophe in the shape of the 1929 Depression and two world wars.³³

According to Marshall’s conceptualization, citizenship is an equal status which contains civil, political, and social rights within itself. He explains the gradual development of these rights of citizenship in England, historically.³⁴ In the eighteenth century, the civil rights gained were the basic rights for individual freedom. In the nineteenth century, political rights came with the enfranchisement and the right to be elected. In the twentieth century, the last phase of the evolution of citizenship began and the social rights, meaning basic social welfare and security to be a full member in

³¹ Rose, *The Relief of Poverty, 1834-191*, 22-23.

³² Charles Booth, “Enumeration and Classification of Paupers, and State Pensions for Aged,” *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society* 54, no. 4 (Dec., 1891): 618.

³³ Ayşe Buğra, *Kapitalizm, Yoksulluk ve Türkiye’de Sosyal Politika*, 65.

³⁴ Marshall, “Citizenship and Social Class,” in *Class, Citizenship and Social Development: Essays by T. H. Marshall*, 78-126.

society, started to be formed. In the aftermath of the Second World War, the Welfare-State was established, which ensured basic social rights to its members on the basis of equal citizenship status. With Keynesian demand-side policies and the promise of full employment, these states guaranteed a minimum welfare to their citizens, mostly in return for contribution to a social security system on the basis of work.

However, it also should be noted that there was not only one form of welfare state. Therefore, using Polanyi's term of "commodification," he says that social policies and welfare regimes should be evaluated on the basis of their capacity for "de-commodification": that is, to say their capacity for making people independent of market forces.³⁵ For instance, according to a classical distinction, residual welfare states take responsibility in cases of market failure and concern only with the weakest segments of the population whereas institutional welfare states have a commitment of welfare of the whole population.³⁶ He writes that "It is not the mere presence of a social right, but the corresponding rules and preconditions, which dictate the extent to which welfare programs' offer genuine alternatives to market dependence."³⁷ For this reason, instead of a welfare state, Gosta Esping-Andersen uses the term "welfare regimes" which, in his conceptualization, are constituted with the interplay between the state, family, and the private sector.³⁸ Social policies address the problems of inequality, and aim to diminish them. However, as Esping-Andersen states, at the

³⁵ Gosta Esping-Andersen, *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, [1990] 1996), 21-23.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 20. For the classical distinction between the residual and institutional welfare states, see Richard Titmuss, *Social Policy: An Introduction* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1974), 47-59.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 22.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 26-32.

same time, they may create other types of inequality and stratification. He differentiates between three ideal-types of welfare regimes with respect to de-commodification liberal, conservative, and social democratic. The ideal-types of Esping-Andersen are analytical abstractions that exist in reality only in hybrid forms, and in each case they produce their own version of stratification, yet in an importantly varying degree.³⁹

As Marshall wrote, for the early years of the foundations of the welfare state, the one clear aim of the social policy was the abolition of the Poor Law. Indeed, the groups that were first disassociated from the stigma of pauperism were the elderly, the sick, and the unemployed through the Old Age Pensions and National Insurance Acts of 1908 and 1911.⁴⁰ The major aim was decreasing the number of those needed the relief of the state to a minimum by the creation of “social rights vested in the citizen, the rights to an acceptable standard of economic welfare, to health and, one might add, to education.”⁴¹ In 1929, by the Local Government Act, the workhouse system was abolished, and finally in 1948, the Poor Law was completely abolished by a National Government Act. At last, Marshall says, the “Poor Law was broken up, leaving a Public Assistance authority to deal with what it was hoped would be exceptional cases only.”⁴²

Beveridge, who may be the most influential person on the social policy of the future decades, states that in the new system, it should be designed:

³⁹ Ibid., 55.

⁴⁰ Marshall, “Welfare State and Affluent Society,” in *Class, Citizenship and Social Development: Essays by T. H. Marshall*, 289.

⁴¹ Ibid., 290.

⁴² Ibid., 291.

a unified universal contributory insurance to ensure at all times to all men a subsistence income for themselves and their families as of right; that is to say without any form of means test or inquiry about what means they had.⁴³

Marshall states that this view:

expressed a spirit that was definitely new. Its source was the common experience of war, when the welfare needs which had to be met by government action had little or nothing to do with personal income or class distinctions but sprang from the fortunes to which all people were exposed.⁴⁴

The post-war atmosphere, when all people felt exposed to risk and insecurity regardless of their class or position in society, gave way to the will in the society for the government be the responsible for the welfare of all its citizens. The restriction of social assistance or services to a certain class through means test became meaningless since in such conditions “class” also became pointless.⁴⁵ The Welfare State, he writes, “was born at a time when the sense of national solidarity created by the war coincided with the enforced restraints on consumption and the regime of sharing imposed by the post-war scarcity.”⁴⁶

The circumstances of the post-war period allowed the popular support of a universalist social policy design. However, the universalistic schemes started to be

⁴³ Ibid., 292, ref. to Hansard, House of Lords vol. 182 (1953), 675-676.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 293.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Marshall, “Welfare State and Affluent Society,” in *Class, Citizenship and Social Development: Essays by T. H. Marshall*, 296.

questioned again just after a couple of decades. Actually, even in the welfare state era, not all welfare provisions were universal. Targeted programs were the remainder of the Poor Laws that aimed to be broken up with the establishment of welfare states.⁴⁷ However, they remained in use in all the Western states along with the universal programs and services due to various concerns such as limited resources and efficient use of them. For example, in the United States, the Social Security Act of 1935 introduced universal old age pensions together with a means-tested program, Aid to Families with Dependent Children.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, while targeting and means testing became major issues within the social policy strategies of the US, in Europe, the main pillar of the welfare regime was the universal social insurance system. This different emphasis on different types of welfare provisions created a basis for separation between the welfare states into “social assistance states” and “social security states.”⁴⁹

Korpi and Palme state that with the Second World War, targeting became an important issue, and in 1960s poverty programs that are directed to poor became widespread.⁵⁰ While means-tested programs became prominent, the focus of social studies on anti-poverty programs moved to the efficiency of targeting. Even so, the measure of the success of an anti-poverty program was seen as the target of

⁴⁷ Ibid., 289.

⁴⁸ Walter Korpi and Joakim Palme, “The Paradox of Redistribution and Strategies of Equality: Welfare State Institutions, Inequality, and Poverty in the Western Countries” *American Sociological Review* 63, no. 5 (October 1998): 662.

⁴⁹ Piven and Cloward, *Regulating the Poor: The Functions of Public Welfare*, 409-412. For more information on the separation between social security and social assistance states, see John Myles, “Social Structures and Welfare Policies: Perspectives for Canada and the United States” Departmental Working Paper (Ottawa: Carleton University, 1991), 91-98.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 662.

efficiency, as the forerunners of a huge array of World Bank studies on targeting some decades later.

Mostly some economists defended means-tested anti-poverty programs against the universalistic earnings- or status-related insurance programs which were widespread in Europe. Emphasizing the effects on the labor market of the social assistance benefits, programs specific to the poor were regarded as the most efficient to fight poverty. Resources that were channeled to all citizens in the form of universal social services or insurance were seen as waste. Since it was assumed that universal schemes would not have redistributive effects, even they did not increase inequality between the poor and the rich.⁵¹

However, there were those who criticized means testing and others who defended universalistic studies, even if programs that targeted the poor may have had a more income equalizing effect. Mostly the critiques were directed at the ways and process of determining eligibility for assistance and the eligibility requirements.⁵² The definition of the needy was ambiguous and the whole process of determining eligibility was a humiliating experience for the claimants, according to these critiques.

George Hoshino, for instance, in 1967, gave the example of the Social Security Act (1935), which granted cash transfers or medical care for people in need. The “need,” he stated, was not defined and it was also not described how this need

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² George Hoshino, “Simplification of the Means Test and Its Consequences” *Social Service Review* 41, no. 3 (Sep., 1967): 240.

was to be determined.⁵³ The definition apparently was left to the states in the US. The system puts the public assistance worker in a position of “eligibility determinator,” a public assistance worker gave her whole time dealing with measuring the small amount of resources of the applicants, making household visits, and determining the value of the household stuff.⁵⁴ The whole process necessitated a huge administrative body and expenditures, which was regarded as another negative point.

The major problem was regarded as the “punitive climate” in which public assistance was administered.⁵⁵ However, for most, the problem originated not in the public assistance, but in the means-test. *Social Service Review* published an article that said:

As long as it is necessary for a man to submit to an investigation regarding his lack of means and then to be certified for public aid on the basis of degree of destitution to which he has fallen, there is a loss of self-respect and independence when such aid is accepted.⁵⁶

The necessity of proving the condition of need was a constant source of discomfort which was inherent in the means test.⁵⁷ The process beginning from application and until the reception of public assistance was described as “a demeaning experience” by Hoshino, while another scholar described the tests of

⁵³ Ibid., 239; and Editor’s Note, “Abolish the Means Test for Old Age Assistance” *Social Service Review* 17, no.2 (Jun., 1943): 213.

⁵⁴ Editor’s Note, “Abolish the Means Test for Old Age Assistance,” 213.

⁵⁵ Hoshino, “Simplification of the Means Test and Its Consequences,” 240.

⁵⁶ Editor’s Note, “The Deterrent Public Assistance: Means Tests” *Social Service Review* 18, no. 2 (Jun., 1944): 246.

⁵⁷ Hoshino, “Simplification of the Means Test and Its Consequences,” 240.

investigation of need as “mean tests” as well as “means tests.”⁵⁸ If a person accepted to be investigated through a means test, she could be regarded as needy, or alternatively, the applicant’s statement could be accepted instead of conducting investigations on the person regularly, which would result in surveillance and regular monitoring of the sources of income.⁵⁹ Some of the traditional and generally accepted means test applications could be listed as “Home visiting; collateral calls; the required submittal of rent receipts court orders, bank books, fuel bills, and other ‘documents;’ registration with the social service exchange;” and “general rubric of ‘verification.’”⁶⁰

Such applications were regarded as detrimental to the human dignity along with causing a massive bureaucracy and expense. Efforts should be made to develop ways of social policy that removed the necessity of means test. This was valid not only for the groups who were traditionally regarded as deserving, such as the elderly, disabled or children, but also the able-bodied. According to an article of *Social Service Review*, the unemployed should be taken care of “as unemployed men and not as destitute person to be investigated by a public assistance bureau.”⁶¹ An example was given, of times when there were fees for education before it was made compulsory. Parents had preferred not to send their children to school rather than accept the humiliation of a means test for a remission of fees.

⁵⁸ Editor’s Note, “Abolish the Means Test for Old Age Assistance,” 213.

⁵⁹ Hoshino, “Simplification of the Means Test and Its Consequences,” 240.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 240.

⁶¹ Editor’s Note, “The Deterrent Public Assistance: Means Tests,” 246.

According to opponents of the means test, if it could not be abolished immediately, at least it should be mitigated. The whole process of the means test, according to Hoshino should “respect for the client’s dignity and integrity” and “protect their dignity, privacy, and constitutional rights.”⁶² If it must be used, it should be “objective and reasonably generous.”⁶³ For instance, putting the income threshold at the income-tax level, excluding the gifts of relatives and small grants from the Church out of the calculation of the income would be a beginning for a generous means test. Or the removal means test for the relatives of was offered.⁶⁴ Another recommendation was encouraging the use of declarations by the applicants for the eligibility for assistance.⁶⁵ Until an inconsistency within the declaration of the client or until a discrepancy between the state registrations and declared information, the statements of the applicants would be considered reliable.

Apart from the means test, Richard M. Titmuss, the founder of Social Administration as academic discipline, in 1974, described the whole process of social assistance as a “social process of stigmatization.”⁶⁶ He related the stigma to the “generalized values and mythologies of American values” such as independence, work, thrift and private enterprise which are similar to the values of the nineteenth century Victorian era. Those who benefit from the public services were regarded as “self-confessed failures.” Especially those who apply for public assistance were said

⁶² Hoshino, “Simplification of the Means Test and Its Consequences,” 241.

⁶³ Ibid., 239; and Editor’s Note, “Abolish the Means Test for Old Age Assistance,” 213.

⁶⁴ Editor’s Note, “The Deterrent Public Assistance: Means Tests,” 246.

⁶⁵ Jules H. Berman, “The Means Test: Welfare Provisions of the 1965 Social Security Amendments” *Social Service Review* 40, no. 2 (Jun., 1966): 173-74.

⁶⁶ Richard M. Titmuss, “*Laissez-Faire* and Stigma,” in *Social Policy: An Introduction* (London: George Allen & Unwin 1974), 45.

to feel “pauperized.” Also Marshall emphasized that the programs that targeted the poor came with stigma. Although, the means test had an equalizing affect in the economic sense and through them the condition of the worst-off would be improved, this would come together with “psychological class discrimination,” just like the Poor Law, which made “pauper,” “a derogatory term defining a class” through the stigma attached to the recipients.⁶⁷

Korpi and Palme emphasized that the means-tested social policy programs cause segregation between the various income groups, whereas universalistic programs tend to generate coalition and solidarity in society.⁶⁸ The income threshold in the means-tested programs resulted in a split within the workers, driving the better-off to cooperate with the middle-class against the lower classes of the society.

However, apart from solidarity creation there were studies that question the assumption of the equalizing effect of means-tested strategies. For instance, there were those who defended a system of fund that would be created by taxation and be “accessible to all, irrespective of their income, occupation, or social position,” with the reason that in the absence of universalism, the “conditions of civilization can be enjoyed only by the rich.”⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Marshall, “Citizenship and Social Class,” in *Class, Citizenship and Social Development: Essays by T. H. Marshall*, 111-112.

⁶⁸ Korpi and Palme, “The Paradox of Redistribution and Strategies of Equality: Welfare State Institutions, Inequality, and Poverty in the Western Countries,” 662.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 662.

The Welfare State under Attack

While the literature on social policy was engaged with the discussions of means test and targeted social assistance programs, there was an attack on the welfare states, especially in the 1970s, when, in the aftermath of the oil crisis the shortcomings of the system rose on the surface and the generous welfare schemes started to be regarded as a burden on the budget. Welfare states have been criticized since their early establishment, and during the time, when they have been perceived as the most successful. The criticisms were not merely from the right. They also were criticized by the left as being too much work-centered, intervening people's lives, and also creating or enhancing the existing stratification in the society in different ways. However, for some time the discourse of social rights had continued to be the dominant view regardless of the ideological view of the governments.⁷⁰ But in the last quarter of the century, the ideological climate started to change; the belief that the welfare states were not sustainable became the main-stream attitude in the process of the restructuring of world capitalism, which was commonly referred as neo-liberalization. The state-led liberalism of the post-war period was identified as the source of the problem in the aftermath of the global crisis of capital accumulation. This process is marked by deregulation, privatization and liberalization, and the state was regarded as the biggest enemy of the free market society.

There was an attack on the welfare states but this did not mean a total decline of the welfare state, contrary to the general belief of that term. However, there

⁷⁰ Buğra, *Kapitalizm, Yoksulluk ve Türkiye'de Sosyal Politika*, 71.

was a change in the welfare regimes of the previous period. Marshall, for instance, stated that:

The ‘Welfare State’ passed away. Its institutions, practices, procedures and expertise are still with us, but they are operating in a different setting without the original consensus which welded them into a social system with a distinctive spirit of its own.⁷¹

He further said “it was difficult to convince a society turned materialist that the case for the principle of universality did not rest on materialist arguments at all.”⁷² The universality principle’s basis was the atmosphere of solidarity in society.

The relationship between the state and its citizens started to change and a new model of welfare governance developed.⁷³ The tendency of de-commodification in labor relations in the post war era left its place to the re-commodification of labor and other forms of relation between the state and citizens. The social-right based approach towards social policy weakened and the Keynesian demand-side policies left its place to supply-side policies, which put the responsibility of unemployment on the unemployed rather than the government, which was responsible for creating jobs for all with the direct intervention in the market in the previous era of welfare regimes.

The change in the welfare regimes also commonly referred to as a shift *from* “welfare to workfare,”⁷⁴ since it had become increasingly common not to use work as

⁷¹ Marshall, “Welfare State and Affluent Society,” in *Class, Citizenship and Social Development: Essays by T. H. Marshall*, 301.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 299.

⁷³ Buğra, *Kapitalizm, Yoksulluk ve Türkiye’de Sosyal Politika*, 80.

⁷⁴ Piven and Cloward, *Regulating the Poor: The Functions of Public Welfare*, 382-387.

a condition for receiving social assistance, and to enforce work-training programs to increase the employability of the poor. In the new ideological climate in which taking social assistance was associated with a negative meaning that viewed them as valueless, being dependent on the state and the emphasis on work to be a proper citizen became central in the social policy.⁷⁵ In this area, the emphasis within the social policy shifted from social security to social assistance as Piven and Cloward wrote.⁷⁶ The social policies of the era mainly directed the poor, with temporary, ambiguous terms, not on the basis of social citizenship.

The policies of the previous era had been to ensure full employability and the major social policy tool was social security, which covered most of the population in a time when the promise of full employment was close to reality. However, in the later period, the relation between growth and employment was interrupted. As the Keynesian demand-sided policies were replaced with supply-side policies that shifted the responsibility of finding work from the state to the unemployed themselves, the social policies were directed at those who were at risk of exclusion.

These policies that were directed to the poor, had a different logic behind from the policies of the post-war era in the sense that they were no longer based on the social citizenship rights as Marshall writes. The logic behind the increasing share of the policies that were directed to the poor and the shift from social security to social assistance was somewhat different from this understanding. Instead of aiming to make individuals full members of society, social assistance for the poor was given not as a right of citizenship, but as more like alms and charity. Along with being

⁷⁵ Buğra, *Kapitalizm, Yoksulluk ve Türkiye'de Sosyal Politika*, 79.

⁷⁶ Piven and Cloward, *Regulating the Poor: The Functions of Public Welfare*, 90-102.

mostly temporary and unclear in their conditions, receiving the social assistance necessitated proof of poverty. Being far away from enhancing individuals' full participation in society, social assistance was directed only towards the segments of population that were faced with the risk of total exclusion from the society.

After the short period of domination of these non-interventionist policies in social policy, in the late 1980s, the necessity of measures against poverty started to be expressed more and more. Hence, the means-tested assistance and means testing itself became a central point of studies on social policy. The discussions on means testing within the World Bank literature, which is the main institution that directs the social policy in the world, will be examined next.

The World Bank on Targeting

Poverty and Targeting

In the late 1980s, the mainstream belief that growth on its own was a necessary and sufficient means to poverty reduction started to be left aside. The idea that there would be no need for state action or additional social protection measures as long as the growth could be guaranteed, changed due to the persistence of poverty as a social problem. According to the World Bank and main-stream economics, the reasons for the insufficiency of growth to eradicate poverty were that the poor did not have the assets to participate in the growth process and the growth process was not in the sectors in which the poor predominated. These views about the inclusion of the poor in the market as a way of poverty reduction, without taking the forms of

participating in the economy into account, has been criticized widely, as will be explained in detail later. Whatever is assumed, the reason for the persistence of poverty was, more and more, it was understood that extra measures to cope with poverty should be taken.⁷⁷

The poverty reduction strategy of the Bank was based mainly on what the Bank itself described as “encouraging broad-based growth, human capital development [through health, education, and basic social services], and the provision of safety nets.”⁷⁸ Safety nets, according to their definition, are “programs that protect people or households against two kinds of adverse situations: chronic incapacity to work or earn a living; or temporary decline in earnings capacity due to cyclical declines in the economy or other temporary situations.”⁷⁹ With a limited budget, the most efficient and effective way of improving the condition of the poorest segments of the population was said to be means-tested poverty alleviation programs, although later studies questioned this view.

The cost-effectiveness of the public spending to be made for the poor was emphasized by the World Bank and this led to an increasing emphasis on reaching and properly targeting the poor. As a result, means testing gained importance so that finer targeting became the measurement for the success of a poverty reduction program. The underlying assumption was that with better targeting, fewer people would be beneficiaries and more resources could be spent for the “real” poor.

⁷⁷ For the interest of the World Bank on poverty reduction, see The World Bank annual reports, 1990, 1997, 2000.

⁷⁸ The World Bank, “The World Bank Annual Report 1997” (Washington D. C.: The World Bank, 1997), 13.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

With a constrained budget that could be spent for reducing poverty in the poorest segments of the population the best way was stated to give the transfers to the most poorest of the poor until they were raised to the level of the nearest group of the poor until all the money was spent.⁸⁰ This way of reducing poverty necessitated a mechanism for targeting the intended group of the population. The first step was a precise definition of the targeted group, which was a political decision. After the targeted groups were defined, a means should be found to identify the people in this targeted group and exclude those outside of the group.⁸¹

Below, the main problems and consideration in means testing in the World Bank literature will be explained in detail. Then, after various targeting methods are described briefly, the issues about the targeting performance will be clarified. Last, the more critical studies within the World Bank literature will be examined shortly. They criticize the focus on better targeting in the poverty alleviation programs and criticize the assumption that equalizes finer targeting with better poverty reduction.

The Problems and Difficulties of Targeting

It is not easy to properly reach the “truly” poor with targeted programs. Targeting can be both technically difficult and costly. Actually perfect targeting is

⁸⁰ Ravi Kanbur, “Macro Crisis and Targeting Transfers to the Poor” Commission on Growth and Development, Working Paper No. 66 (Washington D. C.: The World Bank, 2010), 3.

⁸¹ Margaret E. Grosh and Judy L. Baker, “Proxy Means Tests for Targeting Social Programs” Living Standards Measurement Study, Working Paper No. 118 (Washington D. C.: The World Bank, July 1995), 1-2.

impossible, as the World Bank states.⁸² Most the time it bears certain trade-offs between transferring resources only the most needy ones and political, technical, financial and other difficulties.

Administrative considerations are important issues in World Bank poverty alleviation programs. Cash transfers require a more complicated institutional system and a broader capacity than in-kind systems. The advantage of the cash transfers, on the other hand, is that the cost of operating the program is lower. However, despite the need for a more complicated institutional structure more and more cash transfers are implemented across the world, since they are more successful in empowering the poor, while in-kind-transfers are more paternalistic since they assume to know what the poor need more than the poor themselves.

The main aspect that makes cash transfers more complicated is the need for a program and criteria for eligibility due to the impossibility of using self-targeting mechanisms. There is no way to prevent the non-poor from applying to the cash programs, since there is no chance of decreasing the quality of product as it is in-kind transfers.

Therefore, criteria should be defined for eligibility, and a functioning eligibility mechanism must be established to ensure the cash is given only to those eligible and the eligibility of the recipients should be confirmed periodically. The necessity of establishing such a mechanism brings a huge administrative burden on social assistance programs.⁸³ The definition of the targeted population, collecting

⁸² Kanbur, "Macro Crisis and Targeting Transfers to the Poor," 3.

⁸³ Steven R. Tabor, "Assisting the Poor with Cash: Design and Implementation of Social Transfer Programs" Social Protection Discussion Paper Series, no. 0223 (Washington D. C: The World Bank, 2002), 11.

information about the condition of people, and determining the eligible necessitate an important administrative capacity. Many of the developing countries do not have such an administrative infrastructure to operate an extensive cash transfer system. Creating the institutional and administrative mechanism to apply means-testing and income tests are too expensive, and have the risk of excluding large numbers of people.⁸⁴ Therefore, administrative costs are an important concern for poverty alleviation programs as well as other costs which will be explained in detail.

Apart from the administrative costs there are first private costs, which are the costs that belong to people who desire to apply for the programs, such as queuing, cash costs for obtaining the necessary certificates or papers that will prove their conditions or opportunity costs for the missed income importunities.⁸⁵ Further, there are the incentive costs (indirect costs). The eligibility criteria make people change their behavior to become beneficiaries. As well as the effort to understate their incomes, they may also prefer not to make the effort for further income possibilities and take the poverty relief. Especially labor disincentive is an important concern.⁸⁶

Last, in a more critical study, Martin Ravallion writes that means testing has “hidden costs” for the recipients, especially when the program is a conditional one, with conditions such as work or behavioral conditions that would be a source of

⁸⁴ Ibid., 15.

⁸⁵ David Coady, Margaret Grosh and John Hoddinott, “Targeting of Transfers in Developing Countries: Review of Lessons and Experience” Regional and Sectoral Studies, no. 30230 (Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2004), 8.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 9.

stigma.⁸⁷ Only those who think they could bear the “nuisance or stigma,” would apply to the assistance programs.⁸⁸

Various Methods of Targeting

To overcome these difficulties, various methods have been developed for targeting the poor. Individual or household assessment including simple means-test, proxy means-test and community-based targeting are the most laborious and difficult ways that require checking the eligibility of each individual or household. Categorical targeting, on the other hand, refers to including all members of a group of people on the basis of their characteristic, such as age, gender, or the region in which they live. Another method of targeting is self-selection, which foresees excluding the non-poor by providing benefits only the poor would interested in or providing benefits in a way only the poor would bear the conditions of, such as providing low quality products, making the delivery at a certain time and place, with a long queue, or low-waged public work so that only the poorest again would accept.⁸⁹

Most of the time the means test is given as the best way to determine the eligibility, in principle. A means test refers to look at the income or welfare level of the claimant to decide on the eligibility of the person or household for the assistance program. However, in principle the means test has several difficulties. There are

⁸⁷ Martin Ravallion, “How Relevant is Targeting to the Success of an Antipoverty Program?” Development Research Group, Policy Research Working Paper 4385 (Washington D.C.: The World Bank, November 2007), 3.

⁸⁸ Grosh and Baker, “Proxy Means Tests for Targeting Social Programs,” 18.

⁸⁹ Coady, Grosh and Hoddinott, “Targeting of Transfers in Developing Countries: Review of Lessons and Experience,” 15.

incentive problems, meaning that people have a tendency to understate their income or level of welfare. It is very difficult to acquire accurate information on the income of the applicants. Especially in the lack of a huge administrative capacity by the state, which is mostly absent in poor countries, where the means tested programs were suggested, security or tax records, land registers, or the other registrations of the state either are not reliable or do not exist for much of the population.⁹⁰ Income is not the only indicator for assessing the condition of need in the means test; various indicators such as location or the type of the housing, and durable goods in the household can be used. Often, a social worker visits the households and sees if the applicants are really in a state of need. However, this evaluation is highly subjective and unsystematic.⁹¹

To assess more accurate data on the level of welfare of the poor, another type of means test was developed, the proxy-means test in which other household characteristics are used as “proxies for income.”⁹² For that, an algorithm is formed with the use of indicators other than income that have been defined previously for the use of the collected data in a more systemic way. A form is filled out by the social worker. Again, however, certain indicators have specific weight, all resulting in a score in the end. According to these scores, households can be compared and a more true decision about the income can be made and a fair result reached.⁹³

⁹⁰ Grosh and Baker, “Proxy Means Tests for Targeting Social Programs,” 1.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 2.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 4.

Targeting Performance

The various methods of targeting differ according to their costs and performance. A variety of issues exist in measuring targeting performance. Targeting accuracy basically is measured through undercoverage and leakage rates. While targeting programs with too strict eligibility conditions may cause errors of exclusion, leaving poor people out of the program (undercoverage), programs with looser conditions may cause errors of inclusion including the non-poor in the programs (leakage). The errors in targeting are inevitable and which type of error is bearable in the program is a political choice.

Normally, if the reduction of poverty is the first concern, the undercoverage is a more serious problem. However, when the concern for saving the limited budget is important the leakage problems are the first priority.⁹⁴ Since the cost-efficiency of the programs is a major concern in the World Bank literature, an efficient targeting is regarded as crucial for not wasting the resources by giving them to the undeserving people. Also, leakage may affect the public legitimacy of the programs, if the perception becomes that of waste of resources to undeserving people. Therefore, there is a tendency towards regarding leakage as the first priority vis-à-vis undercoverage problems.⁹⁵ Also, proxy means tests are all reported to cause undercoverage. Nevertheless, they are believed to be successful since, as Grosh and Baker write,

⁹⁴ Ibid., 9.

⁹⁵ Ravallion, "How Relevant is Targeting to the Success of an Antipoverty Program?" 2, ref. to Giovanni Cornia and Frances Stewart, "Two Errors of Targeting," *Journal of International Development* 5, no.5 (1993): 459-496.

“they cut down leakage so much that the impact on poverty is better with imperfect targeting than with none.”⁹⁶

Questioning the Relationship between Targeting and Poverty Reduction

Most of the literature on means test has the tendency to take the success of targeting as the most important indicator of the success of the program in reducing poverty. Although it is generally accepted that the aim of these programs reducing poverty with limited resources and improved targeting is only a means for the reduction of poverty, the success of targeting is treated mostly as the main aim.⁹⁷ In that way, the problem of poverty was reduced to a highly technical problem of targeting success. Studies on how targeting performance is influential in poverty reduction are insufficient. However, there are studies that question the assumption that better targeting will lead to an increased reduction in poverty.⁹⁸

The incentive effect is one of the major points of the questioning of the success of means tested programs in poverty alleviation. Means tested programs drive people to change their behavior to be eligible for the social assistance program, as was explained above. The methods of minimizing incentive costs in a means test are either decreasing the relief to a minimum amount which will decrease the poverty reducing effect of the program, which is actually the major aim, or making the conditions of application so bad that people would prefer it not to instead of any other

⁹⁶ Grosh and Baker, “Proxy Means Tests for Targeting Social Programs,” ix.

⁹⁷ Ravallion, “How Relevant is Targeting to the Success of an Antipoverty Program?” 2.

⁹⁸ Dominique van de Walle, “Targeting Revisited,” *The World Bank Research Observer* 13, no. 2 (August 1998): 231-48.

possibilities, which would definitely turn the process into a demeaning experience and source of stigma.

Another issue with better targeting is that a strict and “successful” targeting may result in the loss of political support, which would cause budget cuts, except times when the budget is formed out of the political forces, for instance with international or private subsidies. While on the one hand, leakage may cause a negative public attitude towards the program by undermining the perception of fairness by giving resources to undeserving people, on the other hand, strict targeting may result in segregation and the loss of solidarity in society, which may again result in the loss of support for the program. When the people over the threshold that is defined for the poverty program know that they have definitely no chance of being eligible, they may remove their support from the program and cause resistance.⁹⁹ The chance of leakage, on the other hand, may enhance the coalition between these groups and increase political support for the program. This view is historically the main argument behind the universalistic programs. Universalistic programs create solidarity among the population, with not giving way to any segregation across different income groups, and also not exposing any segment of population surveillance and stigma.

⁹⁹ Kanbur, “Macro Crisis and Targeting Transfers to the Poor,” 5.

CHAPTER 3

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND FOR SOCIAL ASSISTANCE AND MEANS-TESTING IN TURKEY

The Period until 1980

Charity has an important role in Turkish culture that is rooted in Ottoman times especially through the *vakıf* (foundations, *waqf*).¹⁰⁰ These institutions have religious connotations and function according to the Islamic code system¹⁰¹ and have specific purposes, such as building or running a school or a mosque, building a bridge or a fountain, or giving stipends to students or allowances to the indigent.¹⁰² They use a mix of public and private resources in the form of donations, charity or properties donated by private people or state elite.¹⁰³

Alms-giving to the poor is an Islamic private duty. Moreover, family and kinship ties have major roles in dealing with poverty. With these social mechanisms and with the lack of industrialization, in the Ottoman era, social assistance mechanisms in the modern sense did not emerge. However, beginning with the

¹⁰⁰ Amy Singer, "Charity's Legacies," in *Poverty and Charity in Middle Eastern Contexts*, ed. Michael Bonner, Mine Eder and Amy Singer (Albany: State University of New York Press: 2003), 310.

¹⁰¹ Aydın Apaydın, "Social Assistance as a Poverty Alleviation Strategy: Case of Altındağ Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundation," 54.

¹⁰² Singer, "Charity's Legacies," in *Poverty and Charity in Middle Eastern Contexts*, 297.

¹⁰³ Ayşe Buğra, "Poverty and Citizenship: An Overview of the Social-Policy Environment in Republican Turkey" *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 39, no. 1 (Feb., 2007): 37.

nineteenth century, within the modernization process¹⁰⁴ along with emerging capitalism, industrialization affected the Empire. Causing a decrease in their function of social assistance, the centralization of the state changed the vakıf system, decreasing its influence and autonomy.¹⁰⁵ Nevertheless, vakıfs sustained an important degree of independence in the Republican period, without not being directly controlled by state, but monitored by state agencies.¹⁰⁶

In the early years of the Republic, social aid was conducted through these foundations, which were civil organizations with public support. Organizations such as *Hilal-i Ahmer* (Red Crescent) and *Himaye-i Etfal* (a Foundation for Protecting Children) (Which turned into *Çocuk Esirgeme Kurumu*, Institute for Child Protection in 1935) were in closely related to the state, acting together with it. However, the duty of dealing with the poor was mainly attributed to society and civil organizations. With the establishment of the Republic in 1923, although a statist approach was adopted, in the area of social assistance, there was not much state intervention.¹⁰⁷

The conditions that give way to mass poverty in the early Republic were not a process of proletarianization or dispossession, rather they were due to long years of war.¹⁰⁸ Under these circumstances where poverty was not marginal but a mass

¹⁰⁴ Nadir Özbek, *Cumhuriyet Türkiye'sinde Sosyal Güvenlik ve Sosyal Politikalar*, 29.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹⁰⁶ Damla Işık, "Vakıf as Intent and Practice: Charity and Poor Relief in Turkey" *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 46 (2014): 311.

¹⁰⁷ Buğra, "Poverty and Citizenship: An Overview of the Social-Policy Environment in Republican Turkey," 38.

¹⁰⁸ Buğra, *Kapitalizm, Yoksulluk ve Türkiye'de Sosyal Politika*, 99.

phenomenon, Buğra writes that the idea that “the poor state of a poor country could not be effective in the area of social assistance” was the dominant view.¹⁰⁹

From the earlier years of the Republic, various voluntary organizations and charitable donations were concerned about the poor. However, in the post-Second World War period, this voluntary and local aid was no longer sufficient to cope with poverty. Although Turkey did not take part in the war, its economy and social life were seriously influenced by it. The war economy had the most disastrous effects on urban poverty. The increase in prices due the decrease in international trade impacted the urban population most.¹¹⁰ The difficulties in the cities appeared in the form of shortages of bread together with coal and fuel wood in winter. Therefore, the state became involved in providing cheap or free coal and wood to the urban poor.¹¹¹ In addition, staple food such as rice, sugar or cheese was distributed in the poor areas in cities, and food banks for poor university students were opened. Meanwhile, the numbers of beggars, which constituted the most marginal of society increased in the cities. As Özbek writes begging was viewed as illegitimate by the state elites, which resulted in criminal measures rather than practice of social policy.¹¹²

Actually, even before the end of the war, ideas about the responsibility of the state in social areas already began to be articulated, as Buğra notes.¹¹³ Especially, after the publication of the Beveridge Report in 1942, which is said to be the basis of the welfare states in the world, social security and social policy were asserted as a

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 100.

¹¹⁰ Özbek, *Cumhuriyet Türkiye'si 'nde Sosyal Güvenlik ve Sosyal Politikalar*, 143.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 149-150.

¹¹² Ibid., 154-155.

¹¹³ Buğra, *Kapitalizm, Yoksulluk ve Türkiye 'de Sosyal Politika*, 159.

middle way between the communist and capitalist states in some news articles and by the professions in the Economy and Society Institute (*İktisat ve İçtimaiyat Enstitüsü*) at Istanbul University.¹¹⁴ Thus, following the war, parallel to the developments in the western states, new period began in terms of social policy. Although, it cannot be claimed that the Turkish state became a welfare state in the sense of European Welfare States, the state had a new interest in the issue.

In the 1950s, social and demographic changes, such as urbanization and immigration due to rapid industrialization, made the insufficiency of the social policy visible and, in time, the idea of a need for an institutional framework to cope with the changing forms of social problems became accepted.¹¹⁵ Especially with the influence of the German academics that fled their countries took positions in Turkish universities, social policy became a matter of discussion. Social security came out of new concerns for work life and the social services were to be expected to answer the problems and side-effects of urbanization, industrialization, and economic development. It came to be seen as a constituent of economic and social development and actually to have developed parallel to the industrialization, as it did elsewhere in the world.

While the social policy was limited to orphans, the health of the population and people in need in the pre-1945 period, problems about work and work security became more dominant in the aftermath of the Second World War.¹¹⁶ The democratization and liberalization of the politics with the transition to the multi-party

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 160.

¹¹⁵ Özbek, *Cumhuriyet Türkiyesi 'nde Sosyal Güvenlik ve Sosyal Politikalar*, 94.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 160.

regime impacted industrial relations, too. There was an increase in private investments. The Ministry of Labor was established in 1945 for the regulation of work life and to ensure the implementation of the first work law which had been legislated in 1936.¹¹⁷ The subsequent years was a series of institutions established about work life and the social security of the workers. In 1946, the Workers Insurance Institution (*İşçi Sigortaları Kurumu*) was established and the Retirement Fund (*Emekli Sandığı*) for civil servants was reorganized to include all civil servants under in a single program in 1949, all during the government of the CHP (Republican People's Party, *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*).

Buğra states that these developments were similar to the experiences in the late industrial countries of the South.¹¹⁸ While there were improvements in the social security aspect of the social policy, the progress in terms of the social services was not on a level that could be compared to that of the European welfare states. Also, although the developments in social security were important, the number of people covered by these security programs was very low. Only 500,000 workers of 14, 5000,000 of the total labor force in Turkey were covered by the insurance.¹¹⁹ Most of the people in the services and industry in the cities together with workers in agriculture were not within the protection of the related work laws. In addition, new changes in the social policy did not include unemployment insurance, social assistance or measures to prevent poverty.

¹¹⁷ Meryem Koray, *Sosyal Politika* (Ankara: İmge, 2012), 130.

¹¹⁸ Buğra, *Kapitalizm, Yoksulluk ve Türkiye'de Sosyal Politika*, 161.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 161.

In the period of the DP (Democrat Party, *Demokrat Parti*, 1950-1960), although there were some improvements, social rights and social policy were not given much attention. The adoption of an agricultural growth-based economic policy, Prime Minister Adnan Menderes¹²⁰ put the emphasis on the problems of the village population, which constituted the majority of the population at the time, neglecting the social rights of workers and the problems of the urban population.¹²¹ The emphasis on the village and agriculture did not result in the inclusion of agricultural worker in the social insurance system. However, the DP had a different village policy from that of the CHP in that they adopted a strategy that would increase urbanization. Actually, migration from the countryside to cities increased.

As most of the migrants were not the propertyless villagers,¹²² they would be in the 1980s. This migration to cities did not mean a break off with the village as the family members left in the village and ownership of the land was maintained. Support mechanisms were established between the city and the village, and the migration wave did not result in the dissolution of the village and agriculture. On the contrary to historical process common in other countries, it became possible to cope with the difficulties and individual problems in the cities with the help of the connection to the village and the kinship ties in the absence of social security and a social assistance system.¹²³

¹²⁰ Şevket Pamuk, *Türkiye'nin 200 Yıllık İktisadi Tarihi* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2014), 227.

¹²¹ Buğra, *Kapitalizm, Yoksulluk ve Türkiye'de Sosyal Politika*, 165.

¹²² Pamuk, *Türkiye'nin 200 Yıllık İktisadi Tarihi*, 231.

¹²³ Buğra, *Kapitalizm, Yoksulluk ve Türkiye'de Sosyal Politika*, 167.

As Buğra says, the government intended to apply an economic policy on the basis of agricultural development along with enabling the migration from villages to the city so that it would mean an easier adaptation to the city.¹²⁴ However, in the second half of the decade, it became difficult to apply this model, due to the decreasing rate of growth and inflation. The DP had no interest in taking measures against urban poverty. There was no system of social assistance to cope with it other than the traditional charity organizations and municipalities. In 1954, a draft on the constitution of Social Service Institute (*Sosyal Hizmet Enstitüsü*) started to be prepared under the lead of the UN with the promise of a fund by the UN and, with Rockefeller and Ford Foundations.¹²⁵ However, the institute was not established until 1959 at the cost of the loss of the promised funds.¹²⁶

In the DP period, a few improvements were made to the health system. Together with increase in the budget of the Ministry of Health and in the number of hospitals, a regulation in 1955, the Regulation of Hospitals (*Hastaneler Talimatnamesi*) ensured the right of free access to health care for those who had health insurance. For the poor, a paper that proved their poverty (*Fakrihal kağıdı*) was necessary to obtain a free access to health services. Without the paper, the power to decide on who received was given to the chief doctor.¹²⁷

From 1945 to 1960, though with a decrease, emphasis on charity continued, while in the period following 1960 coup the emphasis was given to “social state.”

¹²⁴ Ibid., 172.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 171.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 168.

What separates the two periods was that in the second term, industrialization intensified and leftist policies had been strengthened, according to Buğra.¹²⁸ For the first time in Republican history, the state was called a “Social State” in the constitution of 1961. This emphasis made it possible to develop an institutional framework of social policy on the basis of human rights.¹²⁹ While there were serious improvements in the social rights of the workers in the formal sector, however, there was no corresponding progress for the rest of the population.

In 1964, the Workers’ Insurance Institution was replaced by the Social Insurance Institution, which included all the formal workers in the social security program regardless of whether they were defined by the Work Law. In addition, relatives of the workers were included in the security system.¹³⁰ As the last phase, in 1971 an institution (Bağ-Kur) which covered self-employed was established. However, inclusion of farmers in the social security scheme became possible only in 1984.¹³¹

In the area of social services and social assistance, developments were far more limited, although in the 1960s, social strategies for the poor became to be evaluated within social services, which now had an academic and institutional framework.¹³² In 1961, special personnel started to be trained for the Social Services Institute which had been institutionalized earlier, in 1959. The scope of the social

¹²⁸ Ibid., 158.

¹²⁹ Özbek, *Cumhuriyet Türkiye’sinde Sosyal Güvenlik ve Sosyal Politikalar*, 190; Buğra *Kapitalizm, Yoksulluk ve Türkiye’de Sosyal Politika*, 158.

¹³⁰ Buğra, *Kapitalizm, Yoksulluk ve Türkiye’de Sosyal Politika*, 178.

¹³¹ Tülay Arın, “Refah Devleti,” in *Neoliberalizmin Tahribatı*, eds. Neşecan Balkan and Sungur Savran (İstanbul: Metis, 2003), 78.

¹³² Özbek, *Cumhuriyet Türkiye’sinde Sosyal Güvenlik ve Sosyal Politikalar*, 200.

services was broadly defined; however, with a constrained budget, its practices remained quite limited.¹³³ Also in the area of social assistance and poverty, the establishment of the Institute did not made any important change,¹³⁴ since the state took no responsibility for social assistance for the poor citizens.¹³⁵

With the planned development and import-substitution strategies that were adopted in the 1960s the industrial sector was grew with the increasing work possibilities in industry. However, employment possibilities were far below the growing need for work, due to the accelerated migration to cities.¹³⁶ Inflated housing prices resulted in the illegal construction of houses which were called *gecekondu*. The gecekondu were built on the periphery of the cities from 1950s in the absence of a social housing policy. Buğra states that the problem of integration of the new-comers in the city economy, which could not be solved through the employment possibilities within the formal sector, resulted in a growing informal economy through networks and social relations that emerged in gecekondu areas. These social relations with gecekondu at the center were a part of the informal social security systems.

The main problem in society was seen in the industrialization process. It was a common theme among politicians that the social problems would disappear when “real” industrialization had been achieved. When the solution was seen in development, industrialization and employment creation, however, the social

¹³³ Ibid., 191.

¹³⁴ Ahmet Tunç, “Türkiye’de 1983’ten Günümüze Sosyal Yardımların Değerlendirilmesi” (Malatya: MA. Thsesis, İnönü Üniversitesi, 2009), 56.

¹³⁵ Buğra, *Kapitalizm, Yoksulluk ve Türkiye’de Sosyal Politika*, 188.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 181.

problems were excluded from social policy.¹³⁷ This was also the approach to social policy adopted by leftist politics. Regarding industrialization as the main problem and target, they remained deeply indifferent to the problems in the area of social policy. Buğra states that still, the leftist politics, which were at their peak and were well-represented in parliament, impacted the formulation of social policy positively at the time.¹³⁸ The adoption of a different approach to social policy by the Justice Party (*Adalet Partisi*, AP, 1965-1971), which can be differentiated from the previous right-wing parties, can be interpreted in these terms.¹³⁹

The emphasis on “citizenship rights” by the right-wing could have been a part of the strategy against the left which was powerful at the time and was in the search for a change in the system, according to Buğra. In this way, the AP used the language of social rights during the discussions of the Act. No. 2022 in 1976, a legislation of a categorical assistance program that granted direct income to those over 65 and the disabled who do not have relatives to look after them. This program was accepted as the first example of a modern social assistance program in Turkish history.¹⁴⁰ It was also social right-based and unlike the rest of the implementations of the time far from the approach of “protecting the weak.”¹⁴¹ It shows the acceptance of the state’s responsibilities towards its citizens, not only for those who have a formal social security program and pay fees for it, but also those who do not contribute to a

¹³⁷ Ibid., 184.

¹³⁸ Buğra, *Kapitalizm, Yoksulluk ve Türkiye’de Sosyal Politika*, 188-189.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 189.

¹⁴⁰ Hande Hacımahmutoğlu, *Türkiye’deki Sosyal Yardım Sisteminin Değerlendirilmesi*, (Ankara: Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı, 2009), 69.

¹⁴¹ Buğra, *Kapitalizm, Yoksulluk ve Türkiye’de Sosyal Politika*, 191.

social security scheme. The only aspect which contradicts with social rights understanding in the program was the condition of disabled people having no relatives to look after them, which attributes prior responsibility to kinship relation rather than the state.

1980-2002: The Liberalization Period

Poverty and Social Assistance

Although poverty has always been an important concern of the Turkish Republic, since the 1980s there has been change in the attitude of the state in parallel with the changing economic strategy in general. In the aftermath of the coup d'état in 1980, the free market system with an export-based strategy was adopted.¹⁴² The period following the coup constitutes the background of the changes in the AKP period, which began 2002. There has been a change in the attitudes towards the welfare state, even if there has never been a welfare state in the real sense that can be compared to European welfare states. Together with the rise of the neoliberal ideology that took the market as the solution to all problems and the state as the major evil, the “social state” approach that had been adopted in the 1960s started to be severely criticized. However, the desire to leave the social problems to charity and the philanthropic activities of the civil society had to coexist with the reality that the social problems could not be overcome without the state taking a primary role in the

¹⁴² Pamuk, *Türkiye'nin 200 Yıllık İktisadi Tarihi*, 265.

social assistance as Buğra explains.¹⁴³ Since, while on the one hand, due to the liberalization process in the economy the wages and social expenditures were reduced, on the other hand, it was a time of rural dissolution and loosening family structure.

After the adoption of the market-based strategies in the economy, the agricultural sector started to decay, resulting in a decrease in agricultural incomes and wages.¹⁴⁴ This accelerated the migration from the rural areas to the cities, which reached the highest point in the 1980s. While the rate of urbanization was only 25 per cent, it reached 44 per cent in 1980, and has continued to increase since that time.¹⁴⁵ The increase in the urban population caused the problem of creating employment, despite the increase in economic growth.¹⁴⁶ Although, the population in the working increased 23,000,000 between 1980 and 2004, only 6,000,000 jobs were created.¹⁴⁷ The rapid increase of the population in the cities and the absence of formal work opportunities caused high rates of informal employment which became an important means of survival for those who migrated from the land to the city, but could not be incorporated in the formal employment yet. These processes resulted in an increasing insecure population that put pressure on the traditional social support mechanisms, such as the extended family and strong kinship ties.

¹⁴³ Buğra, *Kapitalizm, Yoksulluk ve Türkiye'de Sosyal Politika*, 199.

¹⁴⁴ Pamuk, *Türkiye'nin 200 Yıllık İktisadi Tarihi*, 292.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 72.

¹⁴⁶ İnsan Tunalı, "Background Study on the Labor Market and Employment in Turkey" European Training Foundation (European Union, 2004), 90-91.

¹⁴⁷ Ayşen Candaş and Volkan Yılmaz, *Türkiye'de Eşitsizlikler* (İstanbul: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2012), 61.

Therefore, despite the ideological climate, there were some awareness of the need for state action on the issue, and thus some developments in the area of social assistance occurred. However, these developments were not on a level that can be compared with the disability and elderly allowance of Act no. 2022, which was in a direction of a rights-based approach. The Ministry of National Education was charged with offering grants and free housing to the poor students in 1982.¹⁴⁸ Later, in 1983 SHÇEK (*Sosyal Hizmetler ve Çocuk Esirgeme Kurumu*, the Institution for Social Services and Protection of Children) was charged with providing social assistance to the needy with children in priority while in 1984 the General Directorate of Foundations (*Vakıflar Genel Müdürlüğü*) obtained the authority to provide social assistance.¹⁴⁹ Finally, in 1986, emphasizing a philanthropic attitude, the Fund for the Encouragement of Social Assistance and Solidarity (*Sosyal Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışmayı Teşvik Fonu*, SYDTF)¹⁵⁰ was established by the Motherland Party (ANAP) government. It was a fund for social assistance to be financed out of the general budget, from sources such as traffic tickets, penalties of Radio and Television High Commission (*Radyo ve Televizyon Üst Kurulu*, RTÜK) along with all types of

¹⁴⁸ Hacımahmutoğlu, *Türkiye'deki Sosyal Yardım Sisteminin Değerlendirilmesi*, 69;

Republic of Turkey, Law No. 2684, “İlköğretim ve Ortaöğretimde Parasız Yatılı veya Burslu Öğrenci Okutma ve Bunlara Yapılacak Sosyal Yardımlara İlişkin Kanun,” Official Gazette, 17 June 1982, accessed on 5 May 2014. <http://mevzuat.meb.gov.tr/html/25.html>

¹⁴⁹ Hacımahmutoğlu, *Türkiye'deki Sosyal Yardım Sisteminin Değerlendirilmesi*, 69;

Republic of Turkey, Law No. 2828, “Sosyal Hizmetler ve Çocuk Esirgeme Kurumu Kanunu,” Official Gazette, 27 May 1983, accessed on 5 May 2014. <http://mevzuat.meb.gov.tr/html/132.html>;

Decree Law no. 227, “Vakıflar Genel Müdürlüğünün Teşkilat ve Görevleri Hakkında Kanun Hükmünde Karamame,” Official Gazette, 18 April 1984, accessed on 5 May 2014. <http://www.tskdv.org.tr/p01/227khk.pdf>

¹⁵⁰ Republic of Turkey. Law No. 3294, “Sosyal Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışmayı Teşvik Kanunu,” Official Gazette, 14 June 1986, accessed on 14 July 2014. <http://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/MevzuatMetin/1.5.3294.pdf>

private donations. With the establishment law of the SYDTF, Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundations (*Sosyal Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışma Vakıfları*, SYDV) were established in all cities and districts in Turkey with the aim of distributing the resources that were collected in the Fund through these foundations in the local. According to Buğra and Keyder, the establishment of the fund was in part “a response to the increasing inability of the family to carry the burden of care traditionally placed on it.”¹⁵¹ However, the logic behind the law was not part of a view of the responsibility of the social state towards the citizens; instead it was more a part of benefiting from the traditional foundation (*vakıf*) system, related to historical tradition of Ottoman charity, as discussed above.¹⁵² Hence, the Fifth Developmental Plan (1985-1990), stated that the social assistance should be conducted according to the principle of voluntarism.¹⁵³ The aim was to finance the Fund with private donations while the state plays a regulatory and encouraging role. However, contrary to the plan of mobilizing civil society to meet the needs of the poor, the Fund and the Foundations became the major actors in poverty alleviation with the use of public resources.

Another important development of the period was the Green Card system a more promising program in terms of emphasizing a rights-based approach to social policy. The Green Card, which was implemented in 1992, gave the right to free access to health services to the poorest segment of the population who had no social

¹⁵¹ Ayşe Buğra and Çağlar Keyder, “Poverty and Social Policy in Turkey” Boğaziçi University Social Policy Forum, (January 2005), 28.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 28.

¹⁵³ Hacımahmutoğlu, *Türkiye’deki Sosyal Yardım Sisteminin Değerlendirilmesi*, 81.

security.¹⁵⁴ This practice which was seen as temporary until a General Health Insurance Program was implemented until 2011, since the idea of the health insurance program was not realized for almost 20 more years. The Green Card was a social benefit that underlay the aspect of social citizenship rights, since it was given independent of work, and consequently, also was independent of fees paid for social insurance.

The transition to an open economy put pressure on the traditional ways of dealing with poverty, while at the same time, the vulnerable population was increasing in the absence of a meaningful system of social assistance. Despite these facts, SYDTF and the Green Card were the only developments in the almost two decades following the coup. However, towards the very end of century, and in the early 2000s, the necessity of social assistance mechanisms became far more obvious. Below, the emergence of a new form of poverty will be discussed, which the existing mechanisms of the welfare regime could not cope with, and resulted in a rapid increase in social assistance, which made the development of central targeting mechanisms necessary.

New Poverty and Increasing Attention to Social Assistance

The social policy scheme basically was constituted from the labor market regulations and social security system which involved health care and pension

¹⁵⁴ Republic of Turkey, Law No. 3816, “Ödeme Gücü Olmayan Vatandaşların Tedavi Giderlerinin Yeşil Kart Verilerek Devlet Tarafından Karşılanması Hakkında Kanun,” Official Gazzete, 3 July 1992, accessed on 20 April 2014.
mevzuat.basbakanlik.gov.tr/Metin.Aspx?MevzuatKod=1.5.3816&sourceXmlSearch=&MevzuatIlski=0

benefits. The functionality of the social security system was highly controversial due to the high rates of informality. Despite this fact, expenditures on the social assistance, which aimed to prevent the social exclusion of citizens who did not work and were uncovered by a social security scheme, was so limited and unorganized that its share within the welfare regime can be ignored.

According to Buğra and Keyder, the reason for the lack of policies directed at the poor was not the absence of poverty, but the perception of poverty.¹⁵⁵ People were not becoming extremely poor permanently, thanks to the supporting mechanisms which helped them integrate into the city when they migrated from the villages.¹⁵⁶ Işık and Pancarlıoğlu, relying on their research in one of the gecekondu area of Sultanbeyli in İstanbul, describe a situation of poverty in which people try to integrate into the system with the possibilities of the slums and informality.¹⁵⁷ They call this situation poverty-in-turns (*nöbetleşe yoksulluk*), to describe a cyclical poverty which is transmitted to the new comers in the city by the older inhabitants of the gecekondu areas.¹⁵⁸

The new comers were able to learn how to survive through kinship relations and the network of *hemşehris* (co-locals). Working in the informal sector while, it was possible to find into more secure and long-term work through these relations by finding a formal work or by establishing a new business. Moreover, through the

¹⁵⁵ Buğra and Keyder, “New Poverty and the Changing Welfare Regime of Turkey” Report Prepared for the United Nations Development Programme (2003), 18.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹⁵⁷ Oğuz Işık and Melih Pancarlıoğlu, *Nöbetleşe Yoksulluk: Sultanbeyli Örneği* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2013), 73.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 77.

gecekondus the housing needs of the new comers were met cheaply almost in substitution for the non-existing public housing policy. The gecekondus also offered extra income opportunities due to the possibility of additional rooms or floors which could be rented to later arrivals.

With the policies that put the economy before the needs of society the traditional elements of the welfare regime fell short of preventing poverty from giving way to social exclusion, and the formal social policy strategies was insufficient.¹⁵⁹ The changing institutions triggered new forms of social problems and poverty. Buğra and Keyder use “new poverty” for this new form of poverty in their report on poverty prepared for the UNDP in 2003. They used it or a type of poverty that had emerged as a result of the changes in the “structure of the economy and employment, and new forms of social stratification, urban residual segregation as well as new types of cultural dynamic” since the 1980s.¹⁶⁰ They stated that these groups suffering from new poverty were also “subject to the risks of social exclusion, marginalization, and the increasing difficulty of integration in terms of economic relations.”¹⁶¹

Along with the problem of unemployment, which would become chronic especially after the economic crisis of 2001, that is defined as a period of “growth without employment.”¹⁶² For those who were employed, on the other hand, there was a change in the work relations and work types. There was a spread of changing forms

¹⁵⁹ Buğra and Keyder, “New Poverty and the Changing Welfare Regime of Turkey,” 19.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 21.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Candaş and Yılmaz, *Türkiye’de Eşitsizlikler*, 61.

of insecure work that were flexible and informal, increasing the share of sub-contracting and piecework with short-term contracts instead of long-term, secure work. The increasing share of the big companies, supermarkets, and malls making it impossible for the bakers, grocery stores, and other small shops in the neighborhoods to compete in the market in such a way that made people forced to work for big companies or franchises for small amounts of money instead of owning their own business.¹⁶³

Moreover, urbanization developed in a way to eradicate the *gecekondus*. An increase of competition over urban land brought a demand for the capitalist property rights on land¹⁶⁴ resulting in the prevention of new *gecekondus* and destruction of the older ones under the banner of “urban transformation.” With the eradication of the *gecekondus*, recently migrated people could no longer be able to settle nearby their relatives or people from their places of origin and get support until they fully integrate in the city. Also, as the rate of population in the countryside gradually decreased, the opportunity of support from home-land also decreased; after the population of the cities surpassed those of the countryside for the first time between 1980 and 1985. The population in the cities continued to increase, reaching 62.1 per cent in 1995 and 72.3 per cent in 2012.¹⁶⁵

The impacts of the 1999 earthquake and the 2001 economic crisis should also be noted for a proper explanation of the increase in social assistance. These

¹⁶³ Buğra and Keyder, “New Poverty and the Changing Welfare Regime of Turkey,” 24.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹⁶⁵ The World Bank, “World Bank Databank,” accessed on 17 March 2014. <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/home.aspx>

events showed that Turkey did not have a social policy system that could give quick response in times of crisis and urgent need.

As a result of the earthquake the expenditures of the SYDTF was increased 143 per cent of the expenditures of the previous year, according to the audit reports.¹⁶⁶ With the earthquake, the necessity of a central social assistance system to cope with the urgent needs of the poor and the vulnerable came to light. Increase in expenditures continued in the next year, with 48 per cent, which was again related to the ongoing impact of the earthquake.¹⁶⁷ In 1999 and 2000, the relief for the earthquake victims provided by the SYDTF had an important share in the total amount of social assistance, while in 2001 its share started to decrease.¹⁶⁸ Despite the increase in the public expenditures in social assistance, in 1999 the civil society and private charity organizations were called to action. For instance, Faruk Taşçı, in his book on social assistance, describes the year as a milestone in social assistance.¹⁶⁹ Civil associations were called to overcome the insufficiency of the public social assistance mechanism during the earthquake.

The economic crisis of 2001 deeply impacted society. It caused a serious number of bankruptcies and thousands of people lost their jobs. According to the World Bank Report on poverty in Turkey in 2001, the “social impact of the crisis is already being felt as lay-offs, rising prices, and negative economic growth, reduce

¹⁶⁶ Republic of Turkey, Parliament Deb., vol. 46, reunion 73, 14 April 2004, Public Economic Enterprise (KİT) Audit Report 1999, 735-744.

¹⁶⁷ Republic of Turkey, Parliament Deb., vol. 46, reunion 73, 14 April 2004, Public Economic Enterprise (KİT) Audit Report 2000, 748-753.

¹⁶⁸ Buğra and Keyder, “New Poverty and the Changing Welfare Regime of Turkey,” 29.

¹⁶⁹ Faruk Taşçı, *Sosyal Politikalarda Can Simidi Sosyal Yardım* (Ankara: Nobel, 2010), 120.

household incomes, and increase the risk of poverty on the poor.”¹⁷⁰ As Mine Eder says, there was an increase in the risk of poverty, especially, child poverty.¹⁷¹

The conditions made the necessity and importance of social assistance system obvious. Right after the crisis a project was designed by the World Bank to cope with the impacts of the crisis. The Social Risk Mitigation Project (SRMP, *Sosyal Riski Azaltma Projesi*) was started in 2002 involving the second central public social assistance program Conditional Cash Transfers. Apart from this project there was also an increase in the social assistance that was distributed by the SYDTF. These were the background of the AKP period, during which the role of social assistance had been increased and new social assistance mechanisms had been developed with a strong emphasis on charity and civil society.

After 2002: The AKP Period

Social Policy in the Market Economy

Turkey’s welfare regime, overall, was based on free public education with a public healthcare and retirement pension system depending on employment status. It was also regarded as a highly dualist system due to the high informality rates. There were no social security or retirement pensions for the most of the population who

¹⁷⁰ The World Bank, “Project Appraisal Document on a Proposed Hybrid Investment/Adjustment Loan in the Amount of US\$500 Million to the Republic of Turkey for a Social Risk Mitigation Project/Loan,” (Washington D. C.: The World Bank, 2001), 14.

¹⁷¹ Mine Eder, “Deepening Neoliberalization and a Changing Welfare Regime in Turkey: Mutations of a Populist, ‘sub-optimal’ Democracy,” in *Turkey’s Democratization Process*, ed. Carmen López Rodríguez (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2014), 199.

were outside of the social security system. The policies that targeted the poor were very limited to small amounts of irregular assistance through institutions such as SHÇEK, SYDTF or the General Directorate of Foundations. There are only two central programs, the Green Card, and disability and elderly allowance with Article 2022, which all constituted only 0.5 per cent of GDP with the other social assistance expenditures.¹⁷²

The AKP period can be distinguished in the sense that it was the first time in the history of the republic social policy was a major issue for the government and was discussed in the way that it was handled in the early-industrialized societies. The European Union (EU) accession process played an important role in the new interest in social assistance. After the official application for the EU membership, social policy started to be taken more seriously.

However, apart from the conditions of EU membership, there were other reasons for the new concern. Buğra states that in the AKP rule, which came into the government in the aftermath of the Republic's deepest economic crisis in 2001, it was understood that poverty was a far deeper problem that could not be overcome by leaving it to the market forces.¹⁷³ It was accepted that the state had a major role in proper functioning of the market the contrary to the previous period. However, this acceptance of the major role in social policy or leaving the non-interventionist policies did not mean taking full responsibility and providing every citizen with social rights and a minimum welfare. Rather, the direction was towards using a mix

¹⁷² General Directorate of Social Assistance, "2012 Sosyal Yardım İstatistikleri Bülteni" (T.C Aile ve Sosyal Politikalar Bakanlığı, 2012), 19, accessed on 5 May 2014.
http://www.sosyalyardimlar.gov.tr/upload/Node/11873/files/SYGM_2012.pdf

¹⁷³ Buğra, *Kapitalizm, Yoksulluk ve Türkiye'de Sosyal Politika*, 18.

of civil society and market with an emphasis on charity and the traditional societal ties of family and kinship.

The AKP, which came to power right after the crisis in November 2002, put a strong emphasis on poverty as one of their major campaigns policies together with corruption and prohibitions. Even if the emphasis on poverty and social policy seems to be in contradiction to the conservative-liberal ideology of which the AKP is accepted as a strong representative, the context in which the AKP came to power compelled it to emphasize social policy. The effects of the 2001 economic crisis, policy recommendations, and assistance of the IMF, which necessitated a wide-ranged social security reform and poverty alleviation programs, and finally the EU Accession process, were the main reasons the AKP put emphasis on social policy.¹⁷⁴ However, it also should be noted that the AKP's approach to social problems and social policy was not within a rights-based understanding of social policy; rather, it was a highly populist approach with a strong emphasis on civil society, charity, and family.

Two points were persistently emphasized from the early years of the AKP government: the importance of family within social policy and social policy being a part of economic development. The importance of the family to help alleviate social problems was repeatedly articulated and family was always placed at the center of the social policy during the AKP government.

Strong family ties have always been an important feature of the Turkish welfare regime, which is one of the reasons why it is compared with the South-

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 219-221.

European models along with informality and clientalism.¹⁷⁵ However, as the poverty became permanent, the possibility of handling with it within family also became more difficult. As Buğra and Keyder indicate, family relations, function well when the poverty is short-termed and temporary;¹⁷⁶ however, the conditions were far more difficult than could be handled within the family. Along with the increasing pressure on the family, the changing form of family from the extended to the smaller, nuclear family was another factor in the decreasing function of the family. Parliamentary discussions show that the changing forms of poverty were well recognized by the member of parliaments.

The general argument was that since family and kinship relations in the country were so deep, they prevented the crisis and poverty from turning into a social explosion, as they had it in western countries. Thus, the family should be the main target and the center of the social policies. The changing family institution due to urbanization, migration, and industrialization was an important concern that necessitated specific measures for the government and the opposition.¹⁷⁷

The traditional social cooperation, neighborhood, and family ties were often expressed in the parliamentary speeches as the mechanisms that had prevented social

¹⁷⁵ Ayşe Buğra, "The Changing Welfare Regime of Turkey: Neoliberalism, Cultural Conservatism and Social Solidarity Redefined," in *Gender and Society in Turkey: The Impact of Neoliberal Policies, Political Islam and EU Accession* eds. Saniye Dedeoğlu and Adem Y. Elveren (Cornwall: I. B. Tauris, 2011), 16.

For more information on the South European model of welfare regimes, see Stephan Leibfried "Towards a European Welfare State?," in eds. Z. Ferge and J. E. Kberd *Social Policy in a Changing Europe* (Westview Press, 1993); and Maurizio Ferrera, "The 'Southern Model' of Welfare in Social Europe" *Journal of European Social Policy* 6 no. 1 (1996).

¹⁷⁶ Buğra and Keyder, "New Poverty and the Changing Welfare Regime of Turkey," 19.

¹⁷⁷ Republic of Turkey, Parliament Deb., vol. 64, reunion 16, 10 November 2004, Discussions on Law on the Organization of General Directorate of Family and Social Investigations, Speeches of Özlem Çerçioğlu, Canan Arıtman, Recep Garip, Ali Osman Sali, Gülseren Topuz, Nükhet Hotar Göksel, 80-103.

explosions in Turkey. Also, the changing form of family and its impacts on poverty was within the awareness of parliamentarians. For instance, Canan Arıtman from the CHP, in a parliamentary speech in 2004, stated that in the previous times, when the majority of the population had been in the countryside poverty had not been such a big problem.¹⁷⁸ Most of the people had farmed and obtained their own food and sent food to their relatives in the cities. However, now 68 per cent of the population lived in the cities and the support from their village was weaker and poverty had become a problem that had to be dealt with by the state.

These conditions of the new poverty were important factors in the new concern with social assistance, and the emphasis on the role of the family and societal ties was an indicator of the tendency to attribute a great role to the family and civil society in the social strategies.

The second emphasis was on the place of social policy within economic and social development. For instance, Mahfuz Güler, an AKP MP, reflecting a widely held opinion of the time, argued that Turkey was trying to give social services at European standards which were beyond its economic power.¹⁷⁹ The state could not take care of everyone. This argument left its place to arguments of so called “economic miracle” of the AKP, which was high growth rates and decreasing rates of poverty, which was an unlimited point of debate between the government and all of the opposition groups in parliament. The idea that social policy was a part of economic development, and thus should be in accordance with the economic

¹⁷⁸ Republic of Turkey, Parliament Deb., vol. 64, reunion 16, 10 November 2004, Speech of Canan Arıtman, 89-90.

¹⁷⁹ Turkey, Parliament Deb., vol. 6, reunion 38, 27 February 2003, Speech of Mahfuz Güler, 22-23. See also Parliament Deb., vol. 31, reunion 19, 18 November 2003, 115.

development was kept alive during the subsequent the AKP governments. Their concerns about the effects of social policies on the labor market or the emphasis put on the policies such as social assistance in return for work and microcredit applications show this.

The AKP's view was in total harmony with IMF strategies and recommendations, and even if this liberal-conservative ideology could be regarded as in contradiction with its future concern with social problems at first glance.¹⁸⁰ However, in the post crisis context, poverty emerged as a highly visible social problem which could not be dealt with in the absence of older social support mechanisms. On the one hand, the labor market was becoming increasingly insecure with flexible and temporary jobs, sub-contracting, and piece-work practices. On the other hand, the traditional social support mechanisms could not compensate the absence of social policies directed towards the poor, such as the family and kinship ties, networks that were established through the *gecekondus*. Therefore, although the dominant view was a neoliberal market economy, the necessity of taking measures against poverty became obvious. It was understood as a process that was experienced in parallel to the other world economies, resulting in a serious increase in public social assistance. Below, after briefly describing the main changes in the social security system in the early AKP period, the changes in the area of social assistance and the increase will be explained, which creates the need for systemized targeting mechanisms.

¹⁸⁰ Buğra, *Kapitalizm, Yoksulluk ve Türkiye'de Sosyal Politika*, 233.

Change in the Social Security System:
The Increasing Role of the Private Sector

One of the most important developments of the AKP term which brought immense changes both in the structure and content in the social policy was in the area of social security and public healthcare system. The Law on Social Security and General Health Insurance (*Sosyal Güvenlik ve Genel Dağlık Sigortası*), which was accepted in the parliament in May 2006, was a great transformation in the social security system which had been long discussed.¹⁸¹ Unifying all public health insurance programs (Retirement Chest, Bağ-Kur, SSK) in one compulsory universal health insurance, the new system removed a deeply structured inequality which was based on occupation status. However, Volkan Yılmaz suggests that the new system only changed the basis of the inequality from occupational status to income.¹⁸²

The Universal Health Care provision covered all citizens breaking the relation between work and social security. Those who worked in the informal sector or did not work at all now could be benefit from the same rights and healthcare services with those in the informal sector, by paying their own fees. Only for those whose income was under one third of the minimum income, the contribution fees would be financed by the state. The rest of the nonworking people and people in the informal sector should pay their own fees proportionate to their incomes. This system, which was envisioned to replace the Green Card, could only be implemented

¹⁸¹ Official Gazzette, “Sosyal Sigortalar ve Genel Sağlık Sigortası Kanunu” 31 May 2006, accessed on 5 May 2014, <http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2006/06/20060616-1.htm>

¹⁸² Volkan Yılmaz, “Changing Origins of Inequalities in Access to Health Care Services in Turkey: From Occupational Status to Income” *New Perspectives in Turkey*, no. 48 (2013).

in January 2012 with subsequent postponements. Mine Eder states that the Social Security and General Health Insurance reform package increased both the eligibility for free health service, and the amount that was paid as a contribution fee while enabling the privatization of the healthcare system by increasing the role of the private sector.¹⁸³

However, it should be noted that this privatization in the health care did not mean that state left its responsibility of welfare provision. On the contrary, public social expenditures continued to increase during this period.¹⁸⁴ However, privatization occurred in such a way that the state paid people to buy these services from the private sector instead of giving the services itself.¹⁸⁵ Overall, the financing and delivery of the healthcare services and some other social services were separated from each other. The state continued to finance certain services such as healthcare, care for elderly, and disabled. However, it contracts out these services either to private sector or to family and civil society.

The Social Assistance System

Under the circumstances of the increasing need for social assistance, as discussed above, the AKP put emphasis on the Social Risk Mitigation Project (SRMP, *Sosyal Riski Azaltma Projesi*), which started in the last months of 2001 in cooperation with and according to recommendations of the World Bank. The project

¹⁸³ Mine Eder, "Retreating State?" Political Economy of Welfare Regime Change in Turkey" *Middle East Law and Governance* 2 (2010): 166.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 169.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 169.

was financed by the World Bank credits and was conducted in cooperation with the SYDTF. The two basic roles of the project were protecting the poor against the disastrous effects of the economic crisis and helping them prepare for future risks.¹⁸⁶

The four main components of the Project were Rapid Response, Institutional Development, Conditional Cash Transfers (CCT), and Supporting Local Initiatives which were aimed coping with the social consequences of the crisis along with creating the institutional capacity for further poverty alleviation programs. The Conditional Cash Transfers deserves more attention, since it became one of the main social assistance programs and continues today, long after the end of the SRMP in 2006. These are small amount of cash transfers that are paid to women in families with children on the condition of regular health checks of the children or of regular school attendance.

Apart from the SRMP, the free distribution of textbooks for primary and secondary education was one of the first things that the AKP did, which was a measure also was inspired by a World Bank report on Turkey stated that as a result of the crisis, the rates of withdrawal of children from school was high and the high costs of education materials was one of the reasons behind this.¹⁸⁷ The widening of the scope of the Green Card in 2005 was another development of the early AKP government. While previously only inpatient treatment expenditures had been met, coverage of provision of pharmaceutical expenditures and out-patient expenditures

¹⁸⁶ Apaydin, "Social Assistance as a Poverty Alleviation Strategy: Case of Altındağ Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundation," 65.

¹⁸⁷ The World Bank, "Project Appraisal Document on a Proposed Hybrid Investment/Adjustment Loan in the Amount of US\$500 Million to the Republic of Turkey for a Social Risk Mitigation Project/Loan," (Washington D. C.: The World Bank, 2001), 14-15.

for Green Card holders was an implementation that was highly appreciated by the poor.¹⁸⁸

Two other developments in the area of social assistance were an allowance for widows and an allowance for the women who were looking after an old or disabled relative. A means test was required for eligibility for both programs. Especially the second program was highly controversial, since it strengthened the traditional gender roles, while at the same time it seemed to benefit women who already doing the work, but now received wages for it. The program is an important indicator of the government's desire to deal with the social problems through the family.

Along with the developments in social policy programs such as SRMP, the free provision of textbooks for primary and secondary education, and the extension of the scope of the Green Card, there were institutional changes through which the social policy and security programs were conducted. In 2004, with Law No. 5263, the SYDTF, which had been administered by a secretariat under the Prime Ministry, was turned into the General Directorate of Social Assistance and Solidarity (*Sosyal Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışma Genel Müdürlüğü*, SYDGM) under the Prime Ministry.¹⁸⁹ The Directorate was given a great degree of autonomy with an extra-budget fund beyond any parliamentary scrutiny.¹⁹⁰ Later, in 2011, with the establishment of the Ministry of Family and Social Policy, the SYDGM were

¹⁸⁸ Buğra, *Kapitalizm, Yoksulluk ve Türkiye'de Sosyal Politika*, 233.

¹⁸⁹ Republic of Turkey, Law No. 5263, "Sosyal Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışma Genel Müdürlüğü Teşkilat ve Görevleri Hakkında Kanun," Official Gazette, 8 December 2004, accessed on 9 June 2014. <http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/kanunlar/k5263.html>

¹⁹⁰ Eder, "Retreating State?" Political Economy of Welfare Regime Change in Turkey," 174.

transferred to ministry from the Prime Ministry becoming General Directorate of Social Assistance (*Sosyal Yardımlar Genel Müdürlüğü*, SYGM).

This change also meant the separation of social protection from social assistance social services from each other. With that, the services for the “dependent” people in the population, such as the elderly, disabled, the destitute, children and women, were distinguished from those for the working and “self-sufficient”. For instance, the duty of making the payments of the disability and elderly allowances were transferred to SYGM, whereas, previously they had been placed under the Retirement-Chest (social insurance scheme for the civil servant) and not, for instance, in Social Services or any other institution for social assistance and social service. Also, healthcare expenditures for those who were exempted from paying contribution fees, since they had an income below the one third of the minimum income, were transferred to the SYGM, although other expenditures within the General Health Insurance remained in the Ministry of Social Security. The idea behind was that free health service without any payment should be regarded as social assistance in a system in which people contribute to the healthcare system with payments.¹⁹¹

Another important aspect of the AKP period under discussion in terms of social assistance was the desire to engage civil society in the area of social assistance. Philanthropic activities by the private sector and individuals were strongly encouraged by the government. For example, private donations in the area of education became totally tax deductible after the campaign “One Hundred Percent Support to Education” (*Eğitime Yüzde Yüz Destek*) of the Ministry of Education in

¹⁹¹ Hacımahmutoğlu, *Türkiye’deki Sosyal Yardım Sisteminin Değerlendirilmesi*, 91.

2003.¹⁹² Another example is the *Gökkuşluğu* “Rainbow” Project (*Gökkuşluğu Projesi*) through which efforts were made to finance the budget for the rehabilitation of the disabled and integration of them into the labor market with private donations by encouraging compassion and mercy for the disabled.¹⁹³

The number of religiously motivated, philanthropic NGOs rose with receiving the support of the government.¹⁹⁴ The coincidence of the liberalization of the economy with the rise of Islam gave way to increasing role of religiously motivated charity organizations in social assistance.¹⁹⁵ Certain NGOs such as *Deniz Feneri* (Lighthouse) and *Kimse Yok mu?* (Is Anybody There?), for instance recognized as having a special status of “association of public interest” (*Kamu Yararına Çalışan Dernekler*) by the Council of Ministers which allows them to collect donations without prior permission and provides them with exceptions in taxation.¹⁹⁶

Along with the civil society, municipalities also began to get involved in area of social assistance during the AKP government. With the Municipalities Act, no. 5393 in 2005, municipalities were charged with providing social assistance to the

¹⁹² Buğra, *Kapitalizm, Yoksulluk ve Türkiye’de Sosyal Politika*, 241.

¹⁹³ Betül Altuntaş, “Sosyal Haklar ve Sosyal Adalet Bağlamında Türkiye’de Kurumsal Sosyal Hizmetler ve Yardımların Değerlendirilmesi,” in *Uluslararası Sosyal Haklar Sempozyumu: Bildiriler* (Ankara: Belediye-İş Sendikası, 2009), 168.

¹⁹⁴ Eder, “Deepening Neoliberalization and a Changing Welfare Regime in Turkey: Mutations of a Populist, ‘sub-optimal’ Democracy,” 213.

¹⁹⁵ İpek Göçmen, “Religion, Politics and Social Assistance in Turkey: The Rise of Religiously Motivated Associations” *Journal of European Social Policy* 24, no.92 (2014): 92-100. See also, Damla Işık, “Vakıf as Intent and Practice: Charity and Poor Relief in Turkey,” 312-314.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 98.

poor.¹⁹⁷ Moreover, they gained the right to collect private donations and ensure the poor to apply micro-credit programs.¹⁹⁸ However, the increasing role of municipalities created the perception of political patronage and arbitrariness due to the absence of a supervisory mechanism and the lack of accurate data of the social assistance made by the municipalities.¹⁹⁹

Although there were a lot of developments in the area of social assistance in the AKP period under discussion, most of the changes were in the direction of giving a more weight to municipalities and NGOs in the area of social assistance by means of relying on the traditional social ties and charity.²⁰⁰ At the same time there was an increase in the public assistance, which shows the acceptance of the necessity of state intervention in a neoliberal market economy.

Increase in Public Social Assistance

Public social assistance expenditures have always been the weakest part of the social policy scheme in Turkey. The traditional social support mechanism substituted for central public assistance for a long time. However, although the public

¹⁹⁷ Eyüp Zengin, Ayhan Şahin, and Salih Özcan, *Yönetim ve Ekonomi* 19, no. 2 (Manisa: Celal Bayar Üniversitesi, 2012), 140.

¹⁹⁸ Republic of Turkey, Law No. 5302, “İl Özel İdaresi Kanunu,” *Gazette*, 3 March 2005, accessed on 5 May 2014, <http://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/MevzuatMetin/1.5.5302.pdf>

Republic of Turkey, Law No. 5393, “Belediye Kanunu,” *Official Gazette*, 13 July 2005. Accessed on 12 July 2014. <http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/kanunlar/k5393.html>

<http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/kanunlar/k5393.html>

¹⁹⁹ Hacımahmutoğlu, *Türkiye’deki Sosyal Yardım Sisteminin Değerlendirilmesi*, 165.

²⁰⁰ Altuntaş, “Sosyal Haklar ve Sosyal Adalet Bağlamında Türkiye’de Kurumsal Sosyal Hizmetler ve Yardımların Değerlendirilmesi,” 168.

expenditures on social assistance were traditionally very low, there emerged an increase in the AKP period under discussion. Mine Eder describes this increase in the social assistance expenditures as an “explosion.”²⁰¹ Despite the fact that it is very difficult to assess accurate and regular data on expenditures of social policy in general, and especially of social assistance due to the fragmented and uncoordinated structure of social assistance, it is definite that there was an increase in the social assistance.

The major obstacle to a study on social assistance expenditures in Turkey is the lack of any systemized and regular data on the social assistance expenditures as well as social expenditures in general. TÜİK, which is the institute for official statistics in Turkey, does not have specific data on social assistance. There is only one news bulletin which was released at the end of 2013.²⁰² Only, the data on the spending for health within the public social expenditures are available.²⁰³

Another difficulty is the scattered structure of social assistance system in Turkey. The social assistance distribution is disorganized and made by more than one institution. SYGM, SHÇEK, the General Directorate of Foundations, and the Ministry of Health are some of the institutions through which public social assistance is distributed. This fragmented and uncoordinated structure makes it difficult to obtain and organize data gathered from these single institutions. Finally, the lack of a proper classification for the social assistance expenditures and their specific branches

²⁰¹ Eder, “Deepening Neoliberalization and a Changing Welfare Regime in Turkey: Mutations of a Populist, ‘sub-optimal’ Democracy,” 212.

²⁰² TÜİK, “Sosyal Koruma İstatistikleri, 2008-2012,” TÜİK Haber Bülteni, no. 16201 (31 December 2013) accessed on 4 May 2014, <http://www.tuik.gov.tr/PreHaberBultenleri.do?id=16201>

²⁰³ TÜİK, “Sağlık Harcamaları,” accessed on 20 May 2014, http://www.tuik.gov.tr/PreTablo.do?alt_id=1084

and the constant change in the social assistance system and institutions in the first decade of the 2000s makes it difficult to use the present data for a meaningful analysis.

In addition to the lack of official data on the expenditures of social assistance, there is no systemized or wide-ranged empirical study on the issue, at least to my knowledge. The existing studies and calculations on the issue are mostly based on the annual reports of the related public institutions, such as SYGM, the Directorate of Foundations, SHÇEK and so on. There is a civil organization named the Platform for the Monitoring of Public Expenditures (*Kamu Harcamalarını İzleme Platformu*) which prepares wide-range reports on specific branches of public expenditures. However, they have not released any reports on social assistance expenditures yet.²⁰⁴ Apart from that, some studies on social assistance and social policy in Turkey have been published which make use of some calculations on social assistance expenditures, such as articles of Mine Eder and the thesis of Hande Hacımahmutoğlu, which is a thesis of the State Planning Organization. Benefitting from these studies and the annual reports of SYGM, I will give an overview of the increase in the social assistance distribution in Turkey during the AKP years under discussion.

Referencing Sarısoy and Koç,²⁰⁵ Mine Eder states that the ratio of public social transfers increased from 0.007 to 0.009 per cent within of the GDP between

²⁰⁴ For other branches of public expenditures such as expenditures on disability, military, see “Kamu Harcamalarını İzleme Platformu, KAHİP” accessed on 25 July 2014, <http://www.kahip.org/>

²⁰⁵ İdris Sarısoy and Selçuk Koç, “Türkiye’de Kamu Sosyal Transfer Harcamalarının Yoksulluğu Azaltmadaki Etkilerinin Ekonometrik Analizi” *Maliye Dergisi*, no. 158 (Ocak-Haziran 2010): 338.

2002 and 2008.²⁰⁶ According to the data of the SYGM however, the increase was greater, from 0.5 to 1.4 per cent within GDP between 2002 and 2011.²⁰⁷ The ratio that was expressed by the SYGM during interviews that I made at the beginning of 2014 was 1.5 per cent of the GDP for 2013, which was almost half that of European countries.

The difference between the calculations of these two sources is originated in the confusion and ambiguity about what is counted as social assistance. Sarısoy and Koç's calculation includes the transfers for the Green Card, for the disability and elderly allowance (Law No. 2022), the transfers made from the General Directorate of Foundations, SHÇEK and SYDTF, while SYGM data involve all the transfers including the transfers such as that of to Ministry of Education or the social assistance expenditures of municipalities in their calculation. Hacımahmutoğlu also states that the amount of both the social assistance expenditures and social assistance recipients increased in recent years, in her thesis, "Evaluation of Social Assistance System in Turkey." Relating this fact to the high levels of unemployment, she says that due to the dissolution of the agricultural sector, migration to the cities caused a rise in unemployment.²⁰⁸

Since the main institutions of public social assistance are SYGM, it is reasonable to assess the degree of increase in the public social assistance through the increase in the expenditures of the SYGM. The cash transfers made to the

²⁰⁶ Eder, "Deepening Neoliberalization and a Changing Welfare Regime in Turkey: Mutations of a Populist, 'sub-optimal' Democracy," 214.

²⁰⁷ General Directorate of Social Assistance, "2012 Sosyal Yardım İstatistikleri Bülteni" (T.C Aile ve Sosyal Politikalar Bakanlığı, 2012), 19. accessed on 5 May 2014.
http://www.sosyalyardimlar.gov.tr/upload/Node/11873/files/SYGM_2012.pdf

²⁰⁸ Hacımahmutoğlu, *Türkiye'deki Sosyal Yardım Sisteminin Değerlendirilmesi*, 78.

Foundations from the Fund can be divided in two main groups. The first group of transfers was directed to certain objectives such as food, coal, education materials, conditional cash transfers, projects for income while the second group contained cash transfers within the initiative of the trustee of local foundations that were mentioned above. In almost all of these assistance categories that were conducted through the local Foundations, an increase can be observed. For instance, while in 2003, 35,270,000 TL were transferred for food assistance, in 2009, the amount of the transfer was 378,950,000 TL with a gradual increase in the years between.²⁰⁹ For educational materials, the increase was far greater; from 10,220,000 TL in 2003, to 181,850,000 in 2009.²¹⁰ It should be noted that the increase in the transfers for education materials was not related to the free distribution of textbooks for primary and secondary education, which is classified as free textbook transfer by the SYGM.

The periodical transfers, as they are called by the SYGM and which mean the cash transfers that are in the total initiative of the local Foundations also increased. The board of trustee of a local Foundation is the decision-maker of the use of this resource; to whom it is given, the amount and the duration. For instance, in 2003 the amount of transfers to the local Foundations for the periodical assistance was 108,964,000 TL in 2003. This amount was 221,602,300 TL in 2009 according to the data of the SYGM. Also the amount of cash transfers within the scope of Act no. 2022 (allowance for disability and elderly), which was a central social assistance program, had increased in 2003. Hacımahmutoğlu indicates the increase in the total

²⁰⁹ Republic of Turkey, Parliament Deb., vol. 91, reunion 58, 3 February 2011, written answer for a parliamentary question of Hasan Macit, 872.

²¹⁰ Republic of Turkey, Parliament Deb., vol. 91, reunion 58, 3 February 2011, written answer for a parliamentary question of Hasan Macit, 873.

amount of cash transfer within the scope of this law as 88.77 per cent in 2003 in comparison to the previous year.²¹¹

Despite the variety in numbers for the different classifications, the data show that there was an increase in the social assistance expenditures to an important degree. Mine Eder states that the numbers and the degree of increase in the social assistance clearly shows the populist approach in the social assistance schemes, despite the absence of a systematic and transparent study on the social assistance programs and the lack of data.²¹² The general view of the distribution of social assistance is that the social assistance programs are scattered, uncoordinated, and based on arbitrary definitions of the “real poor.”

During my interviews with the officials in the SYGM, they also expressed that in the first years of the AKP, high amounts of assistance were distributed. Even if the amount of assistance was still far lower than that of the European welfare states, and not sufficient to reduce poverty, the increase was rapid and the selection of the recipients was arbitrary. Actually, it was bound to be arbitrary due to the absence of any systemic mechanism of targeting or any wide-ranged study on the poor and poverty for the whole country. Due to this rapid increase and the absence of any systemic criteria for the distribution, the application of social assistance became a major point of criticism of the governing party by the opposition.

²¹¹ Hacımahmutoğlu, *Türkiye'deki Sosyal Yardım Sisteminin Değerlendirilmesi*, 111.

²¹² Eder, “Deepening Neoliberalization and a Changing Welfare Regime in Turkey: Mutations of a Populist, ‘sub-optimal’ Democracy,” 212.

The Need for Targeting

Social assistance brings the question of how the recipients will be determined. Neither social assistance nor the targeting of a certain group for social assistance is novel in Turkey as it is not for the rest of the world. However, since social assistance was traditionally a matter of civil society to a great extent and the share of social assistance within the public social policy were so small that, there was no pressure to develop a central and institutional targeting mechanism for public social assistance. However, since the first decade of the 2000s there have been efforts to develop central targeting mechanisms for social assistance in Turkey.

At the beginning of the 2000s saw an increase in social assistance expenditures in Turkey which can be attributed to various developments. First, there was a change of paradigm in social policy in the world, a general trend of shift from social security to social assistance as it was explained in before.²¹³ With the World Bank recommendations, especially for the developing countries, means-tested social assistance became an important strategy of poverty alleviation. However, other than the general increase in social assistance expenditures in the world, there were domestic factors for developing means-tested social assistance programs and targeting mechanisms in Turkey. The eradication of traditional ways of communal support, and changing types of labor in an increasingly insecure labor market resulted in the emergence of a new form of poverty, which was explained above. Along with it, the 1999 earthquake and the 2001 economic crisis had disastrous effects on the

²¹³ For more information, see Chapter 2.

society making urgent intervention necessary, bringing social assistance systems on the agenda of government.

The rapid increase in the distribution of social assistance in the absence of an objective targeting mechanism made the application highly controversial. The continual discussions in the parliament and the news articles on the issue pushed the government to institutionalize a social assistance system and targeting mechanism together with the audit reports within the bureaucracy stating the need for such standardization and institutionalization. However, apart from the discussions, the main trigger for the concern with the issue was the World Bank reports and recommendations.

In the first decade of the 2000s, the World Bank directed attention to poverty in Turkey within its wider program for the development of poverty alleviation strategies in the world. In 2000 it published its first report on poverty in Turkey. Later, in 2001, a report for the proposal for Social Risk Mitigation Project was published. This project started in the following year, in 2002. In its report, the World Bank recommended that government spending in Turkey target the economically vulnerable better. Turkey's social protection system was described as extensive, covering a large part of population and providing payments for healthcare, disability, maternity, and occupational injury.²¹⁴ However, it is also stated that the social insurance system did not reach the most vulnerable, despite its extensiveness. Also, the "dispersed" and "disjointed" social assistance scheme with low benefit levels was criticized. In addition, the social insurance system was called unsustainable, and

²¹⁴ The World Bank, "Turkey: Economic Reforms, Living Standards and Social Welfare Study" (Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2000), 18.

together with the agricultural subsidies, it was regarded as a “drain” on the government budget.

Therefore, in accordance with these recommendations, a Conditional Cash Transfer Program was started, which involved the transfer of a small amount of cash to families with children on certain conditions, such as regular attendance of the children to school or regular health checks. The program was financed with the credits from the World Bank and the research for the program and its application were made in coordination with professionals from the World Bank. This was the first time that efforts were made to develop a targeting mechanism in the real sense in Turkey. Although there had been applications of social assistance distribution and a central social assistance program such as disability and elderly allowance, in these applications targeting had been made with quiet informal and arbitrary ways.²¹⁵ The target of the CCT program in Turkey was defined as the poorest six per cent of the population. However, it was not possible to reach this population with the existent data. Therefore, the first study for means-testing in Turkey was made by professionals of the World Bank and professors from Middle East University in 2002. In the subsequent years the World Bank has continued to be the main body in the changing welfare regime in Turkey.

Another strong factor in the development of means-testing mechanisms was the critiques on the government by the opposition parties and media. The arbitrariness, patronage relations, and inequality in the distribution of social assistance were a constant point of criticism and discussion in parliament.

²¹⁵ For more information about means testing in Turkey, see Chapter 4.

Meanwhile, in the media, there was often news about the corruption in the distribution, in a way to benefit, undeserving people or about the distribution of the resources wastefully.

The criterion and amount of the assistance that were distributed through the Foundations was a frequent subject of the parliamentary questions.²¹⁶ It was often asked whether the uniformity and standardization in services had been achieved or not.²¹⁷ Also there were questions on discrimination and corruption in the Foundations.²¹⁸ Also there was the belief that the General Directorate of Social Assistance and Solidarity (SYDGM) was working in the interest of the government party. For instance, Hüseyin Özcan, in a parliamentary speech in the name of the Motherland Party (ANAP), stated that the application of social assistance was arbitrary especially in the countryside due to the lack of general and objective criteria for the distribution of social assistance. Instead, the poor should be determined, monitored, and scientific data should be collected about poverty regularly.²¹⁹ Cevdet Selvi from the CHP said that the SYDTF was used as if it were administered by the AKP organizations in the local areas. He accused the AKP of taking the lists of the poor from the Foundations and using them for political profit.²²⁰ He also accused the AKP of distributing assistance to the acquaintance of the AKP members in the local

²¹⁶ Republic of Turkey, Parliament Deb., vol. 17, reunion 91, 10 June 2003, Parliamentary question of Gürsoy Erol, 246.

²¹⁷ Republic of Turkey, Parliament Deb., vol. 53, reunion 101, 15 June 2004.

²¹⁸ Republic of Turkey, Parliament Deb., vol. 26, reunion 1, 1 October 2003, 268.

²¹⁹ Republic of Turkey, Parliament Deb., vol. 104, reunion 34, 17 December 2005, Speech of Hüseyin Özcan in the name of ANAP, 404.

²²⁰ Republic of Turkey, Parliament Deb., vol. 104, reunion 34, 17 December 2005, Speech of Cevdet Selvi in the name of RPP, 419.

the AKP organizations. Another example was the accusation by Muharrem Doğan, a member of ANAP, of “partisanship” in the distribution of Green Cards.²²¹

The governing party did not remain indifferent to these criticisms and seemed to take them seriously at least in rhetoric. For instance, during discussions of the establishment of the SYDGM in 2004, Sabri Varan, speaking in the name of the AKP group in the parliament, reported on the general complaints and suspicions of the people about the SYDTF whether the resources are used according to its aims, whether those who deserved the assistance received it or whether the rich received assistance, whether the board of the SYDTF and the board of trustees in the foundations (SYDVs) act fairly.²²² He stated that with the establishment of the SYDGM, the SYDTF would be regulated and the organization would be staffed by the professionals on the issue. With this, the resources would be distributed to the needy with objective criteria.

The last factor that pushed for the development of targeting mechanisms was audit reports on the Fund, and studies about the social assistance within the SYDGM and the Ministry of Development. In these reports and studies the arbitrary definitions of the poor and the resulting differentiation in the distribution of the assistance across the SYDVs were criticized persistently. Also, the dispersed structure of the social assistance programs and the distribution of assistance through various institutions were also other critical points.

²²¹ Republic of Turkey, Parliament Deb., vol. 104, reunion 34, 17 December 2005, Speech of Muharrem Doğan, 349.

²²² Republic of Turkey, Parliament Deb., vol. 65, reunion 24, 1 December 2004, Speech of Sabri Varan in the name for JDP, 571-2.

In the audit reports on the SYDTF, the standardization and systemization of the projects and assistance that are financed by the Fund were highly recommended. Also it was stated that the differences in the interpretation and implication of the actions of the Foundations should be removed and definite regulations should be made about it.²²³ Also in a thesis written within the Ministry of Development the targeting was found to be one of the major points in the problems of the social assistance system in Turkey.²²⁴ The absence of objective and standard criteria of “indigence,” the insufficiency of targeting methods,²²⁵ along with the insensitivity in means-testing²²⁶ and variations in the definition of the needy across various institutions that distributed assistance²²⁷ were major points of the problems that were cited in the reports.

The subsequent World Bank reports in the early 2000s together with the 1999 earthquake and 2001 crisis made the need for a more systemized and institutional social assistance mechanism in Turkey more obvious to the public authorities. Also, with the World Bank social policy recommendations to Turkey that gave weight to social assistance made Turkey to develop more social assistance programs. However, the lack of institutional capacity and previous studies for a targeting mechanism for selecting the recipients of social assistance was expressed in

²²³ Republic of Turkey, Parliament Deb., vol. 46, reunion 73, 14 April 2004, Public Economic Enterprise Audit Report 2001, 272-78.

²²⁴ Hac ımah muto ğlu, *Türkiye’deki Sosyal Yardım Sisteminin De ğerlendirilmesi*, 212.

²²⁵ Ibid., 212.

²²⁶ Devlet Denetleme Kurulu, “Türkiye’de Sosyal Yard ımlar ve Sosyal Hizmetler” (T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Denetleme Kurulu, 2009) 8, accessed on 5 May 2014 <http://www.tccb.gov.tr/ddk/ddk29.pdf>.

²²⁷ Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı, “Gelir Da ğılımı ve Yoksullukla Mücadele: Özel İhtisas Komisyonu Raporu” (Ankara: T. C. Başbakanlık Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı, 2007), 47.

these reports as well as the governmental reports that persistently recommended a more systemized mechanism for selecting the beneficiaries. When these reports and recommendations were coincided with the criticisms on the arbitrary distribution of assistance or on the patronage relations impacting the distribution, pressure rose on the government to take social assistance more seriously and try to institutionalize the social assistance mechanism as well as developing a more objective and systemized mechanism.

CHAPTER 4

THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF SOCIAL ASSISTANCE AND MEANS TESTING

Institutionalization in social assistance was related and actually could be regarded as a part of the process of increasing the state capacity to enhance efficient governance in Turkey. Starting in the 1990s and accelerating in 2000s, there was a wide-range transformation mostly in terms of use of information technologies in the various public institutions in order to increase the efficiency in public administration, in interaction with global actors, especially the World Bank, the OECD and the EU.²²⁸ However, even if the institutionalization in social assistance system should be evaluated in relation to this transformation, it should not be reduced to an ordinary part of this transformation, since it had a different path, though closely related and intersecting.

Some of the major attempts for increasing the institutional capacity of the state could be counted as the Central Population Management System (*Merkezi Nüfus İdaresi Sistemi*, MERNIS), the Address-based Registration System (*Adrese Dayalı Nüfus Kayıt Sistemi*, ADNKS) and the e-government (*e-state*) project. MERNIS was an ID-based information system developed in 1998 which assigned ID numbers to each citizen that was to be used in all of the operations in public

²²⁸ Özgün E. Topak, “Governing Turkey’s Information Society,” *Current Sociology* (2010): 6

institutions.²²⁹ADNKS was an address-based recording system that aimed to connect the electronic information on the address of the individuals to the ID system. Finally, the e-government was a part of the Urgent Action Plan of the government in 2003 and aimed to use of information technologies in all phases governmental tasks. The targeted institutions were the ministries of National Education, Justice, Health, and Transport (currently Ministry of Transport, Maritime Affairs and Communications), State Planning Organization (currently Ministry of Development), Undersecretariat of the Prime Ministry for Foreign Trade (currently Ministry of Economy), the Turkish Standards Institution, and the Informatics Association of Turkey.²³⁰All these developments were important for the institutionalization of social assistance and means testing. However, the transformation of the social assistance system or the use of information technologies was not a component of the e-state project, which aimed at the modernization of public administration. Also the State Statistic Institution (*Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü*, DİE, currently the Turkish Statistical Institute, *Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu*, TÜİK) was not a part of the project at the beginning.

The institutionalization of the social assistance had a somehow separate path. Although, the lack of a systemic and unified approach in social relations and the disorganized, multitude structure of the social assistance system had been mentioned in several reports, for a long time the efforts at the generation of a standardized institutional system for social assistance were started in 2000s. Increasing institutional capacity was one of the main targets of the Social Risk Mitigation Project that was

²²⁹ Gökhan İskender, “Turkish e-Government Transformation: A Country Analysis Based on Efforts, Problems and Solutions” (Massachusetts: MA. Thesis, MIT, 2012), 14.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 15.

made with the World Bank starting in 2001. Especially, the use of technology and information systems was part of the project's Institutional Development Component.²³¹ The institutionalization of the Fund for Encouragement of Social Assistance and Solidarity (*Sosyal Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışmayı Teşvik Fonu*, SYDTF), the creation of database and software development, was all parts of the project and the improvements were closely monitored by the World Bank. Apart from the SYDTF, the institutionalization of SHÇEK and even of the DİE, were parts of the SRMP.²³²

The main trigger of the institutionalization of these institutes, on other hand, was the necessity of an institutional capacity for means testing. The determination of the target group of the social assistance, and developing mechanisms to reach this group necessitated a huge institutional capacity from having knowledge of the poor and poverty to accessing people's personal information such as the income, land or social security registers, health conditions. Therefore, the institutionalization process of social assistance and especially of the means testing involved increasing government capacity. These two processes went hand in hand, triggering each other. Since, for the means testing system to function, all of the public institutions of the land records, social security databases, population registers had to function well; therefore the need for means testing was a trigger for well-functioning of other institutions. On the other hand, without the institutional development of other public

²³¹ World Bank, "Implementation Completion and Result Report on a Loan in the Amount of US\$500 Million to the Republic of Turkey for a Social Risk Mitigation Project/Loan" (World Bank, 2008), 23.

²³² *Ibid.*, 22-25.

institutions, it was impossible to develop a means testing mechanism at the very beginning.

The main problems in the institutionalization of the social assistance can be summarized as the fragmented and multitude structure of the social assistance programs and institutions, the lack of institutional capacity, being exposed to political influence, and making the assistance not on the basis of citizenship rights which will be discussed below. The next part of the chapter will explain the institutionalization in social assistance with a periodization that begins from 1986 with the establishment of the SYDTF, which was established to meet the needs of the poor and vulnerable at the local level through the SYDVs, but remained highly inefficient and stagnant. However, it became important with the urgent need for such an institution after the Marmara Earthquake in 1999 and the 2001 economic crisis.

In time it turned out to be the basis of the current structure of social assistance with the influence of the World Bank after the crisis. So, the second time frame, starting in 2001 with the Social Risk Mitigation Project (*Sosyal Riski Azaltma Projesi*, SRMP) that was designed and conducted with the World Bank's initiation. Then the establishment of the General Directorate of Social Assistance and Solidarity (*Sosyal Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışma Genel Müdürlüğü*, SYDGM) in 2004 will be introduced as an important step for the institutionalization process, since the SYDTF, of which the only tasks were collecting the incomes and transferring them to the SYDVs, was turned into an executive institution with the tasks of monitoring poverty, making research and developing social assistance programs according to need. The last period will be then the establishment of the Ministry of Family and Social Policy and SYDGM becoming a sub-unit under the ministry with the name of

the General Directorate of Social Assistance (*Sosyal Yardımlar Genel Müdürlüğü*, SYGM) in 2011 and the last developments will be evaluated that enhance the institutional unification to an important degree, but still preserve the fragmentary social assistance system. After the introduction of the institutionalization of the social assistance, the developments in the area of targeting will be discussed separately, with the current situation in which there are important developments especially in the use of information technologies and constitution of databases with still ongoing problems and deficiencies related to the difficulty of assessing the actual incomes of the applicants, being exposed to political influence and not being made on the citizenship rights

The Institutionalization of Social Assistance

1986-2001: The Fund for the Encouragement of Social Assistance and Solidarity

The main institutions of social assistance in Turkey are the SYDTF, The General Directorate of Foundations and the Institution of Social Services and Protection of Children (*Sosyal Hizmetler ve Çocuk Esirgeme Kurumu*, SHÇEK). However, only the SYDTF was established directly with the aim of social assistance. Indeed, it became a huge bureaucratic institution, and the main institution of social assistance, under which almost all the social assistance schemes were collected,

which previously had been scattered and separated.²³³ Therefore, the focus of the thesis will be the SYDTF, the institution that the whole social assistance system was tried to be established on the basis of.

In 1986, a law on the Encouragement for Social Assistance and Solidarity was legislated.²³⁴ Through this law, the fund, the SYDTF was created for the pooling of money with the purpose of meeting the needs of the poor and vulnerable. The resources that would be collected in this Fund should be distributed to the Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundations (*Sosyal Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışma Vakıfları*, SYDV), which were established in every city and district in Turkey.²³⁵ Although the resources of the SYDTF were transferred from the public resources, it was outside of the general budget, free from scrutinize of the parliament. Some of the income sources of the SYDTF were some share of the income taxes (2.8 per cent), half of the aggregate of traffic tickets, and 15 per cent of the advertising revenue of High Counsel of Radio and Television (*Radyo ve Televizyon Üst Kurulu*, RTÜK), along with all types of charity and private donations and share that would come from the General Budget.²³⁶

Institutionally, it was under the Prime Ministry and managed by a unit called the “Board of the Fund” (*Fon Kurulu*), which was constituted from the

²³³ For more information on the issue, see the section “Institutionalization of Social Assistance and Means Testing in Turkey.”

²³⁴ Republic of Turkey. Law No. 3294, “Sosyal Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışmayı Teşvik Kanunu,” Official Gazette, 14 June 1986, accessed on 14 July 2014. <http://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/MevzuatMetin/1.5.3294.pdf>

²³⁵ For more information on the SYDVs, see Chapter 5.

²³⁶ Republic of Turkey. Law No. 3294, “Sosyal Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışmayı Teşvik Kanunu,” Official Gazette, 14 June 1986, accessed on 14 July 2014. <http://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/MevzuatMetin/1.5.3294.pdf>

undersecretaries of the related Ministries, such as Health, Internal Affairs, and the Undersecretary of the Prime Ministry, the Directors of SYDGM and the General Directorate of Foundations under the leadership of a Minister selected by the Prime Ministry (currently with the leadership of the Minister of Family and Social Policy). However, other than these, SYDTF did not have any law or regulation that defined the organizational framework with the accurate directions for tasks and responsibilities of it as well as of its personnel until the legislation of a law for it in 2004.

The resources that were collected in the SYDTF were distributed through the SYDVs, which were established in each city and district by means of a law on SYDTF in 1986. They had been designed to make instant social assistances to people in emergent needs, but later they were turned into institutions through which almost all the social assistance programs were conducted. Currently, there are 973 SYDVs and 8,741 SYDV personnel in total.²³⁷ All the personnel of the SYDVs were contracted personnel paid by the SYGM.

The SYDVs was managed by the Board of Trustees, which was constituted of the mayor of the municipality; the provincial director of health, agriculture, national education; and SHÇEK under the head of provincial governor in cities. In the districts it was made up of the mayor, heads of district national education and health directorates and the district governor as the leader.

The SYDVs' main duty is to distribute the resources that are transferred from the SYDTF according to the criteria that were defined by the Law No. 3294 and

²³⁷ Aile ve Sosyal Politikalar Bakanlığı, "2013 Yılı Faaliyet Raporu," (T.C. Aile ve Sosyal Politikalar Bakanlığı: 2014), 112.

by the circulars of SYGM, which was actually no more than being in need and destitution. The amount of the resources that was transferred to each SYDV was determined according to criteria, such as the population, and the degree of socio-economic condition. These resources are distributed with the initiation of the SYDVs and are called as Periodical Transfers. Also, there are regular social assistance programs such as the elderly and disability allowance, support for the widows, or the allowances for the families of soldiers in need, which were given with certain terms and conditions defined by related laws. In 2013, 1,997,306 households benefitted from the periodical transfers of the SYDVs²³⁸ and the total amount that was transferred for these periodical transfers from the SYDTF was 954,260,046.²³⁹ Also, 2,258,734 households benefitted from the regular social assistance with the total number of 3,096,489 households who benefitted either one or both types of social assistance.²⁴⁰

With the use of the SYDVs in the distribution of assistance, it was thought that the local governors would make the best decisions for the distribution of social assistance in their hometowns, benefitting from their local knowledge and experience. Also, it was thought that the distribution of the assistance through a council and not by a single individual would prevent arbitrary decisions and favoritism.²⁴¹ Nevertheless, in this system of distribution of social assistance through the SYDVs arbitrary decisions were revealed in many reports.

²³⁸ Ibid., 112.

²³⁹ Ibid., 108.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 112.

²⁴¹ Republic of Turkey, Parliament Deb., vol. 65, reunion 24, 1 December 2004, Cevdet Eröl, AKP, 582.

Also, these foundations were not within the state organization and had a separate legal personality of their own. However, having been established by the state they also were different from the other foundations in terms of their funding, which was public resources transferred from the SYDTF, and of their directors, who were administrative authorities, provincial governors in the cities, and district governors.

However, like the other foundations they had the right to collect and receive donations and pursue income generating enterprises. Actually, this was one of the reasons stated during my interviews with the SYGM officials. They stated that it was thought that the SYDVs would create their own incomes for social assistance and the state would share its responsibility with civil society. However, contrary to the expectations, this system evolved into a huge bureaucracy with the state playing a big part in the social assistance. The SYDVs almost never used their opportunity for income generating activities and relied on public resources as their main income.

The SYDTF and SYDVs were the main institutions for social assistance; however, for a long time they were not used seriously for a long time since their establishment. Also, the SYDTF was far from having an institutional capacity that could conduct a proper social assistance system. It was only in 1999 after the Marmara earthquake that this structure was used actively. Later with the crisis of 2001 it would turn into the main institution of social assistance that the World Bank use and the future changes in the social assistance system would be on the basis of it. However, until then, the SYDTF and SYDVs lacked institutional capacity, personnel and information technologies and were highly inefficient institutions that were not used actively.

First, the SYDTF had no human resources policy that would recruit qualified people, specialized in the social assistance, as it was stated in a World Bank Report.²⁴² In 2001, almost 15 years after its establishment, there were 67 personnel in the SYDTF. However, half of the staff was temporarily appointments who actually belonged to other public institutions or departments. The duration of their assignment could be long, as 10 years. Even, during our interview, an official from the General Directorate of Social Assistance said that the general board of the fund was like a unit of exile, where the undesired bureaucrats and the other personnel were sent, which shows to what degree it was taken serious.

Another important point is that there were no definite instructions for the conditions and terms of the duties of the staff, since the law on the SYDTF and other regulations did not mention the issue. The SYDTF personnel also had no social work training or education in the area of social policy or assistance, just like the SYDV personnel. Especially, the absence of trained personnel in the SYDVs was an important problem, since the SYDV workers were to carry out the social assistance programs in the local areas and deal with the applicants.²⁴³ Actually, the problem with the staff in the SYDV seemed to have been more serious than reported by the World Bank, since during my interviews with the staff of the SYDV in Çorlu,²⁴⁴ they stated that previously most of the personnel of the foundations had been working in other

²⁴²World Bank, “Project Appraisal Document on a Proposed Hybrid Investment/Adjustment Loan in the Amount of US\$500 Million to the Republic of Turkey for a Social Risk Mitigation Project/Loan” (World Bank, 2001), 55.

²⁴³Ibid.

²⁴⁴ The case of Çorlu will be evaluated in detail in Chapter 5.

units of the district governorship such as driver or gardener, and the rest of the staff of the Foundation had been doing nothing related to social assistance.

The SYDTF also had no policy unit to develop social assistance projects or make research on poverty in Turkey. Actually, when it was established, project development and research were not seen within its tasks. Its only duty was to collect revenues from various public institutions and distribute them to the SYDVs.²⁴⁵ However, the SYDTF even had no sufficient institutional capacity to fulfill these tasks. The audit reports persistently stated that the fund was unable to collect its revenues from responsible institutions, since it did not have the necessary organizational capacity.²⁴⁶ Therefore, the SYDTF was not an institution that could conduct research on poverty and develop policies accordingly. It was far from being able to monitor the poverty in Turkey and develop a systemized means-test mechanism.

The lack of technological capacity in the SYDTF and SYDVs was another important obstacle for a proper targeting mechanism. A World Bank Report in 2001 stated that almost 70 per cent of the SYDVs had at least one computer, and the rest had none.²⁴⁷ Moreover, only 150 of the 971 SYDVs had a database for the data they had kept about the social assistance recipients. Also, there was no electronic system for information sharing among the SYDVs, as well as between the SYDTF and

²⁴⁵ Republic of Turkey. Law No. 3294, “Sosyal Yardımlaş ma ve Dayanış mayı Teş vik Kanunu,” Official Gazette, 14 June 1986, accessed on 14 July 2014. <http://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/MevzuatMetin/1.5.3294.pdf>

²⁴⁶ Republic of Turkey, Parliament Deb., vol. 2, reunion 18, 7 January 2003, Public Economic Enterprises Audit Reports, 735-753.

²⁴⁷ World Bank, “Project Appraisal Document on a Proposed Hybrid Investment/Adjustment Loan in the Amount of US\$500 Million to the Republic of Turkey for a Social Risk Mitigation Project/ Loan” (World Bank, 2001), 54.

SYDVs. In these circumstances, where the records of the applicants were not kept properly and could not be monitored or verified, it was difficult to apply a proper means testing scheme or even to monitor the amounts of money that were distributed; in terms of when, to whom, or in what amounts.

So, the monitoring and evaluation of the social assistance schemes were underdeveloped.²⁴⁸ The activities of the SYDTF were supposed to be monitored by the State Auditing Board (*Yüksek Denetleme Kurulu*). However, it did not trace the assistance that was distributed, and there was no statistical data on the activities of the foundations. It was also unknown whether the assistance that was distributed through the foundations was useful and achieved its goal or not, due to lack of any research and even any unit that would make such researches on the issue. Also, the SYDTF had no records of those who had received assistance, nor did it audit the SYDVs on the issue. Only the number of people who had received assistance and the total amount of assistance that had been transferred to the Foundations were registered. There was no hierarchical relation between the SYDVs and the SYDTF, making the SYDTF unauthorized to audit the SYDVs. Even if it had been authorized, the lack of personnel would make it impossible to audit the SYDVs, the number of which was more than 900 in 2001. The SYDVs had legal personality, which made them separate and highly independent units. They were under the jurisdiction of the General Directorate of Foundations, which had the authority to audit the foundations only in financial terms. Also the SYDVs were to be audit by the civil service inspectors (*mülkiye müfettişleri*) in terms of administration. However, as Sabri Varan, a MP of

²⁴⁸Ibid., 54

the CHP said in his parliamentary speech during the discussions of a law (No. 5263) on the organization and duty of the SYDTF,²⁴⁹ due to the high number of the Foundations and the work load of the charged public institutions, a proper audit of the SYDVs had not been made.²⁵⁰

Overall, the SYDTF was not used effectively or in a way relevant to its original aim. For example, the Public Economic Enterprise (*Kamu İktisadi Teşebbüsleri*, KİT) audit reports stated that even the resources that had been collected in the fund for social assistance had not been used properly.²⁵¹ Some part of the money was transferred from the Fund to the general budget, to finance the budget deficits. Also an important share of the Fund was used for investments in dormitories, rehabilitation centers, and old age homes constructions which were actually beyond the scope of the SYDTF.²⁵² In this period, far from having the capacity of being an influential social assistance institution that would conduct research on poverty, develop social assistance programs, and do means test, it was stagnant and the resources collected under it were used for other aims.

²⁴⁹ Republic of Turkey, Law No. 5263, “Sosyal Yardımlaş ma ve Dayanış ma Genel Müdürlüğü Teşkilat ve Görevleri Hakkında Kanun,” Official Gazette, 8 December 2004, accessed on 9 June 2014. <http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/kanunlar/k5263.html>

²⁵⁰ Republic of Turkey, Parliament Deb., vol. 65, reunion 24, 1 December 2004, Parliamentary Speech of Sabri Varan 571.

²⁵¹ Republic of Turkey, Parliament Deb., vol. 46, reunion 73, 14 April 2004, Public Economic Enterprise Audit Report 1999, 2000, 2001.

²⁵² Republic of Turkey, Parliament Deb., vol. 46, reunion 73, 14 April 2004, Public Economic Enterprise Audit Report 1999, 2000, 2001.

2001 – 2004: The Social Risk Mitigation Project

The main institution of social assistance, the SYDTF was disorganized and incapable of providing even its basic services, as explained in the previous section. The annual reports of the Public Economic Enterprises (*Kamu İktisadi Teşebbüsleri*, KİT) persistently stated that the SYDTF even could not fulfill its main tasks, which were collecting its income from various public institutions and distributing these resources to the SYDVs that had been established in every city and district.²⁵³ It was recommended that the board of the SYDTF, which was the unit of decision-making, should be transformed into an executive organization, take a legal personality, and have an institutional organizational law with all the authorities and responsibilities of it and its personnel as well defined properly. Also, the need for more personnel and resource was emphasized in all of these annual reports.

Actually, long before these reports, in the Development Plans of the governments before the AKP, notes did exist on the institutionalization of social assistance and unification of various social assistance institutions.²⁵⁴ However, the main trigger behind the institutionalization of social assistance lays in the SRMP which was a project of the World Bank that was carried out in cooperation with the SYDTF. The main purpose of the project was overcoming the disastrous effects of the 2001 crisis. However, the SRMP was more than just a response to the crisis. It had also a project that aimed at the institutionalization of social assistance in Turkey.

²⁵³ Republic of Turkey, Parliament Deb., vol. 46, reunion 73, 14 April 2004, Public Economic Enterprise Audit Reports 1999, 2000, 2001.

²⁵⁴ Hacımahmutoğlu, *Türkiye'deki Sosyal Yardım Sisteminin Değerlendirilmesi*, 80-85.

Therefore, along with the poverty research, the development of new social assistance programs, and institutional development in order to develop a proper means testing mechanism for the social assistance were planned from the beginning.

The two main components of the Project were the Rapid Responses and Institutional Development. The first component was meant to expand the existing social assistance programs and supports to enhance the access to healthcare and increase school attendance that had decayed due to the 2001 crisis.²⁵⁵ The Conditional Cash Transfer Program (*Şarh Nakit Transferi*, CCT) was also implied with this aim. It was a central, in-cash social assistance program that aimed at the poorest six per cent of the population with children; in return for regular school attendance or health checks. Also under the name of Local Initiatives; small cash credits were started to be given to those who had an income generating project.

For the distribution of assistance in the CCTs and Local Initiatives, the World Bank cooperated with SYDTF and SYDVs were used to access to people at the local level. The World Bank preferred to use the existing institutions instead of establishing a new structure which would take time and resources.²⁵⁶ It also was stated that SYDTF had experience in social assistance across the whole country, especially mentioning its place in the Marmara earthquake. Therefore, the SYDTF and SYDVs were the main institutions selected for the component of Institutional Development in the SRMP along with the Institute for Social Services and Child Protection (*Sosyal Hizmetler ve Çocuk Esirgeme Kurumu*, SHÇEK) and DİE. These

²⁵⁵World Bank, “Project Appraisal Document on a Proposed Hybrid Investment/Adjustment Loan in the Amount of US\$500 Million to the Republic of Turkey for a Social Risk Mitigation Project/Loan” (World Bank, 2001), 23-24.

²⁵⁶Ibid., 21.

institutions were directly related to social assistance distribution with the exception of the DİE, which collected information on poverty and monitoring it. The idea was to strengthen the institutional capacity of main governmental institutions with the aim of improving targeting and coverage of the social assistance programs.²⁵⁷ These institutions were to be supported in terms of policy development, research, monitoring and evaluation.²⁵⁸ For that, it was recommended that development and the use of information technologies, the recruitment of qualified personnel and training of the staff be made. Also, public information campaigns for being able to access the poor and increase the coverage were recommended by the World Bank.²⁵⁹

Mostly with the influence of the World Bank, which emphasized the necessity of social assistance schemes, some improvements in the area occurred other than the CCTs and Local Initiatives. Together with the increase in social assistance, which was covered above, social assistance became a permanent part of the social policy and efforts were made to institutionalize it.

One of the first improvements in the issue was that use of the SYDTF budget according to its aims. Whereas since 1988, the resources collected under the Fund were transferred to the general budget to finance the government deficits,²⁶⁰ for the first time in 2003, and then in 2004, instead of transferring the money from Fund to other institutions, extra money to the budget SYDTF was transferred from the general

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 23.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Devlet Denetleme Kurulu, “Başbakanlık Sosyal Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışma Genel Müdürlüğü’nün Eylem ve İşlemlerine İlişkin Araştırma ve Denetleme Raporu” (T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Denetleme Kurulu, 2006) accessed on 12 July 2014. <http://akgul.bilkent.edu.tr/ddk/ddk20.pdf>

budget.²⁶¹ Also, the resources of the SYDTF started to be used for social assistance unlike previous years during which the resources had been used for building hospitals, rehabilitation centers, and dormitories.

In this period, even if there was no a change in terms of organizational framework in the SYDTF, it was a significant period that should be evaluated separately from the previous period. Beginning with the SRMP, it was a time when social assistance was taken to be serious. Studies and research on the issue of poverty and social assistance were made with the initiation of the World Bank, as well as new social assistance schemes together with the expansion of the old ones. Most importantly, it was a time when social assistance started to be a permanent part of the system and the foundations of the future institutional changes were made.

2004-2011: General Directorate of Social Assistance and Solidarity

Maybe the most important step in the institutionalization of social assistance was the legislation of the organizational law of the SYDTF. Eventually in 1 December 2004, with the legislation of Law No. 5263, the SYDTF had an organizational framework.²⁶² The SYDGM was established under the Prime Ministry. However, the previous structure was preserved almost the same. The board of

²⁶¹ Republic of Turkey, Parliament Deb., vol. 37, reunion 38, 6 January 2004, 172.

Devlet Denetleme Kurulu, “Başbakanlık Sosyal Yardımlaş ma ve Dayanış ma Genel Müdürlüğü’nün Eylem ve İşlemlerine İlişkin Araştırma ve Denetleme Raporu” (T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Denetleme Kurulu, 2006) accessed on 12 July 2014. <http://akgul.bilkent.edu.tr/ddk/ddk20.pdf>

²⁶² Republic of Turkey, Law No. 5263, “Sosyal Yardımlaş ma ve Dayanış ma Genel Müdürlüğü Teşkilat ve Görevleri Hakkında Kanun,” Official Gazette, 8 December 2004, accessed on 9 June 2014. <http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/kanunlar/k5263.html>

SYDTF was preserved as the decision making unit as well as the extra-budgetary way of channeling the public resources for social assistance through the fund. The manager cadre of the SYDGM was responsible for the administrative tasks, while the decision-making agent of the SYDGM was still the board of the SYDTF which were constituted from some civil servants of higher degree and related ministers and members of government. The main goal of the SYDTF, which was a general secretary under the Prime Ministry, to turn itself into a general directorate as the World Bank suggested to have a more institutionalized structure as a respondent in the SRMP, which was conducted in cooperation with the SYDTF.

The budget of the SYDGM was determined within the General Budget with the parliamentary decision, while the SYDTF was still mostly an extra-budgetary institution. The money that was collected within the Fund was distributed by the board of SYDTF with the approval of the Prime Minister.²⁶³ The whole organization of social assistance exposed it to government decisions and directions. With the law, the SYDTF gained legal and organizational framework becoming a huge bureaucratic institution under the prime ministry, with a huge budget out of the parliamentary control.

Becoming a General Directorate with its organizational law and legal personality, the institution could now employ its own personnel. Instead of the temporary personnel that came from other units and public institutions who have their liability to other offices, now the Fund could employ professionals and social service

²⁶³ Devlet Denetleme Kurulu, “Başbakanlık Sosyal Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışma Genel Müdürlüğü’nün Eylem ve İşlemlerine İlişkin Araştırma ve Denetleme Raporu” (TC. Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Denetleme Kurulu, 2006) accessed on 12 July 2014. <http://akgul.bilkent.edu.tr/ddk/ddk20.pdf>

specialists. The SYDGM constituted from 119 personnel, and seven departments, including departments such as research and development.

The structure of the distribution of social assistance through the SYDVs was also preserved. However, unlike the previous time, the SYDGM now had the right and responsibility to monitor and audit the operations of the SYDVs. Also, another change was with the Board of Trustees, the decision-making unit in the SYDVs. Two representatives from the NGOs, one *muhtar* [village elder] that were chosen by themselves and two charitable citizens chosen by the provincial assembly were additionally included in the Board of Trustees in the SYDVs that were to be chosen by the provincial assembly.²⁶⁴

The establishment of the SYDGM was an important improvement. However, it did not become functional immediately after it was established. The problems and deficiencies have continued for a long time. For instance, in a monitoring report of the State Auditing Institution, it was stated that some of the personnel still had not been assigned to some of the open positions.²⁶⁵ Apart from these more technical issues the main targets with the establishment of the SYDGM had not yet been realized. Still, various public institutions had been kept to distribute social assistance for different social assistance schemes. The unification of the social assistance under one single institution and standardizing the criteria for targeting cannot be considered.

²⁶⁴ Republic of Turkey, Parliament Deb., vol. 65, reunion 24, 1 December 2004, İzzet Çetin, 577. Ümmet Kandoğan, 585

²⁶⁵ Devlet Denetleme Kurulu, “Başbakanlık Sosyal Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışma Genel Müdürlüğü’nün Eylem ve İşlemlerine İlişkin Araştırma ve Denetleme Raporu” (T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Denetleme Kurulu, 2006) accessed on 12 July 2014. <http://akgul.bilkent.edu.tr/ddk/ddk20.pdf>

In 2006, there were still various public institutions that distributed social assistance apart from the SYDGM. There were the Retirement Chest for the disability and elderly allowances (Law No. 2022), the Ministry of Health for Green Card, the General Directorate of Foundations for soup kitchens and various assistances in kind or in cash, SHÇEK for assistances in kind and in cash. Also the municipalities had the right to distribute social assistance and even in 2005, it became their duty to make social assistance with a change in the law on the municipalities.²⁶⁶

In 2007, the State Planning Organization stated that the social expenditures could not meet the need and it could not reach to the all of the people in need.²⁶⁷ In the report, it was recommended that the social expenditures be increased through various programs that would cover the vulnerable, out of the existent mechanism of social assistance. The most vulnerable groups were defined as those who worked in the agriculture, in temporary jobs or had no job security along with the uneducated, women, children, elderly, and the disabled.²⁶⁸ It also criticized that the social assistance were not defined as rights and this. This made it vulnerable to the political influence and arbitrariness, resulting in the waste of already insufficient resources.²⁶⁹

The World Bank report for the evaluation of the SRMP in 2008 stated that the government had taken the necessary responsibility for the project and considerable progress had been made, despite some delays especially in the software

²⁶⁶ Republic of Turkey, Law No. 5393, “Belediye Kanunu,” Official Gazzete, 13 July 2005. Accessed on 12 July 2014. <http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/kanunlar/k5393.html>

<http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/kanunlar/k5393.html>

²⁶⁷Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı, “9. Kalkınma Planı (2007-2013): Gelir Dağılımı ve Mücadele Özel İhtisas Komisyonu Raporu” (Ankara: T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı: 2007), 39-40

²⁶⁸Ibid.,42.

²⁶⁹Ibid.,47.

development and use information technologies.²⁷⁰ However, like their 2006 report, the State Audit Institution in 2009, had still stated that there were the deficiencies in the institutional capacity and the social assistance system was still disorganized and lacked cooperation between the institutions.²⁷¹ Also, it was stated that there were too many laws related to social assistance and, as a result, there were various social assistance schemes with different and sometimes intersecting target groups and responsible institutions.²⁷² In general, the organization of the social assistance system was evaluated as weak, scattered, and lacking a regular and proper monitoring, exposed to the populist strategies of the government.²⁷³

Also although the SYDGM had gained the right to audit the SYDVs, the lack of sufficient personnel, database, and records made continued proper monitoring impossible. For instance, during the interviews made in Çorlu, in 2014, it was stated that they have only been audit once, 4-5 years ago by the General Directorate of Foundations and had not been audit by the SYDGM yet.

Despite the SYDVs having a separate legal personality independent of the state institutions, it was stated in a report of the State Audit Institution that regarding their income and the administrators it was as if they were public institutions.²⁷⁴ In the interviews with the staff of SYDGM, one of the informants commented that the reason for the establishment of the foundations not as provincial or district

²⁷⁰World Bank, “Implementation Completion and Result Report on a Loan in the Amount of US\$500 Million to the Republic of Turkey for a Social Risk Mitigation Project/Loan” (World Bank, 2008), 4-5.

²⁷¹Devlet Denetleme Kurulu, “Araştırma İnceleme Raporu” no. 2009/4 (T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Denetleme Kurulu, 2009), 15.

²⁷²Ibid., 16.

²⁷³Ibid., 17.

²⁷⁴Ibid., 7.

directorates under the state organization, but rather as foundations that were legally independent of the state organization was that it was planned they would benefit from the traditional communal support and solidarity.

However, there are currently two conflicting tendency regarding the state's role in social assistance. With the establishment of the SYDGM, the SYDVs, which previously had been quite independent, became more centralized, in a direction of the state having the major role in social assistance. However, in the report of the State Audit institution, it was stated that social assistance and poverty alleviation must not be regarded as the duties only of the state, showing the second tendency.²⁷⁵ Rather, it was stated that there should be a mixed system, constituted of the state, civil society, and private enterprise,²⁷⁶ with the state having the responsibility of governance and monitoring,²⁷⁷ which were compatible with a government that has a neoliberal perspective.

Certain themes were common in all the reports on the social assistance system, such as the lack of institutional capacity, the multiple and scattered structure of the social assistance institutions; and the lack of coordination among them, and trained personnel; and problems in accessing the needy as well as inefficient use of resources and repetition in the assistance distribution. These criticisms and deficiencies continued throughout the decade and in 2011, when the Ministry of Family and Social Policy, was established the criticisms were still the same.

²⁷⁵Ibid., 12.

²⁷⁶Ibid., 13.

²⁷⁷Ibid., 17.

2011- Present: The Ministry of Family and Social Policy

Maybe the most important development after the SYDGM for the institutionalization of the social assistance system was the establishment of the Ministry of Family and Social Policy with a statutory decree numbered 633, 8 June 2011.²⁷⁸ With the establishment of the Ministry, the SYDGM was taken from the Prime Ministry and placed under the new Ministry and became the SYGM. However, the internal organization of the directorate was not change with this transfer. The social assistance was still made from the SYDTF, which was funded out of the general budget and free of parliamentary control. The use of the fund remained at the disposal of the board of the fund (*Fon kurulu*), which was the main decision-making unit of the SYGM.

The SYGM became one of the 13 sub-units within the ministry, but it was the biggest component, with the biggest share of the budget, with 62 per cent for the 2014 budget.²⁷⁹ The share of the ministry in the general budget was, on the other hand, 3.9 per cent in 2014.²⁸⁰ As can be seen, the social assistance that was distributed was not included in that calculation. Rather, it was distributed from the fund, the SYDTF and was not determined by the parliament.

The sudden establishment of the ministry with a statutory decree, instead of through law proposals discussed in parliament was a point of criticism for the

²⁷⁸ Republic of Turkey, Law No. "A ile ve Sosyal Politikalar Bakanlığı'nın Teşkilat ve Görevleri Hakkında Kanun Hükmünde Kararname," Official Gazette, 8 June 2011, accessed on 12 July. <http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2011/06/20110608M1-1.pdf>

²⁷⁹ Republic of Turkey, Parliament Deb., vol. , reunion 33, 11 December 2012, Ayşe Nedret Akova for CHP.

opposition. The establishment of such an important ministry was not placed in the 9th Development Plan of the government which covered the years between 2007 and 2013.²⁸¹ Even a paragraph about the unification of the various public institutions that distributed assistance under a single institution was absent in the plan that had existed in the two previous development plans.²⁸²

A member of parliament from the MHP, Ruhsar Demirel, declared that the ministry had been constituted by the arbitrary assembling of various institutions.²⁸³ A MP from the BDP, Sabahat Tuncel called it as a “bag ministry (*torba bakanlık*),” emphasizing that it had been established with a bag bill without giving opportunity for parliamentary discussions.²⁸⁴

One of the most criticized points about the establishment of the ministry was that the complete separation of the social assistance from the social insurance payments. For instance, the payments for disability and elderly allowance (Law No. 2022) were made by the Retirement Chest, while the Green Card Payments were conducted by the Ministry of Health. Later, these two programs were transferred to the General Directorate of Non-contributory Payments (*Primsiz Ödemeler Genel Müdürlüğü*) under the Social Security Institution that had been established with the unification of the fragmentary social insurance institutions of Retirement Chest, Bağ-

²⁸¹ Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı, “Dokuzuncu Kalkınma Planı (2007-2013),” accessed on 12 July 2014. <http://pbk.tbmm.gov.tr/dokumanlar/kalkinma-plani-9-genel-kurul.pdf>

²⁸² Hacımahmutoğlu, *Türkiye’deki Sosyal Yardım Sisteminin Değerlendirilmesi*, 82-85.

²⁸³ Republic of Turkey, Parliament Deb., vol. 9, reunion 37, 14 December 2014, Ruhsar Demirel for MHP, debates on budget

²⁸⁴ Republic of Turkey, Parliament Deb., vol. 9, reunion 37, 14 December 2014, 24, Sabahat Tuncel, BDP, debates on budget

Kur, and SSK in 2006.²⁸⁵ At the same time the Law No. 5510, on General Health Insurance,²⁸⁶ was legislated, changing the work-based system into a General Health Insurance system that would cover all citizens regardless of their work status.

According to law, those who did not have a formal job should pay certain amounts of money according to their income group. For those whose incomes were under one third of the national minimum income the General Directorate of Non-contributory Payments (*Primsiz Ödemeler Genel Müdürlüğü*) replaced the Green Card System.

In a law proposal draft that was prepared by the Social Security Institution in 2008, it was planned that the SYGM would be removed and instead there would be a single unit under the Social Security Institution that would be responsible for all kinds of social assistance.²⁸⁷ This had also been recommended by the CHP MPs, during the discussions of the proposal for the General Health Insurance. They had insisted that the SYDGM which was under the Prime Ministry, should be regulated by the same law and the SYDGM should take place under the General Directorate of the Non-contributory Payments.²⁸⁸ However, as a MP from the AKP emphasized, for them, social security and social assistance should be evaluated separately from each

²⁸⁵ Republic of Turkey, Law No. 5502, “Sosyal Güvenlik Kurumu Kanunu,” Official Gazette, 20 May 2006, accessed on 19 July 2014. <http://www.sgk.gov.tr/wps/wcm/connect/8fb729db-26da-4700-9112-d880f5a50dda/5502sayiliKanun.doc?MOD=AJPERES&CACHEID=8fb729db-26da-4700-9112-d880f5a50dda>

²⁸⁶ Republic of Turkey, Law No. 5510, “Sosyal Sigortalar ve Genel Sağlık Sigortası Kanunu,” Official Gazette, 16 June 2006, accessed on 5 May 2014. <http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2006/06/20060616-1.htm>

²⁸⁷ Memurlar.net, “51 maddelik yeni sosyal yardım kanun taslağı hazırlandı,” accessed on 18 July 2014. <http://www.memurlar.net/haber/126562/1.sayfa>

²⁸⁸ Republic of Turkey, Parliament Deb., vol. 117, reunion 89, 18 April 2006, Kılıçdaroğlu, 32. Muhsin Koçyiğit, 70.

other.²⁸⁹ The underlying opinion was that the contributory payments were citizenship rights, deserved in return for work, whereas the social assistance was still regarded as more of the benevolence of the state. So, in parallel with this opinion, non-contributory payments were transferred to the Ministry of Family and Social Policy, instead of vice versa as it had been suggested by the CHP and the proposal draft of the Social Security Institution.

After the establishment of the Ministry of Family and Social Policy, the Directorate of the Non-contributory Payments was closed and the related payments were all collected under the Ministry. The elderly and disability allowance (Law no. 2022), for example, is currently being allocated by the Department of Elderly and Disabled Assistance (*Yaşlı ve Engelli Yardımları Daire Başkanlığı*) under the SYGM, while the payments are met by the SYDTF.

In relation with the debates on that the new structure of the social assistance system that regarded the social assistance not as a citizenship right but as the protection of vulnerable groups by the state, Sebahat Tuncel stated in a parliamentary speech that unifying all these groups in society together under a single institution government gave the impression that “the women, children, elderly and the disabled are not subjects in society. Women are necessary for the continuation of a healthy family, the children, elderly and the disabled are destitute.”²⁹⁰ Maybe this expression was more insightful for understanding the government’s approach than the statements of the government which, for instance, in a report of SYGM it was said that with the

²⁸⁹ Republic of Turkey, Parliament Deb., vol. 117, reunion 89, 18 April 2006 Mehmet Zekai Özcan , 42.

²⁹⁰ Republic of Turkey, Parliament Deb., vol. 9, reunion 37 14 December 2014, 24, Sebahat Tuncel, debates on budget.

aim of “looking after our women, our elderly, disabled people, our students, widows and orphans within the integrity of the family” the public institutions that gave services in those areas were unified under a single ministry.²⁹¹

Institutionalization in Targeting

The poor were defined in Turkey through the Law No. 3294, for the Encouragement of Social Assistance and Solidarity.²⁹² The law stated that those who were not covered by any of the social security schemes and in severe poverty and neediness (*fakrularuret ve muhtaçlık*) were to be covered by the law. However, there were not any other criteria, nor any instructions that would help to define these people in neediness. Actually “*Fakrularuret ve muhtaçlık*” were words still being used during my field work both in Ankara with the officials in the General Directorate, and in Çorlu with the social workers in the SYDV, in 2014.

Later in 2003, the Urgent Action Plan of the government, indicated that a study to make a list of the poor families in Turkey was intended.²⁹³ The families on this list were to be identified and supported with a social assistance program. In the plan, those who would be covered by this study were defined as “individuals and

²⁹¹ SYGM, “Sosyal Yardımlar Genel Müdürlüğü 2011 Yılı Faaliyet Raporu” (TC.Aile ve Sosyal Politikalar Bakanlığı, 2011), preface.

²⁹² Republic of Turkey. Law No. 3294, “Sosyal Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışmayı Teşvik Kanunu,” Official Gazette, 14 June 1986, accessed on 14 July 2014. <http://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/MevzuatMetin/1.5.3294.pdf>

²⁹³ Republic of Turkey, Parliament Deb., vol. 14, reunion 78, 13 May 2003, 278-279.

families who are in poverty to a degree that would disturb the public conscience.”²⁹⁴

This expression was employed by various AKP members of parliament as the criteria for being destitute. However, it was obvious that these definitions of the poor who would be assisted or the so-called criteria for the degree of poverty that would necessitate public social assistance were not enough for a proper selection of the recipients of social assistance.

The determination of the state of neediness and whether the applicant would be entitled to assistance remained as the decision of the Board of Trustee in the SYDVs with the support of the social workers who made the household examinations, if they ever made.²⁹⁵ It was like community-based targeting and mostly the muhtars were used as the people that know the area best.

There were no standard criteria for being poor. It was also difficult to define criteria for distinguishing the targeted groups, since the forms of poverty were unknown. For instance, during my interviews in the SYDGM, one professional from the department of research and development said that at the beginning they used mobile phones as a criterion, but later they had to remove it, since all the poor in Turkey, independent of their degree of poverty, had mobile phones.

The first attempt to make a more systemized mechanism of targeting was in the SRMP with the initiation of the World Bank. For the CCTs in the project, a proxy means testing mechanism was used and regarded as highly successful in targeting. However, despite the positive evaluations of the World Bank on the SRMP, the

²⁹⁴ Republic of Turkey, Parliament Deb., vol. 14, reunion 78, 13 May 2003, 278-279 “*kamu vicdanını rahatsız edecek derece yoksulluk içinde bulunan kişi ve aileler.*”

²⁹⁵ For more information on the process of selection of the recipients by the SYDVs, see Chapter 5.

SYDVs used their own ways of means testing and still there were no common proper criteria or methods of identifying people according to these criteria.

In the remaining sections of the chapter, the method of targeting in SRMP and then the targeting in other social assistance programs will be explained. Then, the major improvements in the targeting mechanism of Turkey will be evaluated with the emphasis on the Social Assistance Information System (*Sosyal Yardım Bilgi Sistemi*, SOYBIS), Integrated Social Assistance Services Project (*Bütünleşik Sosyal Yardım Hizmetleri Projesi*), and Proxy Means Test Formula for the Determination of the Recipients of the Social Assistance (*Sosyal Yardım Yararlanıcılarının Belirlenmesine Yönelik Puanlama Formülünün Geliştirilmesi*).

Targeting in the SRMP

During the Social Risk Mitigation Project that was started in 2001, two kinds of targeting were used. The first was the use of the existing methods of SYDV, which they used in the distribution of the social assistance transferred from the SYDTF, in kind and in cash.²⁹⁶ The SYDVs selected the recipients with a method that could be classified as community-based targeting. They determined the recipients through the Board of Trustee, which was the decision-making unit of the SYDVs, with the *kaymakam* (district governor) and *vali* (governor of the provinces) as the heads.²⁹⁷ Mostly muhtars (local governors) were used for the determination of the poor

²⁹⁶ World Bank, “Project Appraisal Document on a Proposed Hybrid Investment/Adjustment Loan in the Amount of US\$500 Million to the Republic of Turkey for a Social Risk Mitigation Project/Loan” (World Bank, 2001), 22.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 26.

individuals or households in their area, and then notification of them to the SYDV of the area.²⁹⁸ The evaluations of the applications were made by the SYDV workers case-by-case. This method was used for the Rapid Response component of the Project, which aimed to reduce the effects of the crisis. However, for the further more permanent components of the project, such as Conditional Cash Transfers and Local Initiatives, which were small credits for individuals who proposed an income-generating project, the World Bank regarded a proper targeting method necessary. The muhtars and district governors had knowledge about the conditions of the people in their own areas. However, they were not social work professionals, nor were they given the training for it. Also, there was the possibility of the misuse of power by favoring acquaintances. The World Bank stated that their decisions were also open to the accusations of clientalism, even if this was not the case.²⁹⁹

For the Conditional Cash Transfers and the Local Initiatives a new targeting mechanism, the proxy means test scoring formula, was developed by the World Bank.³⁰⁰ As the World Bank Report on the project stated, it was not possible to use a geographical targeting method, since the poor population were scattered throughout the country, especially the huge segments in the gecekondu areas. Also it was almost impossible apply a means test using the state records due to high informality and lack of proper records of assets. Therefore, the World Bank decided to use proxy means testing,³⁰¹ which is a method that uses proxies of the income such as location of the

²⁹⁸Ibid., 22.

²⁹⁹ Ibid., 26

³⁰⁰Ibid., 22.

³⁰¹Ibid., 26.

household, the items in the house hold, or expenditures instead of just looking at recorded income and assets. A means testing formula also would allow ranking the households and making comparisons among them. Also, different eligibility thresholds could be used for different social assistance programs with the same formula. For that purpose, at the beginning of the CCT, the World Bank tried to develop a national proxy means test formula peculiar to the forms of poverty in Turkey. They work in cooperation with Middle East Technical University (*Ortadoğu Teknik Üniversitesi*, ODTÜ).³⁰² However, the first study was based on the Household Survey of the DIE, which relied on interviews conducted with 4000 poor households. Using this survey they developed a proxy means test survey that would distinguish between households according to their type of household, location of it, and valuable items within the household such as televisions, refrigerators.³⁰³ The same formula was to be used both for the CCT and Local Initiatives program.

The proxy means testing formula that was developed in cooperation with the World Bank was the first attempt to bring a systemized way of doing means testing with a definite target group (the poorest six per cent of the population with children for the CCT). The means testing with the CCT with the use of proxy means testing was overall, evaluated as successful by the World Bank SRMP evaluation report.³⁰⁴ The proxy means test that was developed by the World Bank was used until 2006, as one of my informants in the SYGM stated. After the World Bank's gradual exit from

³⁰²Ibid., 22.

³⁰³Ibid., 20.

³⁰⁴World Bank, "Implementation Completion and Result Report on a Loan in the Amount of US\$500 Million to the Republic of Turkey for a Social Risk Mitigation Project/Loan" (World Bank, 2008), 10.

the functioning of the system towards the end of SRMP, the SYDGM started to use and develop its own ways of targeting.

Targeting by the SYDVs

Although the World Bank evaluation found the targeting that was used in the CCTs successful, for the other social assistance schemes, the situation was different. Although the same proxy means test formula that was designed for the SRMP should be used by the SYDVs in the distribution of social assistance, the means testing had actually not been done properly.

In my interviews at the SYGM one of the informants stated that in targeting and means testing, it was possible to distinguish between two periods, separated with the use of SOYBIS in 2009. Before, all the SYDVs had produced their own ways of distinguish the needy, due to the ambiguity of the definition of the needy in the law. Even after the establishment of the SYDGM the social assistance system became more centralized. Previously it had been localized, it took more time to enhance standardization in targeting. The use of the SOYBIS was evaluated as an important step in this process. Due to the greatness of the informal sector it had always been difficult to assess the incomes of the applicants by looking at the Public records. However, before the SOYBIS, accurate information from other public registers, such as those for the land or vehicle registers, were not accessible due to the lack of state capacity to collect and keep accurate records. Therefore, when the SYDVs use these or similar information on the applicants for the means test they were unable to check for the accuracy of the declared information, and mostly had to accept the

declarations. Actually, since the system of social assistant was self-applied and public information on the SYDVs was strictly limited, mostly the applicants were directed by the muhtars or neighbors or provincial and district governorates. The SYDVs did not make household investigations and for the rest who were not sent by the muhtar or governorates the decisions were made mostly according to the appearance of, and personal opinion of the SYDV staff of the applicants.

Actually, the SYDVs did not have enough personnel to make household investigations and mostly they did not keep detailed records of the social assistance recipients. A report of State Audit Institution in 2009 stated that the SYDVs did not make the means testing properly.³⁰⁵ The scattered and disjointed organization of the social assistance system with various institutions, assistance programs and various legal frameworks made the standardization in targeting impossible. Each institutions or social assistance scheme had different targets and priorities and lacked common norms and standards.³⁰⁶ The criteria of the conditions of need were different for each program. Also these criteria were not concrete and objective.

In 2005-2006, the efforts for the systemization were started, according to my informants in the SYGM. Especially with the gradual removal of the World Bank from the system, they stated that they met with questions such as which groups should be the targets of the assistance programs, how could the poor be selected best. With the research and monitoring reports that were made after the establishment of the SYDGM and the reports of the World Bank helped to determine the deficiencies

³⁰⁵ Devlet Denetleme Kurulu, “Araştırma İnceleme Raporu” no. 2009/4 (TC.Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Denetleme Kurulu, 2009), 8.

³⁰⁶ Ibid., 26.

and was instructive in the process. The major steps in the process of systemization in the targeting and means test were the SOYBİS, the Integrated Social Assistance Services Project, and the Proxy Means Test Formula. Also, the increase in the share of the regular social assistance programs with respect the instant assistances of the SYDVs, also were regarded as a factor that would increase standardization in means testing, since the terms of the conditions of each regular social assistance program was defined with laws and the room for subjectiveness or arbitrariness of the SYDVs were diminished to a great extent.

Social Assistance Information System

The SOYBİS was a project carried out by the SYDGM with the aim of making the investigations of the applicant through a central database instead of collecting all the papers manually and preventing the repeating social assistance cases. It became a part of the e-Devlet (e-government) application and integrated with the databases of other public institutions. It was completed, put in practice, and started to be used by all of the SYDVs in February 2009.³⁰⁷ It was an integrated database that allowed social workers to access all the records of the applicant in different public institutions with the ID number of the individual. With this database, all the social assistance that the applicant receives at the time together with all the public registers such as registers of vehicles, landed property or houses or stores that were possessed, social security registers could be made.

³⁰⁷ SYDGM, “Stratejik Plan (2009-2013),” (Ankara: T.C. Başbakanlık SYDGM, 2008), 5-6.

Before the SOYBIS, the applicants had to go to various public institutions to collect the necessary papers for the application. The Social Security Institutions, the General Directorate of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, the General Directorate of Foundations, and the land registry office were only a few of the institutions that had to be visited. The greatness of the paper work and its costs to the applicant is obvious. Since the applicants were from the most disadvantaged groups in society such as the disabled, elderly, and the poor that either had no money to pay the fees of the paper work or no condition to visit each of the public institutions. In the SYDGM reports, one of the expectations was also that the reduction of the work of the SYDVs would enable the social workers to have more time for proper household examinations.³⁰⁸ It was claimed that in this way the necessity of the applicants to prove their own condition of neediness was removed.³⁰⁹

However, obviously it was controversial in a system in which household visits were made in order to confirm the papers and declarations of the people. On the other hand, it was obvious that the SOYBIS would reduce the workload both for the social assistance institutions and other related public institutions and make the system quicker in an important degree.

³⁰⁸ SYDGM, “SOYBIS: Sosyal Yardım Bilgi Sistemi”(T.C. Başbakanlık Sosyal Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışma Genel Müdürlüğü, 2011), 8-9.

³⁰⁹ SYGM, “Sosyal Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışma Genel Müdürlüğü 2011 Yılı Faaliyet Raporu” (Ankara: T.C. Başbakanlık SYGM: 2011), 101.

Integrated Social Assistance Services

As was stated above, one of the criticisms that was emphasized by all parties was that the social assistance was scattered and highly disorganized, with various social assistance programs and various public institutions independent of each other that made assistance.³¹⁰ For this aim, the Integrated Social Assistance Services Project was prepared by the State Planning Organization which was first mentioned in the Information Society Strategy Action Plan (*Bilgi Toplumu Stratejisi Eylem Planı*) for the period of 2006-2010.³¹¹ It was an e-government project that would be carried by the SYDGM in cooperation with TÜBİTAK, which basically aimed to constitute an institutional base for the social assistance through the unification and execution of all the social assistance schemes through a single institution with an integrated database and automation system.

The first phase of the project was the creation of an integrated information system between the SYGM and the SYDVS. The second phase was the integration of the database of the General Directorate of the Foundations and the Social Security Institution.³¹² The last phase was defined as the enhancement of the information sharing among the public institutions, local administrations and the NGOs. The project began in 2009 and it was expected to end in 2014, as was stated in a report of

³¹⁰ Republic of Turkey, Parliament Deb., vol. 80, reunion 11, 26 October 2010, Hasan Özdemir, MHP, 27.

³¹¹ Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı, “Bilgi Toplumu Stratejisi Eylem Planı (2006-2010)” (T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı, 2006) accessed on 14 July 2014.
http://akgul.bilkent.edu.tr/btstrateji/BilgiToplumuStratejisi_Eylem%20Plani_22062006.pdf

³¹² SYGM, “Sosyal Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışma Genel Müdürlüğü 2011 Yılı Faaliyet Raporu” (Ankara: T.C. Başbakanlık SYGM: 2011), preface.

the SYDGM in 2011. The cost of the project was in the same report stated to be 35,000,000 TL; however, the last phase, which was the information sharing among municipalities and NGOs, had not been completed or put into practice yet.

The three major targets of the project were defined, accessing accurate data on the socio-economic conditions of applicants and making means testing; development of cooperation and information sharing among the related public institutions in order to prevent intersecting assistances that were made from various institutions to a single person; and the last target was making the payments to recipients quicker and more human centered and increasing the quality of the services.³¹³

Some of the steps for realizing these targets were the unification all the public social assistance within a single institution, the integration of all the databases on social assistance taking the household as the basis, enhancing information sharing; and efficient monitoring among various agents, making the social assistance through electronical channels, management of the social assistance with a holistic view that would make the decisions on the social assistance more efficient and fair, giving the public information about the social assistance to citizens through a single channel.³¹⁴

One of the expectations from the project was the generation of a “poverty map” of the country, forming a proper database of the recipients of social assistance, so that it would prevent duplicated social assistance which was a persistent point of criticisms that there were so many people that received public assistance through more than one program or institution. In 2011, 3,600,000 household and 16,000,000

³¹³ Ibid., 98.

³¹⁴ Ibid., 100.

people were registered with all their socio-economic data and assistance that they took from other public institutions.³¹⁵ Also, the household would be the basis of the social assistance, so as to increase access to the people in need. A single application form would be created to increase the standardization in the application and objectification of the criteria for the assistance. Finally, the use of information technologies was as an important part of the project. It was hoped technology would save time and resources as well as ease the access to the public assistance by the needy both in terms of application and reception of the assistance itself.

Currently, the software of the Integrated Social Assistance Services System is used by the SYGM as well as by the SYDVs. It functions in coordination with the databases of other related public institutions. The SOYBIS functions within this software. While the SOYBIS makes instant investigations of the applicants, the system of Integrated Social Services is a database in which the information on the applicants is kept and this information can be accessed retrospectively. With the software, the SYGM can monitor all the records that are kept by the SYDVs. Even if the last phase, which was the information sharing with the other civil social assistance organizations and municipalities has not been realized yet, the system has removed an important workload both from the SYDVs and the SYGM and improved the systemization and standardization in the social assistance system.

³¹⁵ Ibid., preface.

The Proxy-Means Test Formula

The Proxy Means Formula for the Determination of the Recipients of Social Assistance was a project for the development of a proxy means-test formula³¹⁶ that was intended to be used for selecting the recipients of all types of social assistance. With this formula, it was aimed that the recipients of social assistance and project supports are to be determined according to same objective criteria and in this way, undeserved assistance will be prevented.³¹⁷

The project was started in 2009 and continues today. Even though a report of the SYGM in 2011 stated that the use of the formula by the SYDVs was expected to be in 2012, in July 2014 the formula was still in the test. The 2011 report of the SYGM stated that up until then 903,501 TL had been paid for the project and it was foreseen that 1,770,000 TL would be paid for the survey studies of TÜİK.³¹⁸

For the project, TÜBİTAK and the SYDGM worked together. The formula was designed on the basis of the data that had been collected by the Turkey Statistical Institute (*Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu*, TÜİK) through studies that had been made on more than 44,000 households. Through the data collected by TÜİK, the questions on a survey that were filled out by applicants for social assistance were determined according to the forms of poverty in Turkey. The survey had various questions from the type of household, the place and the size of it to the goods in it, and to the consumption patterns of the household. After the filling out the survey, a score would

³¹⁶ For more information on the proxy means test which is a method of means test, see Chapter 2.

³¹⁷ SYGM, “Sosyal Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışma Genel Müdürlüğü 2011 Yılı Faaliyet Raporu” (Ankara: T.C. Başbakanlık SYGM: 2011), 102.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 104.

be given to represent the degree of the poverty of the applicant, at the same time making the ranking of applicants possible. In the survey, each question had different weights within the formula, meaning that each feature had a different degree of importance in the determination of the degree of poverty. Also, different formulas were designed for different regions with the expectation that the formula would be sensitive to the different forms of poverty in the cities or countryside as well as in various regions.

Within the project, the criteria of neediness for each of the social assistance programs would be constituted and the recipients would be determined according to these criteria. In my interviews with the SYGM, it was stated that the proxy means testing developed was highly successful in catching incorrect declarations on the income and socio-economic conditions of the household. Actually considering that more than 44,000 households were interviewed with for the project and keeping in mind that the number of the surveys used by the World Bank at the beginning of the SRMP 4.000, the rate of reliability was quite high. However, it also was stated that one of the reasons for the success was that they did not only look at the income, but rather they looked at the expenditures in order to ascertain the real income with the idea that people would lie about their incomes in order to get assistance. However, naturally this brings the question of the increasing possibility for undercoverage problems, namely the ones who could not take assistance even if they were really poor, due to their score on the formula.

Currently, the survey forms of the Proxy Means Test that was developed by the SYGM is supposed to be used in all the SYDVs and the results should be recorded in the database of the Integrated Social Assistance Services System.

However, the scores in the Proxy Means Test Formula are currently accessible only to the SYGM officials due to the testing process. In the end, it is planned to enable the SYDVs to access these scores through the integrated program and to award assistance on the basis of these scores. The use of this formula would bring total systemization to the social assistance distribution and the removal of the subjectivity of the decision maker units from the process. However, whether it is possible to acquire healthy results with this degree of technicalization remains unknown, especially on an issue on which it is difficult to come to a conclusion. Indeed, the informants from the SYGM stated that a certain degree of flexibility to the SYDVs should be provided in the means test, despite the formula.

How the Means Test is done by the SYDVs?

Currently, the means tests are made by the personnel of the SYDVs through household investigations. The applications are made by the people in need of the SYDVs, which are situated under the district governorship in the districts and provincial governorships in the cities. The SYDV personnel inform the applicants about which kind of social assistance that they should apply. Then, they register the application and fill out the form of the proxy means test through the software of the integrated database, which are accessible by the SYGM. They also make the investigation on the public registers from the other institutions through the SOYBİS, which also are located under the same integrated database. The applicants are also informed on the household investigations and a declaration is signed for the consent of the investigations, by the applicant and the other members of the household over

18. Then, the household investigations should be made at most a month after the application through uninformed visits to the household. After the social investigations, the form of the proxy means test is filled out completely and the personnel are conducting the household investigation also wrote their own opinion on the points that took attention on the form. The new information that was gathered through the household investigations is also registered in the software system. As the last step, the folders of the applicants are discussed in the meeting of the Board of Trustee of the SYDV and the final decision is made. This is at least how the means test should be made formally.

However, in practice, the implementations of the SYDVs still varies, even if there are also SYDVs that follow these procedures to a great extent. Also, even if the SYDV staff follows these procedures, final decisions by the Board of Trustees across the SYDVs vary. Actually, even if formally, there is a board and not a single person for decision making, the decision in the practice are made by the head of the Board of Trustees, and the district governors or provincial governors, due to the hierarchical relations among the members of the boards. Most of the members work in the district governorships and provincial governorships and are hierarchically placed under the head of Board of Trustees. Therefore, the nature of the decisions, whether they are too strict or too generous depends on the attitude of the governors. Accordingly, some SYDVs tend to give less assistance whereas, some give more.

However, at this point a distinction should be made among the different kinds of assistance schemes; the regular social assistance programs and instant periodic social assistance and supports with the initiative of the SYDV. The regular assistance programs are made on the basis of a certain law and in certain amounts, at

certain times to the beneficiaries who are defined by the law. The room for differentiating decisions with the regular assistance programs is smaller than with the periodical assistance which is almost completely in the initiative of the SYDVs.

Conclusion

With the establishment of the SYDGM in 2004, the SYDTF gained a legal, organizational framework and was turned into an executive body that employed and trained its own professionals and specialist, conduct research on poverty, and develop social assistance programs according to need. The law paved the way for the monitoring and auditing of the SYDVs by the SYGM. However, the implementation of these legal changes took a while and actually, it is not possible to say that the problems and deficiencies have been resolved altogether.

For the institutional part, the SYDVs still lack the trained personnel for the social assistance and means test. Also, the coordination among the institutions has not been achieved in the desirable degree and the projects that aimed to establish coordination between the public institutions, municipalities and NGOs that were related to social assistance have yet to be completed.

Exposure to political influence was an important problem, especially through the SYDVs. The change in the law in 2004,³¹⁹ which envisions two charitable citizens in the Board of Trustees that would be chosen by the provincial assemblies in the SYDVs, was also regarded as enhancing the politicization of the Board of Trustees,

³¹⁹ Republic of Turkey, Parliament Deb., vol. 65, reunion 24, 1 December 2004, İzzet Çetin, 577. Ümmet Kandoğan, 585

since the provincial assemblies were constituted of members from political parties. Also, the ambiguity of the tasks of the Board of the Fund was problematized with the same concerns. How and by whom the priorities in the use of resources would be defined, how and by whom it would be audit were undefined in the law. A CHP member of parliaments stated that the social assistance institutions with a huge budget would be left to the use of government and would turn into a means of political blackmail for the government.³²⁰

Supportive examples were given, such as the provincial head of the AKP in the Aksaray, a city, who represented the coal assistance that were distributed by the SYDV in Aksaray as having been distributed by them.³²¹ A newspaper article stated that 46 of the 64 members of the Board of Trustee in the SYDV in Malatya were from the AKP and even the two members of provincial assembly from the AKP had been chosen as the charitable citizens in the Board of Trustees.³²²

It was claimed that some local SYDVs distributed assistance according to the lists of the AKP's local organizations,³²³ or that the assistance that was made by the SYDV was represented as if it had been made by the AKP.³²⁴ As a MHP member of parliament, Hasan Özdemir said the distribution of the coal in summer, sending

³²⁰ Republic of Turkey, Parliament Deb., vol. 65, reunion 24, 1 December 2004, Enver Öktem, CHP, 591.

³²¹ Republic of Turkey, Parliament Deb., vol. 65, reunion 24, 1 December 2004, İzzet Çetin "Yoksulluk başarısız bir hükümetin yerini sağlaştıtırma, oy tahvil etme arayışına alet edilmemeli," 576.

³²² Milliyet, "Hayır işlerine de siyaset karıştı mı," accessed on 15 July 2014. <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/hayir-islerine-de-siyaset-karisti-mi-/siyaset/haberdetayarsiv/07.04.2007/195079/default.htm>

³²³ Republic of Turkey, Parliament Deb., vol. 80, reunion 11, 26 October 2010, M. Nuri Yaman, 31.

³²⁴ Republic of Turkey, Parliament Deb., vol. 80, reunion 11, 26 October 2010, Reşat Doğru, 32.

washing machines to villages that had no water system in the houses enhanced the impression that the government was trying to buy votes.³²⁵ Actually, this widely held opinion by the opposition was supported by news in the media, too.

Especially before the general elections in 2007 and local elections in July 2009 there were news reports about the generous distribution of social assistance by the SYDVs together with claims of corruption. Distributing the assistance that generally was given for the religious feasts before the elections,³²⁶ an increase in the amount of assistance distributed by the SYDVS just before the elections,³²⁷ distributing the assistance through the papers with the emblem of an AKP municipality,³²⁸ or claims of the SYDVs making assistance when the people said that they would not vote for the AKP³²⁹ were only some of these reports. Especially, the example of Dersim, where washing machines were distributed to villages that had no

³²⁵ Republic of Turkey, Parliament Deb., vol. 80, reunion 11, 26 October 2010, Hasan Özdemir, MHP, 27.

³²⁶ Milliyet, “Belediyeden seçim kuponu,” accessed on 15 July 2014. <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/belediyeden-secim-kuponu/guncel/haberdetayarsiv/13.07.2007/260258/default.htm>

³²⁷ Milliyet, “Kömür yardımı hız kazandı,” accessed on 15 July 2014. <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/tir-dolusu-secim-yardimi-/yasam/magazindetay/20.11.2008/1018407/default.htm>

Milliyet, “Sosyal yardımlar seçim öncesinde 3 kat artmış,” accessed on 15 July 2014. <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/yarimlar--font-color-darkblue--kat--font-artmis/guncel/gundemdetay/10.05.2009/1092824/default.htm>

Milliyet, “Yoksullara yılda dört prim ödenecek,” accessed on 15 July 2014. <http://siyaset.milliyet.com.tr/yoksullara-yilda-dort-prim-odenecek/siyaset/siyasetdetay/29.09.2008/997135/default.htm>

³²⁸ Milliyet, “Suçüstü belgesi,” accessed on 15 July 2014. <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/sucustu-belgesi/guncel/gundemdetay/03.04.2009/1078754/default.htm>

³²⁹ Milliyet, “AKP’ye oy vermeyeceğiz deyince yardım yapılmadılar iddiası,” accessed on 15 July 2014. <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/-akp-ye-oy-vermeyecegiz-deyince-yardim-yapmadilar--iddiasi/gundem/gundemdetay/27.02.2009/1065082/default.htm>

water system, attracted attention resulting the High Election Council's (*Yüksek Seçim Kurulu*) decision of election bribery (*seçim rüşveti*).³³⁰

These criticisms of making the social assistance an elections strategy or political blackmail together continued, since the system of social assistance continued to be open to political influence especially in the SYDVs, due to their structure and their flexibility in decisions.

The fragmented structure in terms of public institutions that make social assistance was removed to a great extent. However, even if a single institution, the SYGM, deals with all these regular social assistance programs and periodical assistance of the SYDVs, the fragmented system in terms of social assistance programs continues and is regarded as a major problem. In these differentiated regular social assistance programs for different groups, there are still different criteria according to the target groups. Also, for the people who are outside of these targeted groups, in other words those who are not disabled, old, or widowed, it is not possible to benefit from regular social assistance programs. The rest could only benefit from the periodical, instant support of in cash or in kind within the initiative of the SYDV, for urgent needs. The lack of a general regular social assistance program which unified the previous fragmentary programs and also includes the rest of the population that would be given of the basis of a legal right is still one of the major deficiencies of the system.

Social assistance on the basis of citizenship rights is different from the one that is made with the coordination of civil society, the private sector and state with

³³⁰Milliyet, "YSK'dan 'seçim rüşveti' tespiti," accessed on 15 July 2014.
<http://www.milliyet.com.tr/ysk-dan--secim-rusveti--tespiti/guncel/gundemdetay/07.02.2009/1056851/default.htm>

the mobilization of the philanthropic emotions. In Turkey, the two lines exist simultaneously, and the kind of approach to social assistance is also influential on the ways of targeting and means test. The debates on targeting will be the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER: 5

DISCUSSIONS ON TARGETING AND THE CASE OF THE ÇORLU SYDV

With the uneven increase in social assistance from the beginning of the 2000s, targeting and means testing became important questions during the institutionalization of the social assistance system in Turkey. The informality and unreliability of the public records were the major reasons for the need for a means testing mechanism that would enable making more accurate estimations on the income of the applicants using other indicator than public records of income. However, the necessity of the means test left aside, the kind of means testing, its strictness, the coverage of the social assistance programs, or the target of the programs, together with ways of making social assistance were all related to approaches to the social assistance. This chapter, after a brief recall of the problems of targeting in Turkey, evaluates the different opinions and debates of various actors. Then, in the second section, the remaining problems in social assistance and in means test will be examined with the case of the Çorlu SYDV despite all the improvements

in, and efforts at institutionalization, will be evaluated as along with the attitudes of the personnel in the SYDV about means testing.

Discussions Related to Means Testing

The first impetus for developing a proper means testing mechanism was the World Bank, as explained above. However, regarding this as the only reason would be an underestimation of the inner dynamics and the discussions on the issue. There was a need for public social assistance due to the increasing urban poverty and dissolution of the urban slums, the flexible labor market regime and the dissolution of agriculture. The SYDTF was established in 1986; however, at the beginning it was not used much and the amount of assistance distributed was very limited. With the uneven increase in the distribution of social assistance since the beginning of the 2000s, deficiencies were brought together such as the lack of an institutionalized way of distributing assistance, mechanisms for developing social assistance programs according to need, and maybe the most, systemized ways of defining the target of the assistance and selecting the recipients.

Targeting in late industrialized countries such as Turkey has peculiar difficulties.³³¹ These countries lacked institutionalized targeting mechanisms, since the need for targeting due to the increasing public social assistance mechanisms was a recent issue. However, when this need emerged, the weak institutional capacity of the state was an important problem, since it made accessing accurate and reliable

³³¹ For more information, see Chapter 2.

information on the applicants impossible. Especially in a country where the informality is so widespread this becomes the major problem,³³² since the means tests' major indicator is the income. Also the unreliability of other public registers was also another important problem such as the registers of property ownership, or vehicles, social security address and population records. These were all problems that were faced with, when it was tried to develop means testing methods with the increase in public social assistance and with the World Bank's influence.

Currently, the problems with the public records were overcome to a great extent with the efforts of developing the state's institutional capacity in the recent decade. With all of the transformations such as MERNİS, ADNKS, and e-government, currently most of the information on the applicant is available on the databases.

However, the high level of informality continues to be a major problem that necessitates the use of some forms of means test in the social assistance programs. As one of my informants in the SYGM stated, they could not establish and use the systems in the earlier industrialized countries. Giving an example from Switzerland, she stated that in the older industrialized countries, the system of means testing was so systemized and standardized that they were able to access almost all of the socio-economic information of the applicant and make the means-test only with examination of the database.

This does not mean that means testing in those countries is free from problems or debates. However, there is a gap between those countries and later

³³² Informality rates for the first quarter of 2014 were still 34.8 percent according to TÜİK. TÜİK, "Hanehalkı İşgücü İstatistikleri, Nisan 2014" Haber Bülteni no. 16009, accessed on 30 July 2014. <http://www.tuik.gov.tr/PreHaberBultenleri.do?id=16009>

industrialized countries as Turkey in terms of degree of systemization and kind of problems. Therefore, in Turkey they need a system that can help to estimate the income of a household from other indicators such as the location of the household, the valuable good in it, and even the inhabitants' expenditures, which was an effort that has been difficult from the beginning. As was discussed in detail in Chapter Two, it was already impossible to make a perfect means test, in spite of all the technicalization and systemization or different mechanisms and what was tried to be done with all the efforts was only to increase the degree of success.

One of the informants at the SYGM also expressed opinions parallel to that. She stated that actually it had been seen that it was not possible to separate the poor from each other and therefore, programs with increased coverage had to be designed to access more people, and flexibility should be left to the local governors to compensate for the deficiencies of the systemized means test, however, which also would mean leaving the system exposed to abuse and political influence, which were major problems in the system.

Although the impossibility of a perfect means-test was acknowledged by the SYGM, with the conditions of high informality which made checking the accuracy of declared income through the public records impossible, the means test was regarded as a necessary element for the social assistance system. However, how the system of targeting would be, how strict the means test would be, how the social assistance programs would be designed, and which groups would be the target of the programs were all questions related to the attitudes towards social assistance and poverty. The attitudes towards and debates on social assistance and targeting during the period of institutionalization and how these attitudes influenced in these process be evaluated.

One of the most remarkable points in these debates on the social assistance and means test was the differences in the attitudes between various actors. For instance, the decision-making group within the SYGM, namely the Board of the Fund, is made up of governmental actors such as undersecretaries (*müsteşar*) of the related ministries and so on. However, this does not have to mean that the SYGM's projects and programs necessarily will reflect the view of the government. The bureaucrats within the SYGM, mostly made up of professionals on their subject and their ideas, desires and attitudes towards the issue are not necessarily the same as the decision-making group of the SYDGM. Still, the ability of the public servants at the SYDGM to act and develop projects independently of their superiors should not be exaggerated. Despite having some area in which to carry out independent research to a certain degree and manipulate or convince the politicians, the final decision is made by the Board of the Fund. Likewise, civil servants and professionals in the SYDGM and the decision-maker politicians can differ from the public in their perception and interpretation on social assistance.

The idea that the state cannot help every citizen, and that every state should make assistance according to its degree of development³³³ has been the common approach of the government. Social development and social policy should go with economic development and even economic development comes before social development and social policy. The Report of the State Planning Organization on poverty in 2007 was also supportive of this idea. In the report the main target and method for alleviating poverty were seen as economic growth and methods which

³³³ Republic of Turkey, Parliament Deb., vol. 6, reunion 38, 27 February 2003, 23.

would not intervene in to the market and had the biggest possibility of success were defended instead of redistributive methods.³³⁴ Therefore, the policies of the World Bank and UNDP were recommended and social assistance, together with micro-credits was presented as successful ways to alleviate poverty.³³⁵ Targeting, for this approach became crucial since the intervention in to the market and redistributive policies had to be kept in minimum, the targeting should to be made efficient and only the real poor and the poorest of the poor should be the recipients.

Related to the concerns about the distortion to the market, the influence of social assistance on the employment market became another important concern. The fear that people would prefer to take assistance instead of work was very important for the Board of the Fund, as it explained to me during my interviews. Therefore, the means testing had to be strict, so that only the people who were really in bad condition should benefit from the social assistance. In other words, social assistance should not be an alternative to work and for that reason the amount of the social assistance should remain limited.

Actually, apart from being just a fear, this was a common complaint of the employers on the social assistance in Turkey. During my interviews with the officials from the SYGM, it was stated that employers were accusing them of distributing social assistance so generous that they could not find people to employ. Actually, it also was what had been said by Fatma Şahin, the former Minister of the Family and

³³⁴ Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı, “9. Kalkınma Planı (2007-2013): Gelir Dağılımı ve Mücadele Özel İhtisas Komisyonu Raporu” (Ankara: T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı: 2007), 4-6.

³³⁵ Ibid., 24.

Social Policy in a parliamentary speech.³³⁶ She said that as a MP from Gaziantep, a city of organized industry, she often met with such complaints of the employers.³³⁷ Also, in the parliamentary discussions, criticisms on the same issue were constantly made with the cliché expression that they should be teaching how to fish rather than giving people fish and accustoming them receiving fish.

Therefore, almost in every speech related to the issue Fatma Şahin stated that they were trying to establish the relation between employment and social assistance. Giving the example of the Project Supports which were small cash credits given those who had income-generating projects,³³⁸ it was stated that the employment relation with social assistance was very important for them. Another project was explained in another speech, which was bringing the professionals of social assistance and occupation specialists together for a project that would enhance the men who were physically able to work to enter in the employment system in return for social assistance.³³⁹

Not with the emphasis on the influence on the employment, but with emphasis on the danger of making people lazy, the opposition in the parliament expressed similar beliefs. This was actually a widespread belief in the society that social assistance would and makes people lazy. The creation of “culture of charity” (*sadaka kültürü*) and culture of poverty were popular expressions that were used for

³³⁶ Republic of Turkey, Parliament Deb., vol. 9, reunion 37, 14 December 2011, Fatma Şahin.

³³⁷ Republic of Turkey, Parliament Deb., vol. 38, reunion 42, 16 December 2012, Fatma Şahin.

³³⁸ In 2013, for 681 projects 18,164,844 TL was transferred to 1,576 people. The amount of transfer per Project was up to 15,000 TL. Aile ve Sosyal Politikalar Bakanlığı, “2013 Yılı Faaliyet Raporu” (T.C. Aile ve Sosyal Politikalar Bakanlığı: 2014), 129.

³³⁹ Republic of Turkey, Parliament Deb., vol. 38, reunion 42, 16 December 2012, Fatma Şahin.

the criticisms. This was a belief that was often encountered during the research, in the parliamentary debates, in the media, and in the interviews with the staff in the SYDV.

However, at that point the bureaucrats in the SYGM had a different opinion. During the interviews, they said that they did not agree with the idea that the assistance they made caused a work-disincentive or a culture of poverty. Actually, the amounts of the assistance were not so generous that it would be expected to create a disincentive to work.³⁴⁰ Also, a report of the State Audit Institution in 2009 stated that there was no proof for a dis-incentive for work, although there was a widespread opinion as such.³⁴¹ However, bureaucrats that I interviewed still said that they faced criticisms and have to persuade people and therefore, that try to develop more projects which establish the relation between social assistance and employment.

The possibility of abuse was another concern for the government and the opposition as well as the public opinion. For the opposition, on the other hand, the corruption and the belief that the government used the assistance for political aims were dominant at least as the fear of people abusing assistance. Therefore, the government representatives were often met by questions and accusations of favoritism and corruption in social assistance not only by the opposition, but also by the media. Therefore, they need a more standardized system of targeting, at least in the appearance.

³⁴⁰ Monthly 130,62TL for those over 65 years old, 261,24-391,86TL for the disabled according to the degree of disability, 250 TL for the women who lost their husbands and the families of soldiers in need, 30-55 TL for Conditional Education Transfers according to the gender and level of education, 30 TL for Conditional Health Transfers were transferred for the regular social assistance supports in 2013 Aile ve Sosyal Politikalar Bakanlığı, “2013 Yılı Faaliyet Raporu” (T.C. Aile ve Sosyal Politikalar Bakanlığı: 2014), 117-127.

³⁴¹ Devlet Denetleme Kurulu, “Araştırma İnceleme Raporu,” no. 2009/4 (T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Denetleme Kurulu, 2009), 11.

Even if that the government could have been benefitting from the opportunities of arbitrariness and flexibility in the social assistance distribution in terms of rewarding the voting behavior of its supporters,³⁴² the idea of abuse is always disturbing for the AKP MPs and for the government, too.

It is believed that there are many people who try to obtain assistance by various tricks instead of working. Supported by the media, the beliefs that these cases are not exceptions are common in the public as well as the politicians, in both the AKP and CHP and the rest of the opposition. There is often the news of abuse or corruption in the news for example, of the distribution of coal to apartment owners,³⁴³

³⁴² There were various news reports of distribution of assistance for elections and articles that evaluated the social policy of the AKP and social assistance distributed, as one of the reasons of the election success of it.

Milliyet, “Belediyeden seçim kuponu,” accessed on 20 July 2014. <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/belediyeden-secim-kuponu/guncel/haberdetayarsiv/13.07.2007/260258/default.htm>

Milliyet, “AKP’nin altın vuruşu,” accessed on 20 July 2014. <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/akp-n-in---altin-vurusu/siyaset/haberdetayarsiv/24.07.2007/207192/default.htm>

Milliyet, “Halk Gül’ü sempatik, AKP’yi yararlı buldu,” accessed on 20 July 2014. <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/halk--gul-u-sempatik-akp-yi--yararli--buldu/siyaset/haberdetayarsiv/23.08.2007/211847/default.htm>

Milliyet, “Tır dolusu seçim yardımı,” accessed on 20 July 2014. <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/tir-dolusu-secim-yardimi-/yasam/magazin/20.11.2008/1018407/default.htm>

Milliyet, “Seçim öncesi ilginç gelişme,” accessed on 20 July 2014. <http://siyaset.milliyet.com.tr/gecim-yardimi-geliyor/siyaset/siyasetdetay/12.12.2008/1027270/default.htm>

Milliyet, “Asıl mesele sadakanın politik iktisadı,” accessed on 20 July 2014. <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/yarim-mi---font-color-darkblue-rusvet-mi---font-guncel/gundemdetay/23.02.2009/1063049/default.htm>

Milliyet, “Belediye yardımları için DDK uyarısı,” accessed on 20 July 2014. <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/belediye-yardimlari-icin-ddk-uyarisi/guncel/gundemdetay/10.07.2009/1116018/default.htm>

³⁴³ Milliyet, “Apartmanı olana da kömür yardımına tepki,” accessed on 15 July 2014. <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/apartmani-olana-da-komur-yardimina-tepki/siyaset/haberdetayarsiv/04.07.2007/204659/default.htm>

people receiving assistance that was given to passed away relatives,³⁴⁴ agreed divorces for taking payments of relatives,³⁴⁵ or the green card holders that had houses.³⁴⁶

These news reports have some grain of truth. Besides, the state audit reports and other reports acknowledge that the means testing is not made properly. Especially for the green card it was reported that due to the lack of institutional capacity and monitoring there were serious problems. For instance, as a result of the audit made in 2006 and 2007 in 16 provinces, it was reported that, seven percent of the green card holders had registered landed property, houses, or vehicles, and 20,595 out of 2,314,034 were still registered for green cards despite that they had already passed away.³⁴⁷

Since the social assistance was seen less as a right and more as a benevolence of the state, the possibility of abuse is not bearable, even if it means that more people in need receive assistance. The example of social assistance program for women who have lost their husbands is a good example on this issue. The research for this social assistance program was made in cooperation with the Boğaziçi University Social Policy Forum and in the research it was stated that widows and

³⁴⁴ Milliyet, “Annesinin maaşını kadın kılığına girerek 2 yıl çekti ama sonunda,” accessed on 15 July 2014. <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/2005/03/11/son/sontur22.html>

³⁴⁵ Milliyet, “Emekli maaşı için eşlerini boşamışlar,” accessed on 15 July 2014. <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/emekli-maasi-icin-eslerini-bosamislar--gundem/gundemdetay/07.01.2009/1044007/default.htm>

³⁴⁶ Milliyet, “Evi, işi olan da yeşil kart almış,” accessed on 15 July 2014. <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/evi--isi-olan-da-yesil-kart-almis/guncel/haberdetayarsiv/09.02.2003/262694/default.htm>

³⁴⁷ Devlet Denetleme Kurulu, “Araştırma İnceleme Raporu” no. 2009/4 (T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Denetleme Kurulu, 2009) 10.

especially divorced women are the most vulnerable people in society.³⁴⁸ However, despite this fact, the assistance program was extended to women who had lost their husbands, but not those who were divorced, after the decision of the Board of the Fund. Even if this was regarded as related to the conservativeness and the desire to “protect the family” of the government by the opponent media and various feminist groups, during my interviews with both the SYGM and the Ministry of Development, it was several times stated that the underlying concern was the fear of abuse. The fear about the agreed divorces and the possibility of these people receiving assistance weighted against the reality of the vulnerability of divorced women.

According to the civil servants at the SYDGM, the possibility of abuse was not as dreadful as for the politicians. During my interviews, they said that they did not think that the cases of the abuse were the norm, and some cases could be ignored if it meant that more poor people would benefit from the assistance. Actually, they said that they prioritized the problems of undercoverage more than leakage³⁴⁹ in the social assistance, and they tried to develop programs that had more coverage. However, the Proxy Means testing Formula that was developed by the SYDGM was indicative of that they actually took the leakage problems serious at least as the undercoverage.

Actually, in a country where the amounts for social assistance and the income thresholds for receiving assistance are so low,³⁵⁰ the discussion of “deserving” and “non-deserving” loses meaning. The people who take assistance

³⁴⁸ Sosyal Politika Forumu, “Eşi Vefat Etmiş Kadınlar için bir Nakit Sosyal Yardım Programı Geliştirilmesine Yönelik Araştırma Projesi,” accessed on 15 July 2014. http://www.spf.boun.edu.tr/content_files/SPF-SYDGM_NihaiRapor.pdf

³⁴⁹ For more information on undercoverage and leakage problems see, Chapter 2, p. 44.

³⁵⁰ Mostly the threshold was having an income per person lower than one third of the national minimum income with the variations in the calculation of income according to different programs.

even if they do not meet the conditions probably are still poor people. However, in a work-centered society, where redistributive policies are already not welcomed, social assistance should target only the poorest of the poor.

Most of the AKP members of parliament were defending the social assistance that was distributed by the SYGM. A member of parliament, mentioning the amount of coals they had distributed, claimed that they had realized the “social state.” Another claimed that they had showed the meaning of the social state to the whole world.³⁵¹ However, the language they used was more telling about their approach to social assistance. They referred to it as the “benevolence” (*lütûf*) of the state. It was “the state’s giving a hand to the poor” (*devletin yoksula el uzatması*). Also, another expression that was used during a discussion on the green card was insightful of the kind understanding. While an ANAP MP was criticizing their social assistance policy by getting people accustomed to charity, Cavit Torun, an AKP member of parliament said that “*veren el alan elden üstündür* (the hand that gives is superior to the hand that receive),”³⁵² indicating how the understanding was not a right-based approach where taking assistance would be within the scope of equality.

While the AKP members equated social assistance with the realization of the social state, there was confusion among the opposition MPs. Sometimes they accused the government of distributing too much social assistance, and discrediting the social assistance altogether, other times other MPs from the same party said that the amount of assistance was not sufficient and still below the OECD or EU average.

³⁵¹ Republic of Turkey, Parliament Deb., vol. 9, reunion 37, 14 December 2014, Öznur Çalık, AKP, debates on budget.

³⁵² Republic of Turkey, Parliament Deb., vol. 141, reunion 36, 18 December 2006, Cavit Torun.

Still, in most of the criticisms, the opposition accused the government of turning the state into a “charity state.”³⁵³ All types of social assistance were called charity and the necessity of social assistance was not accepted. Increase in social assistance was regarded as undermining the social state. For them, social assistance was not compatible with the social state. For example, the green card which was actually a real improvement in the lives of millions of poor, was called a “certificate of poverty” and it was called a form of begging by an ANAP member of parliament.³⁵⁴ Another ANAP member of parliament described having a green card as dishonorable and offensive, emphasizing that the state should create employment instead of issuing green cards.³⁵⁵ Also the discussions during the social assistance scheme for the family of men who died in the military, in need were indicative of how the social assistance was perceived. During the discussions a MP of the MHP which is a nationalist party criticized the government for giving charity to these families whose children or husbands had died for the nation.³⁵⁶ For him, this was dishonorable and unacceptable.

The underlying assumption of the criticism of the “culture of charity” was the belief that the poor were people who did not work or were unemployed. With a work-centered approach to society, all kinds of social assistance are tended to be regarded as charity. The real problem for them was not the poverty, but the

³⁵³ Republic of Turkey, Parliament Deb., vol. 141, reunion 36, 18 December 2006, 541

³⁵⁴ Republic of Turkey, Parliament Deb., vol. 141, reunion 36, 18 December 2006 Anavatan, Hüseyin Güler, 379.

³⁵⁵ Republic of Turkey, Parliament Deb., vol. 141, reunion 36, 18 December 2006 Hüseyin Özcan, ANAP, 377.

³⁵⁶ Republic of Turkey, Parliament Deb., vol. 25, reunion 125, 27 June 2012, Mustafa Kalaycı for MHP.

unemployment. According to this approach, when employment was created and these people started to work, they would rise out of the poverty. However, most of the poor and vulnerable were already working mostly at the informal, but sometimes also at formal work. A study investigating the influence of the social transfers showed that the employment rates between the poor and non-poor population did not change.³⁵⁷ There is no proof that poor people do not work and prefer to take assistance.

The reality of the working poor was completely unknown to the public authorities until recently. Until 2012, only those who were not covered by a social security scheme, namely who did not work formally, were entitled to all types of social assistance schemes. Having no social insurance was the first condition of the social assistance both of instant assistances of the SYDVs and of the regular social assistance programs, such as elderly and disability allowance. However, the change in the law allowing the distribution of the instant assistance of the SYDVs for those who had jobs with social insurance was an indication that the existence of the working poor had become known, however gradually.

The irregular assistance can be evaluated as resembling charity which depends totally on the arbitrary decisions on the giving side, which creates gratitude in the recipients and could result in clientelist relations. However, this should be separated from right-based, regular assistance which is awarded on the basis of citizenship status together with other social rights, such as education, healthcare, or shelter. For example, cash transfers, such as the disability allowance or the payments for widows which were regular, given at certain times and amounts on certain

³⁵⁷ F. Şeker, “Türkiye’de Sosyal Transferlerin Yoksulluk Üzerindeki Etkileri” (Ankara: Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı Uzmanlık Tezi, 2008), 173.

conditions which were defined through the law were of a more right-based type of assistance.

Although there was a strong tendency to regard social assistance as unnecessary altogether, there were also more consistent criticisms of a social assistance distinguishing between a right-based and charity-based approach, from all parties of the opposition. For example, Hüseyin Bayındır of the CHP, stated that social assistance was an indispensable part of the social state; however, he criticized how the assistance were distributed.³⁵⁸ Another CHP member of parliament criticized the way payments were made irregularly, and making the recipients wait in lines in an inhumane way.³⁵⁹ Mustafa Kalaycı from the MHP stated that the social assistance as such was like a charity of the state with the uncertainty of when, how, to whom, and in what amount of social assistance would be made.³⁶⁰

While conflicting views were expressed by CHP members, from the BDP members of parliament came more consistent criticisms. In the preamble of a proposal for parliamentary investigation of social assistance, it was stated that it was not the benevolence of the state toward its citizens, rather an essential duty being a part of the social policy together with social security as it was in European social states.³⁶¹ Sabahat Tuncel stated that the current methods of social assistance regarded the people as “pitiful (*zavallı*),” rather than as individuals.³⁶²

³⁵⁸ Republic of Turkey, Parliament Deb., vol. 141, reunion 36, 18 December 2006, 357.

³⁵⁹ Republic of Turkey, Parliament Deb., vol. 141, reunion 36, 18 December 2006, 399 Hüseyin Ekmekçioğlu, CHP.

³⁶⁰ Republic of Turkey, Parliament Deb., vol. 25, reunion 125, 27 June 2012, Mustafa Kalaycı, MHP.

³⁶¹ Republic of Turkey, Parliament Deb., vol. 96, reunion 78, 16 March 2011.

³⁶² Republic of Turkey, Parliament Deb., vol. 38, reunion 41, 15 December 2012 Sabahat Tuncel, BDP.

Despite the conflicting speeches of its members mostly due to the confusion on the separation between the rights-based social assistance from the charity-based, the CHP was the first party that included a rights-based, regular social assistance in its party program and then proposed a law draft in the parliament. It was a regular social assistance program for all of the poor, under the name of “Family Insurance” without conditions such as disability or age³⁶³ and used as a major strategy for the elections in 2012, by Kılıçdaroğlu, the leader of the CHP.

Actually the unification of fragmentary social assistance programs under a single regular program that would be awarded only on the basis of poverty was also what was recommended by the informants and researchers at the SYGM. However, they stated that along with the fear of the cost of such a wide-ranged program, the Board of the Fund felt uncomfortable with awarding assistance to those who were able to work.

They also stated that the use of Family Insurance by the CHP as an election strategy was another disincentive for the AKP. Actually, a general program, under the name of Minimum Income Support (*Asgari Gelir Desteği*, AGD), had been recommended as the result of the research of the SYGM and actually its necessity had been accepted, despite the concerns. However, one of the informants stated that it would be difficult for the AKP to implement this program in the near future, since along with the concerns of cost, a major concern was that it would be like copying the

³⁶³ CHP, “Kılıçdaroğlu: Yaşlıların, yoksulların, özürlülerin dramını Aile Sigortası ile bitireceğiz. Toplumla güven, huzur ve barış getireceğiz. O açıdan çok önemli bir proje,” (16 Şubat 2011), accessed on 22 July 2014, <http://www.chp.org.tr/?p=12001>

CHP, “Aile Sigortası: Güçlü Sosyal Devlete Doğru,” (2011), accessed on 22 July 2014, http://www.aykanerdemir.net/_rsc/u/file/ailesigortasi.pdf

idea from the CHP, or justifying them, whereas they had been against the idea in the election process.³⁶⁴ However, the same informant also stated that the AKP had been still thinking about the project and that he believed that it would be accepted at the end.

He stated that currently there were already various social assistance programs and the fragmented structure had been accepted as a problem by everyone involved. Also he stated that it had become easier to convince the Board of Trustee, showing the fragmentary structure and stating many different groups among the poor were covered already, and what needed to be done was to unify them in a single program.

There were two main lines of approach by the opposition towards public social assistance that was distributed by the AKP. First was to object social assistance believing that cash assistance would make people lazy and get accustomed to live on social assistance instead of working, without regarding a distinction between various forms of social assistance and the ways of distribution. However, the second line accepted the necessity of social assistance as a part of social policy and made criticisms on the forms and methods of social assistance distributed by the government. While the second line of criticisms would push for more rights-based social assistance programs, the first line would force the policy makers first to develop stricter means test mechanisms that would ascertain the leakages at the cost of undercoverage. Second, it caused them to keep both the thresholds for receiving assistance and the amount of assistance at the minimum, even if they thought the

³⁶⁴ Radikal, "CHP'nin Aile Sigortası teoride bile imkânsız," (02 May 2011), accessed on 22 July 2014, http://www.radikal.com.tr/politika/chpnin_aile_sigortasi_teoride_bile_imkansiz-1047978

amount was quite insufficient. At last, it caused them to try to justify the social assistance by establishing relations with employment, creating social assistance schemes with condition of accepting the offered work or social work.

The Case of the Çorlu SYDV

The SYDVs were established in 1986 with the Law on the Encouragement of Social Assistance and Solidarity with the establishment of the SYDTF. As explained in detail in the previous section, they were institutions that have legal personalities but are not within the state organization and had a certain amount of flexibility. However, they were different from other foundations, since they had been established by the state, administered by personnel paid by the SYGM and their incomes were constituted mostly from public resources. Çorlu SYDV was one of these institutions out of 973 in the whole country,³⁶⁵ which became the major institutions through which the public social assistance was distributed in the local area.

Previous Chapter described the institutionalization of social assistance and the means-test. These were followed by discussions on and different approaches to targeting. In this section the case of Çorlu will be evaluated in terms of the still-persistent problems in practice despite all the efforts of systemization and standardization in social assistance as well as targeting; and then, with different opinions of the SYDV staff on social assistance and targeting.

³⁶⁵ Aile ve Sosyal Politikalar Bakanlığı, “2013 Yılı Faaliyet Raporu,” (T.C. Aile ve Sosyal Politikalar Bakanlığı: 2014), 112.

The Practice and Problems of Means Testing at the Çorlu SYDV

The Çorlu SYDV is a bigger one although Çorlu is not a city but a district. With a population larger than Tekirdağ that is the province that it exists under administratively, Çorlu receives more public resources than Tekirdağ. During the interviews it was stated that for a long time after their establishments, the SYDVs had not been used actively and also the SYDV personnel had not been used according to the aim. However, as one of my informants stated, beginning with 2005, the workload of the SYDV increased gradually and in 2012 they employed new personnel to meet the need.

Previously, only six people had been working at the Çorlu SYDV. However, only three of them had worked for the Foundation while the rest had been employed in other works, as in the case of a driver in the district governorship (*kaymakamlık*). Also the three personnel who had worked for the Foundation had done nothing, as the most experienced informants said. However, especially since 2012, with the income tests for the General Health Insurance, the workload increased excessively so that although currently 11 of the 10 personnel are actively working for the foundation, they are not sufficient.

Four of the personnel work in social investigations. However, due to the lack of sufficient personnel, they also work in the office and receive applications. These four personnel go on the household visits in two groups, constituted of two personnel. Almost every day, one or both of the groups goes for social investigations and visits between 15-30 households. After the application for the assistance is made, the household investigations need to be made in a month at most. After a month, they

cannot enter the information on the applicants in the database, since the system was closed automatically. For each case they create a file and they register all the information in the database. They have questionnaires with 52 questions which filed out by the personnel during the household visits.

Each SYDV uses the same software that was connected to the other SYDVs and to the SYGM. All the information that was entered by the SYDVs in the software can be accessed by the SYGM. The software is also connected to the data bases of other public institutions through the SOYBiS, which enhance them to access the most reliable records without any paper work.

Until this point, the system seems to be functioning as the SYGM and the activity reports claimed. However, the detailed information on the practice states otherwise. Actually, there are still many problems that could not be removed through all the efforts for institutionalization and standardization. Actually, regarding the means test, it is not possible to say that the problems in practices would be completely resolved due to the impossibility of making a perfect means test in a society where the informal sector was so large and the incomes of the people cannot be estimated through the public records. However other than informality there are also problems such as a lack of sufficient and especially trained personnel, the different practices of different SYDVs, the hierarchical structure among the members of the Board of Trustee resulting in a system exposed to personal and arbitrary decisions, fragmented regular social assistance programs that exclude many of the poor, and people do not have information on the existent social assistance programs.

Informality constituted the major difficulty in the means test for the SYDV personnel, as was underlined in all the reports on social assistance as well as in this

thesis. Even, the main reason for the social investigations made by the SYDV was the informality. From the public records it is impossible to access accurate information on the incomes of people and all of the informants in the SYDV stated that people lie about their incomes in order to be entitled to the assistance. Therefore, they estimate income through household investigations during which they ask questions about income and expenditures, and examine the household. People that do not have formal work mostly declare that they do not have any income. However, when the personnel visit the households, and ask how they live, it is stated mostly either that there is a woman in the family who work daily as a cleaning woman, or a man who works in constructions for daily wages. From questions such as the number of days worked, the personnel make an average estimation of the income.

They also ask about the average amount of money the household spent on various items such as food, cleaning, or school if there were children. Then they look at the gap between the declared income and the expenditures and if there is any mismatch, they take the higher declaration into account as the income of the household. However, despite all these efforts to estimate the income and condition of the applicants, the informants all state that it is impossible to separate the deserving poor from the rest completely.

Another important problem which is emphasized in the criticisms and reports and that are seen in the case of Çorlu, is the insufficiency of the number and quality of the personnel. Despite the increase in the number of SYDV personnel, it was stated that the workload had increased due to the social investigations of the means test in social assistance and income test for the General Health Insurance, so that the personnel are unable to meet the need.

Along with the insufficiency of the number, the personnel in the SYDVs are not trained personnel specialized in social assistance or social services. Four of the personnel of the Çorlu SYDV are assigned to household investigations. None of them are professionals of the issue. Two of them who were interviewed for the thesis stated that they were given a two-week long training session in their first year in 2012. However, they also stated that later they had understood that the training sessions were not held often and it just had been a coincidence that they had received training. They said that training sessions normally were arranged once in four to five years.

They stated that they had learned and developed certain methods by doing. For example, they gave examples such as in order to understand the real income of the house, they ask rapid questions such as how many times in a week you/ your partner goes to work, or how much you earn in a day. Through these questions they try to understand whether the person is lying or not in order to make more accurate estimations on the income of the household. Also with time they became familiar with the daily wages in the informal sector most common in Çorlu, such as construction work or cleaning, which made calculations easier.

They stated that they do not follow all of the instructions, giving the example that there were “ridiculous” questions in the survey of the proxy means test formula. When they began, they asked all of them, but, now they do not ask certain questions, such as “how often do you eat meat?” They stated that some applicants were angered while, and some laughed at them when they asked this question. Anyway, they stated that they felt absurd when they asked such questions, knowing that most of them eat meat two times a year only during the religious fests. However, they also said that

they entered the necessary data without omitting anything, including the questions they do not ask people, completing the survey with their estimations.

As well as these two personnel of the social investigations, other informants were in agreement with the fact that the SYGM's instructions and procedures sometimes could be really far from the realities of practice. Especially the informant that who had been working since 1989 and currently worked in a managerial position, complained a great deal about the SYGM's circulars that were disconnected from the local. Also, she stated that the system was so complicated and they are unable to follow the new instructions and circulars. The SYGM is conducting the system by trial-and-error, although it is stated that the SYGM works with TÜBİTAK (The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey, *Türkiye Bilimsel ve Teknolojik Araştırma Kurumu*). Although the SYGM tried to make professional research in cooperation with TÜBİTAK and various universities, in the case of Çorlu it can be observed that the practice is mostly different from the SYGM's intentions. However, it also should be noted that this period is called a transformation period by the informant and it is hoped that the problems will decrease after the system settles down.

Another important issue is the hierarchy in the Board of Trustees, which influences the decision-making on social assistance distribution. The informant at the managerial position stated that actually she found the structure of the Board of Trustee as well-designed, with members from civil society, civil servants, and citizens. However, she also stated that the number of the civil servants should be decreased because, the head of the Board of Trustee is the district governor, who is the superior of the civil servants, and because the majority of the members are civil

servants, the decisions are actually made by the governor and not an objective group. For example, all the informants gave the example of the difference among the two district governors' ways of conducting the SYDV. The current governor was evaluated as generous in making assistance; with the complaint of some of the informants that he distributes assistance too generously since he prefers to give more instead of taking the risk of making people suffer; whereas the previous governor was the reverse, with a tendency not to make cash assistance easy. As a result, despite the efforts of systemization this system, the general tendency of the SYDVs, therefore, depends on the district governors making it exposed to arbitrary decisions, political influence, supporting the criticisms of the opposition and various reports, as discussed in the previous chapter. It should be noted that this was mostly valid for the instant, periodical assistance that SYDVs give. For the regular social assistance programs, the possibility of such abuse or arbitrariness is more limited.

However, sometimes also for the regular assistance programs, SYDV takes initiatives. For instance, the informants gave examples of cases in which they represented the declared income of the applicants as lower in order to help them meet the criteria for assistance seeing that the applicant was really in bad shape. They also gave examples of reverse situations. For instance, they told about an old woman who had applied for the elderly allowance and whose income actually met the conditions; but still the case was rejected by the Board of Trustee due to the fact that the children of the women were wealthy.

Along with being exposed to political influence and subjective decisions, despite the regulations and circulars of the SYGM, there are still discrepancies between the practices of the SYDVs. For instance, one of the informants who has

been working at managerial position in the SYDV stated that each foundation follows its own way of conduct. The variations can be in the ways of making the means-test and household investigations, or in the group of people who are regarded as entitled to assistance. For instance, the same informant above gave the example of the SYDV of Aydın. She said that she contacted them about an applicant who came from there, and found out that the SYDV in Aydın did not make any kind of social assistance to those who were able to work regardless of whether they worked formally or informally and whether they were unemployed.

Another example was given by one of the informants who works in household investigations. He gave two examples on the issue, one from Kastamonu and the other from Hayrabolu, a district of Tekirdağ. He mentioned an applicant who had come from Kastamonu and received all kinds of periodic social assistances such as coal, food, and conditional cash transfers. When she applied for assistance to the Çorlu SYDV and learnt that there would be social investigations, she was surprised since in Kastamonu, she had received all of the assistance without social investigation of any kind. In the second example, in Hayrabolu, the SYDV make people collect papers showing the market value of the applicant's house, vehicle, landed property, or cattle from public institutions such as the Land Registry, the Agricultural Affairs, and the municipality. Although the determination of the market value is the task of the SYDVs and in spite of a circular from the SYGM clearly stating that the applicants should not be made obliged to go from institution to institution, the Hayrabolu SYDV were acting against and even generated a form to be filled out by these institutions.

The fragmented structure of the social assistance programs was another of the problems that was mentioned by the informants. As well as making process

difficult and complicated for the personnel, some conditions of the programs were in conflict with each other. Every social assistance program had different conditions, income thresholds and different instructions for the calculation of the income, even if the SYGM tried to merge. Apart from making the system more complicated, the social investigation personnel gave an example in which the conditions were in conflict. For instance, in order to be entitled to the disability allowance, there was the condition of being entitled to Free Health Insurance after the income test for the General Health Insurance is made. However, the income and property calculation for the General Health Insurance and Disability allowance were made differently and as a result sometimes people are unable to receive disability allowance even if they were entitled to it as the result of the means test, since they are unable to meet the conditions for Free Health Insurance.

Also, the lack of a social assistance program for those out of the target groups of the existing programs was also an issue since for those who were out of these target groups, in other words for those who have an informal work, who are not disabled, elderly, who are not widows, or families of soldiers there were no possibility of receiving a regular, legal based social assistance, despite they were in permanent need. Their only chance was to apply for the instant emergency assistance of the SYDVs, which is given at most once or twice. However, the personnel stated that there are also those who apply for assistance regularly, making them went for social investigations to the same households many times. Along with the need for regular assistance programs for these groups, they were complained about the workload of these repeated applications.

Despite the fact that the SYGM claimed a high degree of systemization in the means testing, the decisions were still made by the Board of Trustee in the end, which was regarded as a difficult task by all of the informants. Indeed, it was obvious that there had been serious improvements in means testing, with registering the applicants, keeping records, the standardization of the questions and criteria that are evaluated in the social investigations, which were all important. However, there were two main problems on the issue. First, in that phase, the monitoring of the SYDVs is not made regularly yet, so that they can control the implementations of the SYDVs, resulting in continuation in the differences in practice. Second, unless the decisions are made completely according to the scores of the means testing formula, the final decisions are made by the Board of Trustees.

However, even if the means test formula is put into implementation, the SYGM and the personnel at the Çorlu SYDV were in an agreement that there should be flexibility and a room for decision-making by the local actors, since the scores of the means test would not perfectly separate the poor from non-poor. Therefore, it is obvious that means testing would remain a difficult task that always will be exposed to political and personnel influence and subjected to criticisms, even in the aftermath of the complete use of the Proxy Means Test Formula.

The means test creates a dilemma between complete systemization and imperfectness of a systemized means test. If the means test would be completely systemized and reduced to a technical issue with formulations and scores, it would possibly cause undercoverage problems. Therefore, the informants in SYGM stated that there always should some flexibility be left to the local decision-makers.

However, when there was a room for flexibility, it means making the system exposed to subjective decisions.

The Attitudes of the SYDV Personnel about Means Testing

The general tendency among the SYDV staff was similar to that of the general public perception that the SYGM personnel stated, that social assistance causes a disincentive to the work and therefore, the means test should be made properly to distinguish the really deserving poor from others. However, after further questioning, it was possible to see differences in the attitudes and even conflicting ideas within a single person.

For instance, on the perception that by distributing social assistance people became “lazy” and get used living on assistance, the personnel that were interviewed had different opinions. There was a general tendency to accept the idea that social assistance would make people not work. However, only one of the informants strictly defended the opinion that they were distributing too much assistance causing a disincentive to work. She was the informant who had worked there at a managerial position, since 1989 and found the generosity of the current district governor wrong.

However, the personnel who were conducting the social investigations along with accepting that there were people who did not want to work due to the social assistance, emphasized more that mostly the case was that people do not want the employer to make a social security register of them, since they wanted to keep receiving assistance. Therefore, more than the people that did not work relying on

social assistance, they emphasized that this system with the condition of not having social insurance was actually penalizing the people in formal employment.

However, when it was asked whether the amount of assistance was sufficient for people to live on, they all stated that if there were not any other income, it would not be sufficient. Even the woman who said that they distributed too much assistance stated that actually none of the regular payments were sufficient to live on. However, right after stating that, she added that “as a matter of fact, my income is also not sufficient for me. Money is not sufficient for anyone.” She stated that the national minimum wage was also not sufficient. It was disturbing for her to distribute such an amount of assistance to non-working people, while the working people who deserved a better life for her, also struggled in difficult conditions. The distribution of social assistance for her had no limit and the state could not look after everyone. The idea of giving social assistance to the people who were able to work made her especially disturbed, since she worked hard and there were so many people that worked and were still poor. However, the regular assistance that was given on the legal basis did not disturb her due to the fact that she regarded these as legal rights.

The personnel who were in the social investigation stated without hesitation that the amount of social assistance was very low and it should be increased. For example, referencing one of the houses that were visited during the social investigation that day, one of personnel stated that one of the applicants desired her child to continue with education and asked her for assistance. However, the amount Conditional Cash Transfers for education was so low, approximately 30 TL, that it was impossible for that woman to have her child receive an education.

As for the thresholds of the social assistance programs, also the personnel said that they were actually very low most of the time. For most of the regular programs, the threshold was one third of the national minimum wage. In other words, if the income per person in a certain household is over this amount, he or she cannot apply for assistance. However, one of them also stated that actually it was very difficult to decide whether the threshold was correct or not. Sometimes there are people, who obviously need assistance, but in the calculations their income remains below the threshold and there are also cases where the thresholds seem reliable. He added that since people tend to lie about their incomes underrepresenting them, the state keeps the threshold lower in order to prevent too many people from receiving assistance.

The difference between the practices of social investigations that was made for the means-test for social assistance and income tests for the General Health Insurance was also insightful for the different attitudes towards an entitlement that is accepted as a right and the social assistance, which is regarded as more the compensation of the failure of the people. For the income test made for the General Health Insurance, household were much more cautious about the privacy of the members of the household. For example, for the means test both of the personnel that came for the household investigations enter the household, whereas for the income test, only one of the personnel enter into the household and they are careful not to disturb the members of the household and only take a glance at the house just to have an idea about the accuracy of the declared income. Also, in the means test they are more careful in order to distinguish between the incorrect and accurate declarations of income. They additionally take photos of the households for means-test in order to

transfer their experience to the Board of Trustee better, which makes the final decisions on the social assistance schemes.

As one the informants who has been in the Board of Trustee since nine years, reported, the issue of social investigation caused debates among the members, since some argued against entering in the bedrooms of the people and taking photograph of the bedrooms. Indeed, currently the personnel neither take photos of the bedrooms, nor enter in. Actually, they especially specified that they did not enter into the bedrooms, since the people got disturbed otherwise and they tried not to make them humiliated.

The difference in the practice of the means testing and the income test that is made for the General Health Insurance gives an idea about the different approaches to social assistance. For the General Health Insurance was seen as a right the personnel were more cautious not to disturb or humiliate the people. However, for the means test that they made for social assistance applications, they regarded it as the responsibility of the applicants and they regarded the household investigations as more deserved. This was not to say that they behave toward people in a bad way, but they only did not show the sensitivity that they showed for the income test.

However, it is necessary to emphasize the difference between the regular social assistance programs and the social assistance distribution within the initiative of the SYDVs. The personnel tended to regard the regular social assistance programs more as a right of the citizens. Even if the same process in the social investigations for regular and periodic assistance of the SYDVs, they were more comfortable with the regular assistance programs.

If the necessary conditions are met, such as having a certain degree of disability, being a widow together with being in a certain degree of poverty, payments should be made to the applicant as a legal right. It does not depend totally on the perception or opinion of the Board of Trustee on that particular case. Only difficulty with these regular programs is that of understanding the real income of the households where people work in the informal sector. However, still with that, the informants were more comfortable and not as strict in determining the real income.

However, for the other cash payments that were made by the SYDV, the decision of which cases and what amount the assistance would be given all depended on the Board of Trustee. The informants stated that the case of instant assistance given by the SYDV, the Board of Trustee had difficulties in making decisions and there were sometimes debates in certain cases, on which members had different opinions.

For the social investigations the personnel stated that sometimes it was disturbing for the applicants SYDV personnel to have their homes examined. However, mostly they did not object, since during the application they are informed of what is required, and they accept the investigations. However, they also gave examples of a few cases of people who refused to apply when they learned about the social investigation. For example, one man withdrew his application with the reason that his relatives and neighbors did not know about his difficult condition and he did not want them to become informed.

They also they stated that the neighbors are too curious and that this make people feel bad about it. Indeed, during the day that I went with the personnel to social investigation, in half of the cases it was possible to hear the neighbors opening

the door and listening to the conversations between the personnel and the applicant. Since, the personnel preferred to fill out the survey at the outside of the household, which means mostly, in the apartment, the conversations could be heard. It was especially disturbing, since the survey involved private questions that range from socio-economic conditions, to the expenditures and the goods within the household, and to problems in the household, such as domestic violence.

They also stated that entering the household for investigations was actually unpleasant for them as well as the applicant. Giving the example from the household visit that we made one of the informants said that sometimes they had to start to do social investigations in the morning and sometimes they enter the household when the rest of the household members were sleeping in their bedrooms, and witnessing this degree of privacy was disturbing for them too. They stated that actually the household investigations were not so humanly. However, right after the aftermath of it, they all stated that it should be done, since there was no other way of understanding the real income of the people.

Even if there were people who get embarrassed about receiving assistance, and even there were those who refused to apply for assistance out of the fear that the situation will be heard by the neighbors, the distribution of social assistance in cash was important. As well as meaning so much for the recipients despite the low amounts, it also sometimes directed people to perceive social assistance as a right. For example, informants said that people are demanding social assistance more and more, as their right. Whereas in the previous district governorship's period there were few applications, the applications of assistance were increasing each month, since now they gave assistance easier. People hear more about the possibility of getting

social assistance as more people receive it, as well as the more it is distributed the more it becomes normalized. They stated that more and more people come declaring that social assistance is their right, and more and more people complain when their applications are rejected.

The increase in the claims for social assistance with the increase in social assistance resembles the process at the SYGM that was told by one of the informants of the SYGM. He said that it was became gradually easier to convince the Board of Trustee of a Minimum Income Support for the whole poor, by showing that they were already distributing social assistance in cash to various groups of the poor with various social assistance programs. The cash assistance that was distributed although it was not rights-based, may result in the increase of claims for social assistance, showing that the dynamics of the issue are far deeper than it was imagined at first.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The main aim of this study was to examine the institutionalization of public social assistance and means testing mechanisms in the period after 2001, when the SRMP, with the initiation of the World Bank, started. Along with the historical process of institutionalization, the thesis focused on the attitudes towards means testing and social assistance of various actors, with examples from the case of the Çorlu Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundation.

The process of institutionalization of social assistance and standardization of means testing started mostly with the initiation of the World Bank with the Social Risk Mitigation Project that was started in 2001. However, other than the influence of the World Bank there were inner dynamics that triggered these developments. Social assistance was previously not an important part of the social policy system in Turkey. It was not that there was no poverty, rather with the huge agriculture sector, widespread extended family it was poverty that was coped with mostly within social support mechanisms. With the dissolution of the agriculture in time, and especially with the implementation of neoliberal policies in the post-coup period, the abrupt immigration to the urban areas occur, where *gecekondu* became places that enhanced dynamic ways of help for the new-comers.

However, with the destruction of the *gecekondu* areas, changes in the family type, the dissolution of agriculture deprived people of the traditional ways of communal support, making the poverty visible. These changes coincided with the

changing labor regime, in which long-term, secure jobs were replaced by a flexible labor regime in which temporary, part time, insecure, informal jobs were the dominant form. All these changes resulted in a new form of poverty, which made social assistance crucial.

With the Marmara Earthquake in 1999 and the 2001 economic crisis there was a need for social assistance as a means of intervention into urgent situations. The lack of a proper social assistance mechanism that could meet this need was realized. So, in the aftermath of the crisis, the SRMP, in coordination with the World Bank and the SYDTF, was initiated with two components. The first was designed for the urgent need for social assistance due to the crisis and the second was for institutional development.

There were important improvements in terms of the institutionalization in social assistance, such as the increase in institutional capacity, use of information technologies, and creating integrated database that connect the system of the SYGM both with the SYDVs and other public institutions. Also for the means test, there were important developments, such as the creation of the integrated database, where all public records were accessible by the SYDV workers or the development of a proxy means test formula, standardizing the procedure of means test to an important extent. However, even with these developments, there were still important problems, such as the continuing fragmented structure in social assistance programs despite the improvements in the fragmented institutions, and the system being exposed to political influence and arbitrary decision of the people on the Board of Trustee in SYDVs, which made social assistance one of the most discussed issue of the last decade.

Informality was another persistent problem that necessitated a means testing mechanism dependent on the indicators of the socio-economic condition, other than income and making social investigations compulsory, which was actually accepted as an inhumane way. Also the lack of a rights-based system was an important problem in the system which resulted in criticisms of creation of a “culture of charity” and awarding the assistance in inhumane way that make people stigmatized.

The choice of the target groups, the ways and forms of means testing, the types of assistance were the choices in close relation with the approach to social assistance. This was visible in the attitudes of various actors towards the problem of social assistance in Turkey. Whereas the AKP MPs mostly equated the social assistance with the realization of the social state in their defense of the government, among the opposition there were complicated and sometimes conflicting views, especially in the CHP. Some of the MPs in the CHP accused the government of creating a culture of poverty in which people got used to living with social assistance and became dependent on it.

However, there were also MPs who could differentiate between ways of making social assistance; rights-based or charity based, who did not reject the necessity of the social assistance altogether. Actually, the CHP was the first party that spoke of a general minimum income support under the name of “family insurance.” Apart from the CHP, also the BDP MPs made meaningful criticisms by arguing against the charity-based and inhumane ways of awarding assistance.

The approach of the SYGM was also different from that of the government and also from the public opinion in terms of widely held perception that social assistance would create a disincentive to work and make people lazy. They were

more in convergence with a right-based approach, however still keeping the sensitivities with the influence on the employment to the priority.

Indeed, the case of Çorlu was insightful in showing the differences between the regular social assistance programs, which were closer to the right-based social assistance, and periodical social assistance, which were distributed by the SYDV and in which the applicants were left to the mercy of the Board of Trustees. It was also important for the tracing of the different attitudes among the SYDV personnel as well as the ongoing problems which some of them were due to the disconnectedness of the SYGM from local areas, despite all their efforts.

There are two tendencies in the method of conducting social assistance system in Turkey which can be traced back to the previous decades. The first tendency is to accept social assistance as a study of the state and regulating it in terms of legal-based rights whereas the second tends to leave the problem more to civil society and the private sphere, keeping the state mostly for the administration of the system, leaving the citizens to the mercy of philanthropic emotions.

This study maybe is important at most in that it shows the differences in the actors and different dynamics in the issue which cannot be seen easily from the surface. Although the social assistance system can be and should be criticized, especially in terms of its forms, and the philanthropy emphasis of the government; the tendency for a rights-based system was also alive with the increasing legal-based social assistance programs. With a meaningful critique that could distinguish between the different forms of social assistance without rejecting the necessity of it in a work-centered capitalist society in which the flexible labor regime is becoming increasingly

dominant, it is still possible to strengthen claims for a social assistance system on the basis of citizenship rights.

During the research it was seen that most of the research in the area of social assistance was on organizational structures in social assistance while many areas remained untouched. For instance, a general study on the social assistance expenditures is absent which is crucial due to the lack of organized data. Also, unlike the institutional part of the social assistance system on which there are plenty of studies, there is a need for more research about the social assistance recipients. Studies that focus on the recipients of social assistance and their experience would be a contribution.

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