

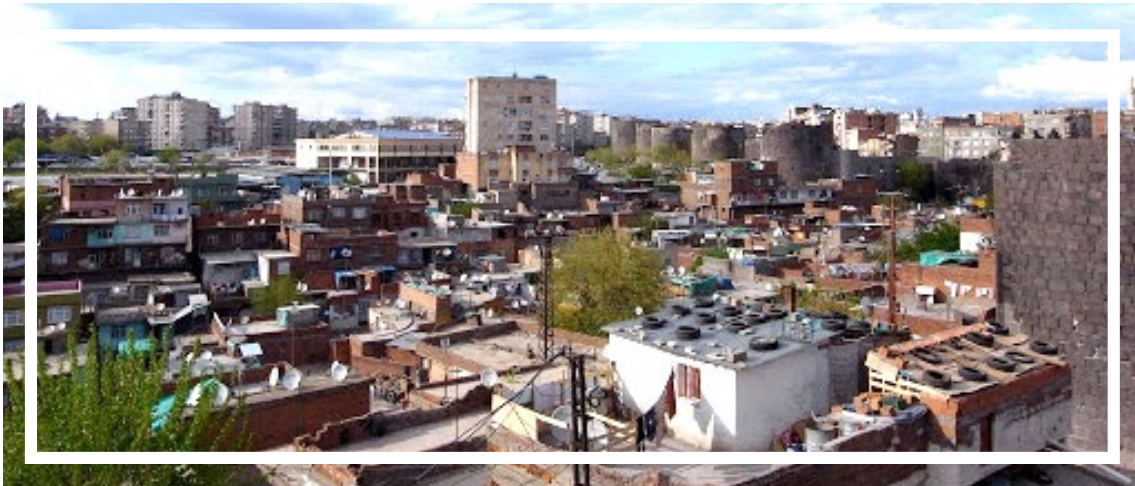


# « SOCIAL INCLUSION AT THE MARGINS OF THE CITY: DIYARBAKIR PUBLIC LAUNDRIES AND EDUCATION SUPPORT HOUSE »

Diyarbakir, Turkey

*Period of implementation: 2001 - 2004 | Study case written in 2007*

**A**iming to facilitate the individual and social rehabilitation of women survivors of displacement and their integration into urban life on an egalitarian and sustainable basis, the Diyarbakir Metropolitan Municipality developed a public laundry project (in 2001) and an education support house (in 2004). Since the city lacked the structural mechanisms to absorb and accommodate the sudden influx of displaced people, the already existing problems in the fields of poverty, unemployment, urban integration, housing, education, health, etc. intensified. Both the public laundries and the education support house are activities bringing a holistic approach to these women as social beings located within an entirety of social relations, not isolated individuals, and integrate individual, social, and institutional aspects of social inclusion and women’s empowerment. The Public Laundry operates in three of the poorest neighborhoods.



The **Inclusive Cities Observatory** was launched in 2008 by the UCLG Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights with the aim of creating a space for analysis and reflection on local social inclusion policies. The initiative was developed with the scientific support of Professor Yves Cabannes (University College of London) and the Centre for Social Studies (CES) from the University of Coimbra. At present, the Observatory contains more than sixty study cases mostly developed between 2008 and 2010. Even though many of these cases refer to policies that have already come to an end, they still have much to offer: from capitalizing on the learning acquired by other local authorities to discovering suggestive and alternative means to address social inclusion challenges from a local perspective.

## Context

### *City context*

Diyarbakir is the center of Turkey's Kurdish-populated Southeast Anatolia Region in economic, political, cultural, and geographical terms. The cradle of many civilizations throughout history, Diyarbakir is currently spending much effort to solve its aggravated socio-economic, cultural, and political problems. The following narrative briefly describes two model social projects carried out by two municipalities in Diyarbakir to improve the life conditions of disadvantaged women and children. These projects are: *DIKASUM-Public Laundries* by Diyarbakir Metropolitan Municipality (DMM) and *Education Support House* by Baglar Municipality, a sub-district municipality related to DMM.

Perhaps the most important factor behind Diyarbakir's current problems is the policy of displacement carried out by the state during the 1990s. In this process, many rural settlements in the region were evacuated under Emergency State Rule "to tackle" the Kurdish conflict and "ensure" state security. A 1998 parliamentary report stated that 3428 settlements were evacuated as of November 1998, with local sources reporting that the number exceeded 4000; and millions of people were displaced without any assistance or compensation by the state. Most of the displaced went to the big towns and metropolitan cities in and outside the region, particularly Diyarbakir, Van, Batman, Istanbul, Izmir, and Mersin.

Diyarbakir's population tripled in the last two decades mostly due to displacement; increasing from about 300,000 to one million. Since the city lacked the structural mechanisms to absorb and accommodate the sudden influx of the displaced, the already existing problems in the fields of poverty, unemployment, urban integration, housing, education, health, etc. intensified. According to the Diyarbakir Chamber of Trade and Industry, around 65% of the 600,000 active workforce of the city is currently unemployed. According to official records, 30% of Diyarbakir's total population and 45% of women in the city were illiterate as of 2003. There exist only 7 doctors per 10,000 people in Diyarbakir, and 100,000 people live in slums. Half of the population is aged 20 or younger, and around 20,000 children work or live on the streets. Infant mortality rate is approximately 6%. GDP (per person/year) is 1,056 New Turkish Liras (approximately 600 EUR). Unsurprisingly, women and children are most affected by these adverse conditions.

Baglar, the largest district in Diyarbakir, has been beset with chronic unemployment, poverty, and problems related to urban infrastructure. It is the district of Diyarbakir worst affected by displacement, with its population rising from 60,000 to over 350,000, with scarce possibilities to integrate the newcomers into structures of urban life. In the area of education, this process has had large-scale adverse effects. There are 26 primary schools in Baglar, with an average of 50 students per classroom. Technical facilities at schools are highly insufficient: of the 26 schools, only 9 have a science laboratory and only 7 have a computer lab. Most children live in extended families (with grandparents), with 7.5 siblings on average. The average household population is 14.5 for a 2+1 flat, leaving children little ability to study at home. Furthermore, high levels of unemployment and poverty render very difficult the allocation of household resources for education. Under these conditions, children are seen as economic resources and are compelled to work in various jobs. Children who work are at risk of breaking away from education, adapting street habits, and abuse.

**Institutional level of policy development:** Municipal and submunicipal levels (Diyarbakir city and Baglar district)

## Policy development

A gender-based social service and development organization set up by Diyarbakir Metropolitan Municipality in 2001, the Diyarbakir Metropolitan Municipality Center for Research and Application on Women's Issues (DIKASUM) aims to facilitate the individual and social rehabilitation of women survivors of displacement and their integration into urban life on an egalitarian and sustainable basis through on-the-ground research, action, and consultancy activities. DIKASUM's activities are driven by an holistic approach that addresses women as social beings located within a web of social relations, rather than as isolated individuals. This approach integrates individual, social, and institutional aspects of social inclusion with women's empowerment. Within such a logic, DIKASUM operates *public laundries* in three of the poorest neighborhoods populated mostly by the displaced: the Hasirli neighborhood of the Surici district (Old City) and Ben u Sen and Aziziye neighborhoods of the Yenisehir district. Besides offering free laundry facilities to women on a daily basis, and hence relieving the burden of their domestic chores, *public laundries* function as *multi-purpose women's centers* wherein women socialize and are offered consultancy services on a variety of issues ranging from psychological disorders, unfulfilled suicide attempts, domestic violence and honor killings to unemployment, financial assistance, social insurance, and support for education. Women who use the laundries also join periodic capacity-building classes on literacy, skill-building, reproductive health, and hygiene. Furthermore, they benefit from consciousness-raising activities such as lectures, seminars, and workshops on gender discrimination and women's rights in order to promote their gender consciousness and self-confidence to struggle against discrimination and for their individual and social rights. These activities also help to stimulate public policy initiatives.

### ***Education Support House***

In 2004, Baglar Municipality initiated the Education Support House (ESH) project to offer free educational support to disadvantaged children and juveniles of primary school age in Baglar.

Program objectives were: to contribute to disadvantaged children's access to education, to prevent drop-outs in collaboration with children and families, and to raise public awareness on the issue in line with principles of social justice, equality, and children's rights. The Project envisioned from the outset the interdependence of cognitive, psychic, social, and cultural dimensions of child education and development. Volunteer teachers and trainers were recruited from the Diyarbakir branch of the teachers' union Egitim-Sen and the Dicle University Student Association. Direct educational support to students in parallel with the school curricula formed the bulk of ESH's activities for the first two years. In addition, numerous culture and art workshops were opened (i.e. music, painting, cinema, photography, folklore, modern dance, intelligence games, IT, handicrafts, literature, children's rights, and media), and socio-cultural activities were organized (attendance to movie theaters, concerts, theatre plays, festivals, and tours) to provide children with different means of self-expression through which they would feel freer, more comfortable, and self-confident. These activities facilitated the development of their cultural and artistic sensibilities and skills. The Education Support House designs its activities so as to promote effective participation of children in family and social life; to contribute to children's cognitive, emotional, and social development in cooperation with all units that make up children's social environment (family, street, schools); and to raise children's awareness of internationally recognized rights and develop social awareness and responsibility on children's rights.

In 2006, the Baglar Municipality constructed a new ESH building to meet the increasing popular demand, and to carry out its objectives under physically and technically better conditions. The

current three-storey ESH building provides multidimensional educational and training support to its target group with 10 classrooms; two IT classes; a nutrition room; intelligence games; painting, drama, music, and mud-work ateliers; a big library; a multi-purpose hall; a television/play room; a guidance and consultancy unit; and two basketball and volleyball courts.

### *Policy goals*

DMM adopts a democratic and participatory approach to local governance that aims to assure that each and every citizen of the city may enjoy his/her fundamental rights and is provided with all the social conditions necessary for a dignified life. To this end, with its very limited budget and in close collaboration with civil society dynamics, district municipalities, and other local partners, DMM conducts various projects targeting the multiply disadvantaged groups, especially the displaced, women, children, youth, and the disabled. What frames DMM's social inclusion activities, and particularly the two model projects detailed in this narrative, are three concrete objectives stated in its Strategic Plan: (1) to enhance social welfare and struggle against poverty, (2) to enhance welfare of the displaced population, and (3) to give priority to the disadvantaged.

### *Stakeholders, beneficiaries and participatory methodologies*

The main agents involved in the policy are the local municipality and activists. The Diyarbakir Metropolitan Municipality is the sole owner and implementer of DIKASUM. It has cooperation protocols with the Turkish Foundation of Family Health and Planning (TAV) and the Foundation for Mother and Child Education (ACEV) to offer literacy classes and training on issues related to reproductive health and family planning.

#### **Beneficiaries**

Women and children from Diyarbakir and Baglar. Displaced women that are currently living in the Hasirli, Ben u Sen, and Aziziye neighborhoods are designated as the primary beneficiaries of DIKASUM's activities. However, the Center offers services to other disadvantaged women of the city if there is a demand.

### *Institutionalization and financing*

The approximate budget of DIKASUM is 300,000 New Turkish Liras (162,000 EUR) per year. The Diyarbakir Metropolitan Municipality covers all the expenses from its own budget.

## **Outcomes and reflections**

### *Key results and achievements*

#### *DIKASUM Public Laundries*

Since its foundation, DIKASUM has offered services to thousands of women through *public laundries*. In 2006, DIKASUM reported the following activities:

- 5220 women benefited from three public laundries that have 45 washers, 9 driers, 12 ironing machines, 6 sewing machines, 3 training halls and 3 child-care rooms. The washers and driers were operated 157,478 times by women from 3696 households.
- 2527 women were given consultancy service and directed to relevant institutions

- 9 literacy classes were operated jointly with the Foundation for Mother and Child Education and the Public Training Centers and 138 women gained literacy certificates
- 2176 women were offered individual and group consultancy on reproductive health, family planning, first aid, breast-feeding, sexually transmitted diseases, vaccination, and child development
- 1459 women participated in the workshops, seminars, focus group discussions, and other meetings organized jointly by civil institutions such as Local Agenda 21, UNICEF, Women for Women's Human Rights, Amnesty International, etc.
- 613 houses were visited to lend social and individual support to women and families in the face of events like death, birth, accident, sickness, etc.

### ***Education Support House***

As detailed previously, the bulk of ESH's activities in its first two years (2004, 2005) was direct education support to students in parallel with the school curricula. As well, it offered numerous culture and arts workshops and organized a range of socio-cultural activities. In 2006, the Baglar Municipality constructed a new ESH building to meet the increasing popular demand, and to carry out its objectives under physically and technically better conditions.

Since its inception, the ESH project has offered direct educational support to 4200 students, 4500 children have participated in various social and cultural workshops, 2500 children have participated in socio-cultural activities, 1200 families have been given guidance and consultancy services, 35 social awareness seminars have been organized, and 3000 children have been offered free health check-ups. In addition, 15 health seminars were organized, 8 performances were prepared for two international children festivals, 2 international summer schools were organized, and 128 successful students were given monthly scholarships for their high school education.

### ***Overall assessment***

The ESH model has inspired 14 education support centers in the city and the region. The Laundries project has prevented suicide among women, enhanced social welfare, supported the struggle against poverty, and gave priority to the disadvantaged people in this conflict area.

### ***Main obstacles***

The main obstacles encountered were:

- Lack of adequate financial, technical and human resources.
- Inadequate institutional coordination and cooperation between local and central governments units on problems related to displacement, social inclusion, and women's empowerment.
- Lack of adequate and effective legal and administrative mechanisms to cope with the comprehensive adverse effects of displacement in general and in particular with acts of domestic violence (from wife-battery to honor killings).
- Cultural prejudices against and resistance towards women-based activities and initiatives.
- Bureaucratic and/or patriarchal obstacles towards the monitoring of and intervention into cases of domestic violence.

## *Replicability*

### **Main pre-requisites for a similar intervention:**

- Provide adequate and competent financial, technical and human resources.
- Promote institutional coordination and cooperation among different levels and areas of government (local and central, legal and administrative) on policies and projects related to gender-sensitive social inclusion and women's empowerment.
- Develop a solid and effective dialogue between policy-makers and beneficiaries.

### **Recommendations to cities that want to formulate and implement social inclusion policies:**

- Develop strategic plans to address and intervene into processes of social exclusion and deprivation at personal, group, and institutional levels.
- Realistically determine needs and activities to be done.
- Determine first-hand the needs, demands, and interests of socially disadvantaged, marginalized, and excluded groups through on-the-ground research and focus-group analysis.
- Prepare and implement concrete and applicable working plans.
- Promote conditions for cooperation and coordination among relevant governmental and non-governmental institutions for effective intervention into the targeted problem area.

Communicate to the designated target groups the aims, approaches, and strategies contained in individual policies comprehensively and in full-transparency.

## **Further information**

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All narratives compiled in 2007 including this one were revised by a DPU editorial committee composed of Ernesto Jose Lopez Morales, Sonia Roitman, Michelle Pletsch, Steffen Lajoie, Luisa Dornelas, Iyad Issa and Pechladda Pechpakdee.

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