

Araştırma Makalesi / Research Article

Poverty and Local Equality Plans: An Analysis of İstanbul, İzmir, and Ankara

Yoksulluk ve Yerel Eşitlik Eylem Planları: İstanbul, İzmir ve Ankara Yerel Eşitlik Eylem Planlarının Karşılaştırmalı Analizi

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ABSTRACT

Local Equality Action Plans (LEAPs) are the key local documents and action plans to set the roadmap to ensure the equality of women and men at local level by strengthening and empowering women's status. LEAPS are essential tools for the fight against gender inequality and increasing global poverty. The existing study is investigating the three LEAPs of Turkey and asking the following current and challenging questions: What role can local governments play in the fight against poverty and, more specifically, the gendered implications that arise from poverty at the local level? What strategies do local governments employ to combat the impact of poverty on women locally? Local equality plans are strategic plans that lay out how local governments will create equal opportunity structures in their cities and create more inclusive governance that addresses gender-based discrepancies. With the growing economic crisis in Turkey, the problem of poverty and the gender-based impact has become a new area of concern for local leaders. This problem is therefore addressed in many of the local equality plans of larger cities. This study will address how the cities of İstanbul, İzmir, and Ankara address poverty in their local equality plans, how they plan to combat women's poverty and the key performance indicators they will utilize in measuring their performance in successfully combatting this issue. The study will also seek to determine the shortcomings of local governments in creating such strategic plans and will take a deeper look into gender aggregated data collection, gender awareness in local government structures and experience in the area of development plan creation.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Local government, gender equality plans, gender and poverty, gender and municipalities, gender equality

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ABSTRACT

Yerel Eşitlik Eylem Planları (YEPP), kadınların statüsünü güçlendirerek yerel düzeyde toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliğini sağlamaya yönelik yol haritasını belirleyen kilit belge ve eylem planlarıdır. YEPP'ler toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizliği ve artan küresel yoksullukla mücadele için önemli araçlardır. Çalışma, Türkiye'nin mevcut 3 YEPP'ini inceleyerek şu güncel ve zorlu sorulara yanıt aramaktadır: Yerel yönetimler, yoksulluk ve özellikle yerel düzeyde yoksulluktan kaynaklanan, toplumsal cinsiyete dayalı sonuçlarla mücadelede nasıl bir rol oynayabilir? Yerel yönetimler, yoksulluğun kadınlar üzerindeki etkisiyle yerelde mücadele etmek için hangi stratejileri kullanıyor?

Yerel eşitlik eylem planları, yerel yönetimlerin şehirlerde eşit fırsat yapıları oluşturmak için cinsiyete dayalı farklılıkları ele alan, daha kapsayıcı yönetim yapısı oluşturmayı hedefleyen stratejik planlardır. Türkiye'de büyüyen ekonomik krizle birlikte, yoksulluk sorunu ve yarattığı toplumsal cinsiyete dayalı etki, yerel liderler için yeni bir endişe alanı haline gelmiş ve bu nedenle sorun, büyük şehirlerin yerel eşitlik planlarında ele alınmıştır. Bu çalışma, İstanbul, İzmir ve Ankara kentlerinin yerel eşitlik planlarında yoksulluğu nasıl ele aldıklarını, kadın yoksulluğuyla nasıl mücadele etmeyi planladıkları ve bu sorunla başarılı bir şekilde mücadelede performanslarını ölçmek için kullanacakları temel performans göstergelerini analiz etmektedir. Çalışma ayrıca yerel yönetimlerin bu tür stratejik planlar oluşturmadaki eksikliklerini belirleyerek, toplumsal cinsiyete dayalı veri toplama, yerel yönetim yapılarında toplumsal cinsiyet bilinci ve kalkınma planı oluşturma alanındaki deneyimlere daha derinlemesine incelemektedir.

Keywords: Yerel yönetimler, cinsiyet eşitliği planları, toplumsal cinsiyet ve yoksulluk, toplumsal cinsiyet ve belediyeler, toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliği

1. Introduction

Local Equality Action Plans (LEAPs) are the key local documents and action plans to set the roadmap to ensure the equality of women and men at local level by strengthening and empowering women's status. They are designed within the framework of gender-sensitive urban planning and empowered by the policies and rights to enable local management systems and services to build and maintain a livable city for the women with an "egalitarian local management" approach (Tokman, 2019). In accordance with CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women) and other national/ international regulations and documents, LEAPs are prepared in

six headings- education, health, employment, participation in management mechanisms, violence against women and urban services. Since the LEAPs are part of urban planning and urban design, they include a series of macro and micro decisions—from the entire city to individual neighbourhoods and from the street to the buildings, parks, traffic lights, and bus stations. Therefore, at every level, these plans should be approached with gender sensitivity and together with all stakeholders. Since LEAPs are being prepared in a "participatory" approach which has to be drafted with the participation and collaboration of all stakeholders, including local administrations, NGOs of the cities, and all stakeholders to ensure gender equality at local level. As Todaro and Smith (2006)

stated, XXI. century's most crucial problem is eradicating poverty and international society, national and local governments will continue to show interest (Todaro and Smith, 2006:22). For this reason, many institutions have prepared policy papers, Poverty Reduction Strategy Plans (PRSPs) that prioritize poverty reduction.

1.1. A Global Challenge: Increasing Poverty

One of the "oldest social policy problems of all times, poverty has direct impacts on physical and psychological aspects of human living conditions" (Yeşildal, 2020:457). Since it is a multidimensional concept, the definition of poverty is one of the most problematic areas in academia. Thus, there is no universally accepted definition of poverty. However, many experts define poverty as "basic consumption", and see it as a lack of access to their needs, and it has more impact on every layer of societal development. Genyi (2008:10) explains poverty through its consequences in a society, such as inadequate access to sustainable livelihoods, hunger and malnutrition, poor health, and limited or lack of access to education and other essential services. According to the World Bank Development Report (1990), a household or individual's basic income to purchase goods and services deemed necessary for social survival is \$370 per year (or \$1 per day). In that sense, about 33 per cent of the population in the developing world is poor (Ameyaw and Bawole, 2009:492). It has to be defined as a lack of access to their basic needs. In that sense, it refers to insufficient consumption of food, clothing or shelter to be able to lead a life worthy of human dignity in society (Yeşildal, 2020:460). When we broaden the definition of social discrimination and exclusion, as well as in decision-making processes

and in civic, social and lack of participation in cultural life, are also other consequences of poverty. In short, poverty is not only described as having enough income to meet basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter anymore. It means much more than that. It means being unable to take kids to recreational activities, to school field trips or pay for medicine for an illness (Domfeh and Bawole, 2009:492).

However, poverty is analyzed through the traditional aspects and stated as the insufficient and irregular income to secure basic needs, we should include intangible dimensions, such as education, health, child mortality, gender inequality etc. Therefore, due to the multi-layer and complexity, it is extremely hard to identify and measure poverty and requires more than economic growth. It is clear that statistical measurement of poverty is highly controversial; measures of at least one dollar a day for developing countries do not reflect the brutal reality of living in rising slums. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) estimates that "around one billion people worldwide live under conditions of extreme poverty (under one dollar per day) and more than one-third of the world's children are malnourished, more than 840 million adults, including more than half women, are illiterate, and 1.2 million live without access to safe drinking water" (UNDP, 2020).

Even without these basic figures, it is clear that global poverty has become a more chronic problem, and therefore, local governments have become more involved in the struggle against poverty recently. To fight poverty and gender inequality, local governments need data and information to identify causes of poverty and prioritize interventions according to the target specific groups. Moreover, since central authorities previously ignored local governments, they have limited experience in

preparing and implementing development plans, which is the backbone of reducing societal inequalities. Thus, local governments need the concepts of welfare and poverty to implement poverty reduction goals.

In sum, central and local governments are key actors to combat poverty and inequalities and have to collaborate with the private sector, supranational organizations, and non-governmental organizations.

1.2. Local Governments and Poverty

Urban poverty is a relatively new concept for local governments. The new poor living groups in the cities and local governments have to deal closely with urban poverty and fight against it (Batal, 2016: 309). In this line, the collection of information on urban poverty by local governments should be part of the government's general and continuous monitoring and evaluation program (Carter, 2006: 180).

With well-designed policies, local governments can empower the neglected and marginalized groups at risk of being a permanent poor category in society, such as women, children, the elderly, refugees, etc. To implement the necessary policies, the local governments should regularly collect information, act more responsive every year in the planning and budget allocation process, and implement the decisions according to the data and strategy the designed (Jütting, Mc Donell and Osterrieder, 2004:5). Thus, local governments can affect poverty with creating environments that offer freedoms and opportunities for the citizens, to make the best use of people's abilities and assets. They can provide support, facili-

tate cooperation between stakeholders and reduce vulnerability. Moreover, at the same time, local governments should aim at sustainable improvement.

Today the growing problem of poverty reduction requires more than economic growth. By balancing the conditions, local governments can affect many aspects of poverty in the economic, social and political fields. Adopting gender-focused approaches to poverty reduction is an essential requirement for the local governments. According to the 2020 data released by UNWOMAN and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), The COVID-19 and environmental crisis dramatically increased the poverty rate for women and widened the gap between men and women who live in, reversing decades of progress to eradicate extreme poverty. By 2021, for every 100 men aged 25 to 34 living in extreme poverty (living on 1.90 USD a day or less), there will be 118 women, a gap that is expected to increase to 121 women per 100 men by 2030 (UNDP, 2020).

Conflicts, climate changes and the Covid-19 pandemic are delivering a triple blow to the rights and safety of women and other disadvantaged groups already facing deep-rooted inequalities and discrimination in every society in the world, including Turkey. Two years into the pandemic, we continue to see increased reports of gender-based violence, from domestic violence, forced marriages, and child labour, to trafficking and exploitation.

2. Research Method

Local Equality Action Plans are the key documents prepared by the provinces to determine the roadmap to be followed to ensure equality between men and women at the local level and to strengthen the status of women. It is prepared with the participation of all stakeholders as a critical document describing the responsibilities and collaborations that governments, provincial organizations, governorships, and, of course, civil society should undertake to ensure gender equality at the local level.

This study aims to analyze and evaluate the local equality action plans of three metropolitan cities of Turkey, namely Ankara, Istanbul and Izmir. Another aim of this study is to determine to what extent the issue of poverty is included in local equality action plans. In addition, it was also examined whether there was a difference between the local equality action plans of the three cities.

The following research questions were investigated:

- What is the general structure of the provincial LEAP? What internal consistency do the plans have?
- In what way are the plans similar to each other?
- In what ways do the plans differ from each other?
- Is there evidence that the plans will serve the purposes they were prepared for and will be implemented effectively/efficiently?
- What is the general situation regarding the actions suggested in the plans?

The study was designed as a qualitative exploratory research based on secondary data. In this context, the MAXQDA program was used for data analysis. Codes were examined under six headings: education,

health, employment, participation in management mechanisms, violence against women and urban services following CEDAW and other national/international plans and documents. Codes were created from plan tables containing purpose, target, actions and observations. Word clouds were created according to the frequency of the words in 3 LEAPs documents.

As it is known, LEAPs basically consist of at least six main titles. The main headings of Education, Health, Employment, Participation in Management Mechanisms, Violence Against Women, and Urban Services are the backbone of all three documents.

3. Findings

3.1. Istanbul LEAP

Istanbul LEAP is the most extended action plan, with 126 pages. It was prepared as an introductory document rather than an action plan, and almost all issues concerning the municipality were included in the plan. To establish the LEAP of Istanbul, 73 preparatory meetings were held, and 15 titles were formed, such as gender-based/violence against women and discrimination; health; poverty; housing and housing; economic empowerment and employment; care services; urban planning, design, accessibility and the safe city; social support; mobility and transport; culture, arts, recreation, sports and green space; public relations information promotion; liveable city; education and lifelong learning; disaster/crisis (p. 18). It includes the six titles of CEDAW, and many other related topics are included in the plan. In the explanations part, it was mentioned that the scope should be kept wide for a holistic approach since the subject should be handled more broadly.

Local equality plans, unlike other plans, are expected to be produced specifically for women based on gender. However, Istanbul LEAP is not a plan prepared in this way. In general, it can be said that Istanbul LEAP is not a gender-based development plan that brings women to the fore, but rather a human dimension development plan. For example, in the Urban Services dimension, The article “Determining the needs analysis by conducting research on people living in risky or unhealthy housing” is an approach that includes all individuals and suggests social inclusion. However, in general, LEAP supports a gender-focused structure. From this point of view, Istanbul LEAP has been prepared more like a social inclusion policy document, although it has a local equality perspective. When the Introductory text of the plan is examined, it is seen that the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality signed the European Charter of Equality between Women and Men in Local Life in 2019. The Charter protects the right to live in a safe, clean and healthy urban environment, the right to housing, the right to work, health, education and socio-cultural activities. To ensure that all people living in a city enjoy their fundamental rights, such as freedom of movement and the right to participate in and control decisions regarding their settlement, regardless of gender, age, belief, social, economic or political position, physical or psychological disability. In addition, many policy documents on which the plan is based are mentioned (p.13), and the prioritization was made under the guidance of organizations and experts working in the field of gender, equality and discrimination in the data collection process. Since Istanbul LEAP is prepared in this context, it is natural to have differences. While creating the plan, “Who lives in Istanbul and how?” search for an answer to the question. Approximately 19 % of Turkey’s population lives and whose daily mobility is around 45 million

people, which corresponds to more than half, making and implementing an equality action plan at the local level will actually pave the way for the spread of culture in this direction throughout Turkey.

When Istanbul LEAP is considered in terms of its construction, the objectives, targets and actions related to them, the responsible unit, the collaborative unit and other stakeholders are specified, and it is also mentioned under the headings of “indicators to monitor” for the success of the process. However, the goal of success for processes was not emphasized. For example, the first aim in the field of participation is “To Ensure Widespread and Effective Participation in Policy Making, Planning, Implementation and Evaluation Processes to Ensure Gender Equality”; The relevant action was determined as “Wide announcement services” and one of the success indicators was “Number of Municipality service points where brochures promoting the services provided by Municipality were distributed”. However, it is unclear how much this indicator currently exists and how many it should be. Plans are expected to be structured to reflect the current and future status.

There is the impression that some goals were written without much thought. For example, although “A3H2E6-Increasing the ratio of female personnel working in health services” and “increasing the number of female personnel working in A3H2E1 healthcare services” are specified as two separate goals, it is a mathematical rule that the ratio will increase if the number increases (Istanbul- p. 55.)

Some vague and incomprehensible expressions are encountered in Istanbul LEAP. For example, the meaning of the expression “A6H2E5- Continuous development of employment education policies for women” is not clear. For example, “GOAL

13: Making Istanbul a Livable City” may not be observed as a healthy statement. The concept meant to be explained by the word livable is not objective. For example, how can the goal of “Practicing the urban gardens” be linked to gender equality? In this sense, Istanbul’s plan has the appearance of a business/activity plan that covers subjects such as the target, purpose and activity determined by an institution in general.

In addition, some populist and not well-framed proposals exist. For example, in Istanbul:

- Regarding the goal of establishing a multilingual women’s hotline, no information was given about whether the women who had a reason to call this hotline would know about this hotline, and even if there were calls, the activities that this hotline would do after receiving the information not exist in the plan.
- İŞKUR currently undertakes this task to provide consultancy services and employment to women. This type of work may be wasteful, and there may be doubts about its effectiveness.
- Preparing a policy document against child abuse can create a state of dysfunction when the existence of laws is in question.

3.2. Ankara LEAP

Ankara LEAP consists of 21 pages. In the plan, the planned activities to be carried out for three years are explained under six main headings: Education, Employment, Violence, Health, Participation and Urban Services. The plan, prepared together with the stakeholders, includes sub-headings: “Educational Support for Girls, Women’s Health, Reproductive Health Training and Hygiene Kit Support for 2,500 Women, Opening and Renting a Temporary Shelter during Pandemic Periods, Supporting Women Entrepreneurs with Başkent Market, Creation of Ankara Social Risk Map with My Purple Map, Establishment of Women’s Counseling and Support Stations, Carrying Services to Women in Rural Districts with the Mobile Women’s Counseling Tool, Increasing Digital Practices in Combating Violence, Sisterhood Campaigns, Focus Studies with Native and Refugee Families on Combating Early Age Marriage, Awareness Campaigns, Improving Preventive Health Services, Refugee Women’s Empowerment Programs, Support to Newly Established Women’s NGOs in the Region, Establishment of Women’s Council, Gender Responsive Budgeting, Disaster/epidemic/Pandemic Risk Map Creation, Active Implementation of Female Worker Quota in Companies Working with Municipality” (p. 2).

health violence labor
urban services
 participation in management mechanisms

Figure 1 : Wordcloud of Istanbul LEAP

**urban services
labor
education
participation in management mechanisms
violence**

Figure 2: Wordcloud of Ankara LEAP

Ankara LEAP has made six targets based on the six titles of CEDAW, assigned sub-goals to these main targets, and determined with which activities and methods it can achieve these sub-goals. Ankara Metropolitan Municipality was selected as the responsible institution and coordinating organization for the objectives of six targets (with two exceptions - these exceptions were realized in the education title, and the Provincial Directorate of National Education was determined as the coordinator. However, there is no comment on whether the institution has consent). In addition, all categories contain one sub-target, and only education has two sub-targets.

Ankara LEAP includes more numerical targets than Istanbul LEAP. For example, “Providing e-commerce training to 500 women” (p.7) is one of the success criteria of the target of Increasing the Participation Rate of Women and Girls in Education in the City under the title of education. The target for the other period was similarly determined as 1000 people. However, at this point, how the number of people to be trained is determined, how the content of the training is defined, whether the purpose of this training is to raise awareness of women about e-commerce or to enable them to use e-commerce as a sales

channel, the target audience’s computer hardware and e-commerce site. It is necessary to consider the questions in detail, such as whether they have business skills. It is thought that it would be a more efficient approach to define the plans in more detail from this point of view.

3.3. İzmir LEAP

İzmir LEAP consists of 26 pages, is structured in the simplest way among the three plans and is based on six articles of CEDAW. The plan has indicators similar to Istanbul LEAP, but a structural approach could not be observed in that these indicators are structured to meet the needs.

For example, with regard to the Participation target, the indicator of the objective of “Considering gender equality in the participation of women in local decision-making bodies” has been determined as “Number of Assembly resolutions” and “Number of announcements”. It can be thought that the quantity of meetings held on a subject cannot be a parameter that shows the quality of the decisions taken.



Figure 3: Wordcloud of İzmir LEAP

4. General Overview and Conclusion

When we look at all the plans in general, the activities aimed in accordance with the main themes for all three cities generally consist of education and awareness activities. There is an effort to alleviate the current negative situation. However, when the suggested actions are handled and analyzed with awareness, they do not go beyond an effort to overcome daily problems. In almost every subject, education appears as a medicine. However, the concept of education varies from the creation of the content to the educator's identity and the individual's capacity to be trained. It is also important to improve the current situation in order to ensure local equality, but it is thought that root cause analysis and analysis with a deeper understanding are needed. Similarly, data analysis is included in all three provincial plans. However, it is not clearly stated what to do with the data obtained as a result of the analysis and what action to take.

There is a problem in local equality action plans in finding practical suggestions on poverty and women's poverty in particular. When examined in general, education has been seen as a fire extinguisher in poverty, as in almost every other subject. However,

clear statements of action were not included in the plans.

Only the Istanbul local equality action plan has a poverty-specific target. As a sub-target, issues aimed at reducing women's poverty were determined. However, when each title is examined, it is seen that the actions cannot go beyond palliative practices. For example, it is thought that actions such as neighborhood houses, urban transportation support, educational support, and special services for disabled women cannot go beyond being a crutch for the problem. Another sub-goal is "To strengthen the decision makers, managers and employees of the municipal units serving in the field of social policies." The title also includes indirect and secondary actions to combat poverty.

Although the goal of "creating effective and sustainable policies and developing mechanisms to eliminate child poverty" is actually an intention related to women and naturally children; It includes vague and verbal activities such as "developing special solutions", "stationery support", "organizing auxiliary activities". Although supporting the participation of refugee women and girls in social and cultural life is a good goal, it is difficult to determine how this goal will contribute to reducing

poverty. Mainly, determining how refugee women will be present in economic life can contribute to the solution of the problem.

In the local equality plan of Ankara province, education is put forward as the most important activity for almost every target. However, there is no comment on how to find a solution to the problem, for example, that women who are given “balanced nutrition” training do not have enough budget to get enough protein economically. The most striking proposal for Ankara is the “Production Oriented Shelter Model”. However, it should be questioned to what extent these shelters, which are limited to 60 beds, will contribute to the solution of the problem.

Just like the other two provinces, education and health are mentioned as palliative solutions in the local equality plans of İzmir. Besides, poverty does not exist as a title.

In general, while there are few targets for activities and implementation in all plans, training, which is a sub-title of LEAP, is repeated in each sub-title. Some titles consist only of education. In this sense, verbal targets such as informing, training and raising awareness play a more critical role than concrete targets in plans. Education appears everywhere as a panacea. In almost all topics, education is a separate topic. For example, 3 of the 6 sub-goals of health in Ankara are to provide education, 1 is accessibility, and the other 2 are practical. Likewise, in the plan of İzmir, 7 of the 8 targets of the health field were determined as providing education. Similarly, 7 out of 12 targets of employment are targets that can be achieved through education. There are only 5 sub-targets that contain the application.

Gender equality is a fundamental human right and necessary for a peaceful society. It also plays a significant role in the development of society and is also an essential tool in fighting against poverty. Therefore, it is critical to realize that men and women may both contribute to societal growth with a holistic approach, sound policies, and long-term commitment by all levels of government. For this aim, gender equality must be a priority in developing national policies and initiatives. Despite improvements in Turkish women’s social, political, and economic lives, the research reveals that still much work has to be done to implement gender equality through local equality action plans. In the local equality action plans of all three provinces, there was no trace of the planning of concrete steps on poverty. In general, any planned activity can contribute to poverty reduction, albeit indirectly. However, a plan structure that focuses entirely on poverty reduction and prioritizes the fight against poverty has not been established.

The poor individual is not only the one with a lack of resources; she/he also lacks opportunities to improve his/her standard and acquire new resources. To empower society, we need to expand the definition of poverty from absolute poverty (related with low calorie intake of inadequate housing, inadequate health facilities, low income, unemployment) to relative poverty which broadens the definition by adding gender inequalities and defining poverty as having an economic disadvantage compared to wealthy members of society (Olowa, 2012:28).

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