

**GLOBAL GENDER NORMS, DONOR FUNDING AND LOCAL REALITIES:
THE TURKISH CASE**

Nuket Kardam
Monterey Institute of International Studies

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Newly Independent States, Nationalist Ideologies and Gender Policy: The Rise of the Turkish Women's Movement and the Turkish State:

In order to understand the effects of global gender equality norms, institutions and transnational movements related to gender equality on Turkish realities, it is necessary to have a brief discussion of the historical context. From its establishment in the 1920s up to the 1960s, the Turkish state controlled the rules over what women could and could not do and this hegemony formed an important basis of the newly formed Turkish state's power. A useful definition of the state is found in Bratton: ¹ "The state is an organization within the society where it coexists and interacts with other formal and informal organizations from families to economic enterprises or religious organizations. It is, however, distinguished from the myriad of other organizations in seeking predominance over them and in aiming to institute binding rules regarding the other organizations' activities". Third World states, as Migdal points out, struggle to achieve certain goals:² "The central political and social drama of recent history has been the battle pitting the state and organizations allied with it (often from a particular social class) against other social organizations dotting society's landscape". Within this context, those who make the rules acquire social control. Alvarez has suggested that the rules over women's status and behavior form part of the structural and ideological grid upon which state power is based.³

In the Turkish case, the rules over women's status did indeed form an important basis of the newly formed Turkish state's power. The Turkish civil code outlawed polygamy, gave equal rights of divorce to both partners, and granted child custody rights to both parents in 1926. In 1934, women were granted the right to vote and to be elected to public office. These policies were devised to achieve international acceptance of Turkey as a "modern" and "Western" state, as well as to achieve domestic control over previously central religious elites, who represented Ottoman-Islamic influences. As a

result of the state's control of the gender discourse, and the state's claim to having bestowed women their rights, women's organizations were closed in the 1930s. This closure was based on the claim that there were no meaningful demands women could make on the state since the state had already given women their rights.⁴

The hegemony of the Turkish state over the gender discourse was not absolute, however. The Turkish policy makers ignored instances of polygamy practiced by clan leaders and landowners, the continuity of high number of marriages by religious ceremony were likewise ignored, despite the law requiring civil ceremony for a marriage to be legitimate. When the secular, bureaucratic elites had difficulty penetrating society to achieve compliance with new gender rules, they struck a bargain with local strongmen, what Migdal calls a "hands off policy which allowed the strong men to build enclaves of social control".⁵ While the bureaucratic elites were capable of striking a bargain with religious and tribal elites, they were less interested in engaging in any dialogue with women's groups in society in the first fifty years of the Republic. The major women's groups followed Ataturk's interpretation of gender issues and expressed gratitude to the secular state for having granted them their rights. Thus, the problem was perceived as the need to spread modernization to the women in rural areas. The reasons cited in the literature for the lack of independent women's movements in the developing world, hold true in the Turkish case as well.⁶ It is suggested that developing country states favor nationalist ideologies which reject class, gender and ethnic divisions and espouse some version of unity or a classless society where everyone works for the common good. Studies from many parts of the developing world show that newly independent states have coopted emerging women's movements for the above reasons and as a means of dismantling the old order and of separation from the old order.⁷ More recently in the post Cold War world, however, class, gender and ethnic divisions have come to the fore, and it is no longer possible to ignore them.

Increased Globalization in the 1980s and Beyond: Increasing Diversity and Identity Politics

It has been argued that the increasing globalization and the collapse of the Soviet Union has led to a shift from authoritarianism in many countries. Alvarez argues that in transitional regimes from authoritarianism to democracy, gender-specific demands may stand a greater chance of being met if women's mobilization is seen as necessary to consolidate the regime and achieve larger goals of development.⁸ Goetz's research also shows that in countries undergoing a period of rapid transition, such as Uganda and Chile, some political space to promote gender issues is more likely to present itself.⁹ In Turkey, too, the processes of economic transformation and democratization since the 1980s, have afforded greater openness for women's rights and the diversity of women's voices.

Thus, the 1980s and 1990s in Turkey can be characterized as an era of expanded and diversified gender discourse. Many observers see the Turkish women's movement as the first democratic movement to emerge after the coup.¹⁰ When political parties closed and all groups which were perceived to be politically active were disbanded and their leaders taken into custody, space for political debate on hitherto unexplored issues opened up. It is also possible to argue that political suppression raised the importance of informal groups which could continue to meet and discuss issues. When Turkey returned to democracy in 1983, the new government headed by Ozal did not feel threatened by the emerging women's movement, partly because it allowed the government to see itself as democratic, and partly because the government did not attach much importance to a few women speaking out on women's rights. Moreover, women's groups themselves did not challenge state authority and in fact, preferred to have minimal interaction with the state.

1980s and 90s were also the time of unprecedented changes. We have seen that increased globalization and the break up of the Soviet system has not always led to greater tolerance and openness, but in fact, at times to greater ethnic conflict and wars and greater intolerance. Paradoxically, however, the forces that encouraged horrible ethnic wars have also legitimized new definitions and new discourses along ethnic, cultural, religious, as well as gender identities. As Erturk argues, during the 1980s and particularly since the breakup of the Soviet Union and the socialist bloc, mega ideologies

are being replaced by particularistic values in determining the basis of identity politics worldwide.¹¹ She defines identity politics as the legitimate right to produce alternative definitions and symbols of identity in the public space. In Turkey, with the coming on stage of new centers of power asserting their own gender discourse, the previous dichotomy of traditional versus modern no longer holds. Identity politics has created new dichotomies of legitimate images for women. Women's inclusion in the rank and files of alternative movements has exposed them to the political domain and opened the door to new and extended modes of legitimate participation in the political domain. The diversification of identity formation has encouraged other groups such as gays, prostitutes, street peddlers, etc. to capture the opportunity to challenge the boundaries of convention. Within the dialectics of change, emerging patterns are cutting across categorically determined women's identities and creating new space for independent initiatives, thus rupturing patriarchal hierarchies¹²

Agreeing with Erturk, Sirman argues that the 1980s was a period marked by new attempts to define and regulate the social order in Turkey through efforts to redefine modes of legitimate political participation. She suggests:¹³

“In the process, the very identity of the individual as a Turkish citizen was being called into question. This search for new conceptions of democracy and individuality was (and still is) a process that involved all sections of the political spectrum and is indeed productive of new forms of political participation. This search for ‘democracy’ can perhaps be best understood as producing a new balance between the drive towards modernization and individual aspirations for social mobility that will not be unduly disruptive of the social fabric. That such a search also includes a search for female identity has been noted by many observers”.

In order to put this process in perspective, it is necessary to discuss how Turkey has joined the globalization process. The agrarian transformations experienced from the 1950s onwards led to a rapid change in Turkish society. Large scale population movements from rural to urban areas followed. The inability of the system to expand the

social and economic rights of citizenship to all of the incoming migrants created enclaves of marginalized people who eventually constituted the seeds of opposition to state hegemony. The first urban/middle class challenge came from the leftist movement in the 1970s which was crushed by a military coup on 12 September 1980. Following the liberalization policies adopted by the Ozal government in 1983, Turkey's economy gradually became more open to world markets. In the political sphere, while leftists and even liberal minded intellectuals were censured, traditional/particularistic centers of power along with new actors came on stage as competitors to assert "identity politics" in the public sphere. At the expense of being too categorical, three such competitors are distinguishable: religious groups, Kurdish nationalists, and "marginal" groups among whom the feminists occupy a primary place.

The radical religious groups challenged the secular principles of the state; the Kurdish nationalists challenged the unitarian character of the state, and the feminists challenged the latent patriarchal order of the state. Obviously, the Turkish bureaucratic secular elite could no longer dictate the terms of the gender discourse with a free hand. While the state continues to reject claims made by Kurdish nationalists, although there are some signs of compromise, they have had to share power with elites who support religious values and who have openly begun to redefine the gender discourse along the lines of their values and beliefs. Likewise, feminists and other women's groups have actively sought alternative definitions of identity. Thus, the modernist gender discourse promoted by secular state elites is being challenged by broader and varied discussion over women's place within society.

State elites now compete among themselves in proposing different discourses on women. Thus, the modernist gender discourse promoted by secular state elites since the establishment of the Turkish Republic is being challenged by a broader and more varied discussion over women's place within society. While militant secularists are resistant to the new trends, others are more willing to compromise or at least modify their position. Some promote a liberal, free market economy and believe that women's position will improve as economic development proceeds. According to this discourse women should

be given equal opportunity to achieve economic independence and discriminatory legislation that bars women's competition in the market should be revised. Those of a social democratic orientation believe that equal opportunity is not sufficient and that women need to be given special attention, such as in the form of affirmative action quotas in order to bridge the gap. Meanwhile, the nationalist and Islamist viewpoint focuses on strengthening and protecting the family rather than on women as individuals.

The gender discourse which previously laid dormant, except for a few organizations following Ataturk's ideology, has now greatly diversified. Liberal feminists argue for legislative change, while radical feminists draw attention to how tradition and culture have perpetuated patriarchy and relegated women to the status of second class citizens. The women in the Islamist sphere prefer to consider issues of "complimentarity" between women and men and argue that capitalist development has not necessarily improved women's position but instead turned them into "commodities". Moslem women's groups derive their strength from turning to Turkish society's traditions and norms instead of Western norms and in a sense freeing feminism from a Western hold. Finally, the discourse of the "Kemalist" feminists have emphasized the maintenance of secularism in the upholding of the rights which Ataturk gave women against the onslaught of religious conservatism.

A Global Gender Equality Regime and its Impact on Turkey: New coalitions and new actors?

It is against the above context that the impact of the international women's movement, the global gender equality norms embodied in international conventions and donor funding activities on Turkey need to be evaluated. It is important to note that the Turkish women's movement had gained momentum starting in the late 1970s and in the 1980s *without* any extensive transnational links. The participation in international civil society networks and intergovernmental forums, and donor activity for gender related projects did not reach a significant level until the 1990s. Perhaps the intensification of such

activities went hand in hand with the greater visibility and strength of the global gender equality regime.

I have argued elsewhere that it is possible to speak of a “global gender equality regime”.¹⁴ By regimes, I mean principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures.¹⁵ The basic principles that underpin the gender equality regime are the prohibition of all forms of discrimination against women, and the active promotion of equality between genders towards an explicit recognition of unequal power relations between women and men. The norms of a regime define the rights and obligations of actors by establishing standards; these can be found in many documents starting with the 1975 World Plan of Action, the 1999 Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies, the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action and the Beijing Plus Five Final Outcome Document. The rules are the legal instruments created to formalize and implement the principles and norms of an international regime. In this case the CEDAW convention signed by 166 states, is the definitive legal instrument. The Committee on CEDAW monitors reports from states, and a set of UN agencies such as UNDAW, UNIFEM and CSW that oversee the implementation of the global gender equity norms. The gender equality regime is an example of a regime where the initiative and leadership came from a transnational women’s movement, with the collaboration of the United Nations and bilateral donors in Northern Europe.¹⁶

How do international norms, recommendations and rules get “translated” into domestic political culture at the national level? A certain level of international pressure and the desire to avoid embarrassment at an international arena may prompt state representatives to go along with decisions taken at international conferences. For example, Tekeli found that the more links a state has to international organizations which are sensitive to gender equality, the more progressive policies on women it tends to devise.¹⁷ But international organizations still cannot enforce compliance. According to Oran Young, the lack of well-entrenched and properly financed supranational organizations in international society ensures that international regimes must rely heavily on the ability and willingness of individual members to elicit compliance with key provisions within their own

jurisdictions. However, ratification of conventions does represent both formal commitment to apply the provisions and an indication of willingness to accept a measure of international supervision. States are then responsible for taking all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in public and private life, and for taking all appropriate measures including legislation, to nullify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs and practices which constitute discrimination against women. By doing so, states become more vulnerable to pressures from the international women's movement, international organizations, as well as national women's organizations for compliance. There are many examples from different countries that show how domestic groups drew strength from the international conventions on gender equality. Women's groups have utilized international agreements to hold their governments accountable. According to Sawer, even in Western industrialized countries like Canada, Australia and New Zealand, international pressure has been used by feminist bureaucrats to press home policy change at the domestic level.¹⁸ In Turkey, six thousand signatures were collected and presented to the parliament demanding implementation of the United Nations Declaration of women's Rights, which Turkey had officially signed. This declaration bound its signatories to accord citizens equal rights regardless of gender. There is also some evidence that CEDAW and its monitoring Committee had some influence on putting gender equality on the Turkish political agenda, including legislative changes. .

CEDAW presenting a window of opportunity?

Turkey has been a signatory of CEDAW since 1985 and since 1999, reservations to Articles 15 and 16 have also been lifted. The Committee on CEDAW asks for reports from each country on the extent of its implementation of the CEDAW stipulations. The responsibility to present a report to CEDAW has had two major effects in Turkey. First, extensive information was collected and disseminated, and the writing of these reports was undertaken with the collaboration of staff members of the Directorate for the Status and Problems of Women (The Turkish women's machinery) and academics from major universities. Reports on the status of women in Turkey have been filed with the Committee on CEDAW in May 1994, and January 1997. These reports examine the legal system (including the Constitutions, Civil Code, Criminal Code, Labor Law and the

Turkish Citizenship Law) specially searching for articles in the law that are in violation of CEDAW and discuss the changes made to bring them in accordance with the principles of CEDAW. The recent chair of CEDAW has been a prominent Turkish academic, and the presenters of the Turkish report the Committee have also been well known gender experts.

The second effect of the monitoring activities of CEDAW has been its contribution to the initiation and passage of the domestic violence act (Family Protection Law) in 1998. According to this new law, a protection order can be implemented against a violent spouse, who can be forbidden to abuse or harass his spouse and children. Violation of the protection order can be used as grounds for arrest and a jail sentence.

There is preliminary evidence that the international community's demand and the guidelines (particularly those of CEDAW) had an effect on specifically the timing of governmental effort. The Committee on CEDAW placed special emphasis on the issue of gender based violence, perhaps because the issue is on the international agenda, as well as in response to the second and third periodic country report on Turkey presented in January 1997. The Minister responsible for women's affairs, who headed the Turkish Mission to CEDAW, returned home with domestic violence as a priority issue on her agenda. As a longstanding politician with a strong traditional and conservative line, domestic violence may not have necessarily coincided with the Turkish minister's own priorities. Regardless of the underlying motivation, however, once she announced domestic violence as the most pressing problem her office is confronted with, this not only placed the issue in the center of mainstream politics, but connected it to the women's movement. Eventually she resigned from the cabinet as well as her party (DYP – True Path Party) on grounds that her efforts in passing a bill against domestic violence was being blocked by the Islamist wing (RP – Welfare Party) of the coalition government. The impact of this political move was twofold: a) it enabled the minister to join ANAP (Motherland Party) which was one of the partners of the coalition government, and thus regain her ministerial position; and b) the issue of violence and sexual abuse of women gained an official platform in Turkish politics.

This is an interesting example of how transnational linkages influenced the domestic political agenda on gender issues. A policy entrepreneur, in this case a minister, seized a window of opportunity and put gender based violence on the political agenda. According to the agenda setting literature, structural conditions, and windows of opportunity are necessary for a new issue to come on the public agenda, but not sufficient. What is also needed is a “policy entrepreneur” or entrepreneurs who take advantage of the windows of opportunity that have presented themselves.¹⁹ In the case of gender violence, these conditions came together: Gender based violence, within the larger context of women’s human rights was on the international agenda; women’s groups in Turkey were demanding an end to domestic violence, and the minister responsible for women’s affairs decided to take the initiative to promote this issue.

Preliminary research suggests that in the Turkish context, not only awareness but also belief in the potential power and transforming capacity of international instruments and agencies appears greater on the state side rather than the civil society side in so far as the women’s equality agenda is concerned. This difference appears to be particularly true for initiation and follow up activities related to specific actions and legislation. While civil society based efforts in Turkey have drawn inspiration from the international context, according to a Turkish gender expert, their energy has been directed to consciousness raising and ideology promotion, rather than the implementation of specific goal oriented legislative or policy change.²⁰ According to Acar, policy advocacy has largely been undertaken by committed political and quasi political actors, bureaucratic leaders, and women who have access to them.

Women’s NGOs and transnational alliances:

One of the leaders of the Turkish women’s movement characterizes the 1980s as the era where women have made their voices heard, by seeking to end all kinds of discrimination against women, including discrimination in the domestic sphere: “Through various ways and means they declared their determination to possess and defend their ‘bodies,

identities and labor’’.²¹ Women’s groups, regardless of whether they define themselves as feminist, nationalist, socialist or Islamist now speak more freely in Turkish society. Doubtless the feminists were the power behind the new public discussion of such taboo issues as “honor killings”, domestic violence, battering of women and rape. All kinds of discrimination against women, including those in the legal sphere were brought on the public agenda and discussed. Conferences and panel discussions have provided a forum for debating and clarifying specific issues of concern to women, such as economic discrimination, reproductive rights, legal rights and violence against women inside and outside the family. These debates continue in academic publications and in popular mass-circulated journals, as well as feminist publications.

Gulcur divides the Turkish women’s movement into several groups and categories:²²
Autonomous women’s groups and NGOs: These groups form a mix of volunteer and professional women’s organizations. Some groups are very loosely formed while others actually have a physical building space and organizational structure. Ideologies also vary greatly and range from nonfeminist women’s associations focusing on charitable activities, to explicitly feminist organizations with active advocacy agendas. Of these several hundred organizations, only a handful perhaps fifteen or so – can truly be characterized as feminist. Although organized women’s groups and related institutions have been founded throughout Turkey, the majority is concentrated in two of the largest urban centers: Ankara and Istanbul.

Activities of women’s groups have ranged from the publication of books, newspapers and journals, to setting up NGOs such as the Association for Discrimination Against Women, Women’s Library and Information Center Foundation, Women’s Culture House, Mor Cati (Purple Roof) Foundation for Battered Women, Kadin Cevresi (Women’s Circle). Some deliver services such as literacy classes to gecekondu “shantytown” women; others organize participatory workshops for rural women to enable them to identify their own problems. The latter project, funded by UNDP and implemented by the Sociology Association of Turkey, provided a unique opportunity for the most silent and invisible segment of women in Turkey to interact and actively participate to identify common

areas of concern. These concerns included forced early marriage, polygamy, bride price, and lack of economic opportunities. Another NGO, Anakultur, has organized activities in Sanliurfa in Southeast Turkey where several incidents of honor killings had taken place over the past few years. The objective was to raise awareness through music and other popular activities to combat killing women for honor – “namus”. Other NGOs focus on women’s rights, legal literacy and human rights education, including eradicating violence in the home and helping battered women by establishing women’s shelters. Finally, a recently established NGO, Ka-Der, aims to parliamentarians to at least 10% from its current 2.5% and to promote women’s political participation at all levels of government. To that end, they have recently received funding from the European Commission to hold leadership training workshops for women.

The proliferation of women’s NGOs since the 1980s was also confirmed by a questionnaire sent to women’s NGOs by the authors. Out of the 38 NGOs that filled the questionnaire, only 10 had been established prior to 1980 and the rest in the last two decades. According to the Turkey Country Report presented to the Commission on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, the monitoring body of CEDAW, the Turkish women’s organizations have expanded their spheres of influence. They have formulated strategies for women’s empowerment, for shaping public opinion towards greater gender sensitivity and public institutions towards more gender sensitive policies. A recent empirical study of 40 women’s NGOs, confirming the above view, show that their focus has begun to change from service, charity, volunteer based elite organizations to service and advocacy orientation, global networking, external increase women’s political participation by raising the number of women fundraising and increased professionalism. The same study also shows that the recently founded women’s NGOs tend to be relatively more democratic internally, function in many fields rather than in one field and have a global orientation.²³

Indeed, the extent of Turkish women’s NGOs’ presence at the 1996 Habitat Conference in Istanbul was astounding: there were more stands by women’s NGOs than in any other category in the NGO Forum. They were very noticeable in their numbers, diversity,

interest and involvement in the conference. The women's NGOs that were represented included professional women's organizations, organizations focused on culture, religious values, women's rights, health and family planning, and employment. Some were umbrella organizations called "women's platforms" that include many local branches.

Feminist media: Feminist media provide a forum for discussion and exchange of ideas and mainstream media has displayed considerable interest in the activities of women's groups and often publish information on feminist events, research and advocacy activities. Both media have been helpful in enabling the dissemination of issues relevant to women's rights, such as the national campaign against domestic violence, on a national level.

University based women's studies centers and research institutes. There are thirteen new women's study centers, established with donor support.

Women's branches of political parties: Almost all major political parties have women's branches. Although the major aim of these branches is to garner women's support in elections, they occasionally also undertake collaborative efforts with feminist women's groups.

Transnational links?

It is clear that the Turkish women's movement has grown substantially in the 1980s and 1990s and has been inspired by the international attention to gender equality, and especially by growing attention to women's human rights, but the extent of influence and concrete alliances awaits further research. So far, the following observations may be made. Laws discriminating against women have begun to be changed as a result of direct lobbying by women's groups. More research needs to be conducted to see if this lobbying included direct references to CEDAW. Article 159 of the Turkish Civil Code, for example, decreed that a married woman must have her husband's consent to work. This law was rendered unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court in November 1990, as a result of a landmark case brought to court by the advocacy efforts of women's groups. But for passing of new legislation, the advocacy efforts of women's groups has been *one* of the several conditions that had to occur simultaneously.

Preliminary research suggests that links with international women's NGOs exist among a small number of NGOs based in urban areas, but are beginning to extend beyond these through donor funding and encouragement.²⁴ Some international women's NGOs such as the International Women's Health Coalition, and Global Fund for Women, fund women's NGOs' projects in Turkey. Donor programs are encouraging collaboration of local NGOs with women's NGOs in the neighboring countries. A very interesting new development has been the collaboration between women's NGOs in Greece and Turkey, established in a meeting in Rhodes in the fall of 1999. It is also the case that women's NGOs have begun to be more active in international forums. In 2000, an alternative NGO report was presented to the Beijing Plus Five Conference held in New York for the first time. At this conference, the Turkish women's NGOs were very active and the official representation included the Minister responsible for women's affairs. The official representatives met with the NGOs every day and discussed strategies, and shared information. This collaboration between state representatives and civil society leaders at an international forum has been touted by women's NGO publications and columnists in Turkey as an unprecedented new development.²⁵

It is important to keep in perspective that these are new developments that are in early stages. As one Turkish gender expert working with an international NGO puts it: "An increase is needed in support for networking, information exchange and collaborative projects with groups in and especially outside of Turkey."²⁶ Building internal links, dialogue and collaboration among women's groups themselves, let alone transnational links and collaboration, continues to be a major challenge. The women's movement in Turkey comprises of organizations with different ideologies, world views, and approaches to women's problems. Even organizations which deal specifically with women's issues are espousing different shades of feminism. Even if they concern themselves with the same issues, there are discrepancies in the ways they approach and seek solutions to problems. Women's NGOs suffer from the general weaknesses associated with civil society institutions, lack of dialogue, low level of professionalism,

sustainability, financial management, building links with the state, local governments, donor organizations, and the media.

Many of the NGO activities cited above are supported by donor funding - (to be discussed more extensively in the next section). In fact, some major NGOs, such as the Women's Economic Foundation, Mother Child Education Foundation, the Flying Broom, and the Women's Human Rights Project, have received funding from sources such as bilateral donors – the U.S., Canada, Holland, Britain, France- and international NGOs such as Mama Cash, International Women's Health Coalition, National Endowment for Democracy, World Academy for Local Democracy, Goethe Institute, and Global Fund for Women. Donor funding in Turkey, as elsewhere, presents a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it enables new activities, but on the other hand, it renders NGOs dependent on donor funds and priorities, and privileges those NGOs that have the capacity to write project proposals and work with both donors and the government. Some of the funding is channeled through the DGSPW and therefore, projects may be accepted based on political orientation rather than the effectiveness of the project proposal.

The Turkish Directorate for the Advancement of Women: New Alliances

The international conventions and platforms for action since 1985 have stipulated the establishment of national machineries for women. The concept of “national machinery” includes many bureaucratic units ranging from ministries, desks, departments or directorates. There are several characteristics they seem to share and these are: a) They are all bureaucratic bodies whose mandate includes in one form or another, changing institutions towards greater gender equality and putting gender equality on the political agenda; b) they are usually relatively weak among other state institutions in terms of resources and political power. The majority of UN member states now have national machineries, the majority of them having been established in the 1980s and 1990s. In Turkey, the General Directorate on the Status and Problems of Women, established in 1990, was in fact, actualized in conjunction with the Turkish government's commitment to establish the necessary mechanisms as stipulated by the 1986 Agreement on The Prevention of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. In addition to the DGSPW,

there are also state agencies such as the General Directorate of Mother-Child Health Division within the Ministry of Health, which plays an influential role in the development of national strategies regarding women's health and family planning. The State Institute for Statistics, Women's Unit is involved in collecting and using nation-wide survey data on women. City owned and run shelters for battered women exist in some urban areas. And most recently, a Parliamentary Commission on Gender Equality has been established.

As Goetz pointed out, NWMs have built partnerships with civil society, including women's organizations and other stakeholders to gain strength. It may be the case that weaker bureaucracies need to form alliances with external groups in order to survive. NWMs, in order to be effective, have to have a broad base of support and respond to demands from society. In countries where the state tradition is strong, the first steps towards alliances with civil society constitute important ones towards building democracy. The Turkish NWM is one of the few bureaucracies in Turkey that have collaborated with NGOs. So paradoxically, its weakness may have produced the unintended effect of new ways of government-civil society collaboration. In fact, it is credited with building a bridge and starting a dialogue between the government and feminist activists and academicians.

The establishment of the DGSPW was sponsored by a woman minister, Imren Aykut, from ANAP, the center right party. While Aykut was personally interested in women's issues and acted as a "policy entrepreneur" in the parliament to promote its establishment, she did not collaborate with women's groups in society as she undertook this task. Reflecting a typical top-down attitude, the initial bill included terms that were unacceptable to women's organizations in civil society. A concrete example of the strength of women's organizations in their interaction with the state was seen in the process that led to the changes in the wording of the bill that established the DGSPW. Strong opposition was expressed by women's NGOs to a particular wording in the bill where "control of" rather than "cooperation with" women's groups were implied. The

following objectives of the NWM listed in the bill were strongly criticized by women's groups:

- To engage in appropriate activities to protect women's status and to prepare principles, policies and programs to solve women's problems.
- To acquire information on the activities and research of the women's studies departments at universities
- To direct the activities of women's NGO in accordance with the national viewpoint to be formulated.

Women's groups protested the bill's intent to regulate the activities of women's organizations. As the English language newspaper, Daily News, observed:²⁷

“Several women's associations among them the Turkish Women Lawyers Association, the Association for the Promotion of Contemporary Life, the Istanbul University center for Research on Women's Problems, the Turkish Women's Union, the Soroptimist Clubs Federation and the Turkish Women's Union issued a press release in which they objected to the decree in its present form and proposed amendments. The Women's associations objected to what Gultekin Baktir, Chairwoman of the Turkish Women's Union Istanbul Branch called the government's intention to control the activities of the independent women's associations.”²⁸

The furor caused by this protest led to a revised version of the bill which became law on October 15, 1990. The changes reflect a softer and more cooperative stance towards women's organizations: Instead of “to acquire information on the activities...” the revised version reads: “to use the research and publications produced by women's centers in universities”. Instead of “to regulate and support the activities of independent women's associations”, the new version reads: “to promote cooperation and coordination among institutions who work in the area of women's affairs, to request information from them, to support the activities of independent women's organizations..”²⁹

The DGSPW is an affiliated body to the Ministry for Women's Affairs, Family and Social Services that was established in 1991. The Directorate, although established symbolically at the outset and striving to function adequately with a limited budget and resources, was able to establish ties with women's groups at its initial stages and starting by 1992, with academic circles. This paved the way to achieve considerable gains in regards to women's advancement despite all the pressing conditions confronted by it. It is very interesting to note that the DGSPW has since then maintained an open and participatory style of communication, quite foreign to Turkish bureaucratic practice, inviting women's NGOs, academics and others to participate in the process of gender policy making. In 1997, a commission made up of women's NGOs, academics, political party representatives, government departments and ministries formulated a "National Plan of Action" in accordance with the Beijing Platform for Action. This plan includes a call to all ministries to examine their policies and programs in light of gender mainstreaming and to coordinate their activities with each other and with the DGSPW.

There are many examples of activities in this direction. Consultations and regular meetings are held with women's groups. There are currently 218 NGOs who communicate and collaborate with the Directorate. These groups represent a variety of ideologies and backgrounds. A significant development is that these groups who represent different ideological persuasions and sometimes conflicting objectives are beginning to sit at meetings and engage with each other. Concrete examples of collaboration include the contribution from many sectors of Turkish society to the preparation of the official report to CEDAW on Turkey, such as academics, labor unions, political parties, and women's NGOs. Furthermore, one of the recent directors of DGSPW comes from an NGO background, rather than a bureaucratic background. She was one of the leaders of a women's NGO named "Foundation for the Support of Women", which focuses on violence against women.

Donor Funding for Gender Equality: Partners or Bosses?

The United Nations agencies, as well as bilateral donors such as Canada, Denmark, Netherlands, Norway and Sweden and more recently the European Commission have been especially supportive of gender equality related programs and projects. As donor programs concentrate more and more on building democracy, civil society and greater participation, projects to build the capacities of women's NGOs, to promote women's political leadership and participation, and to promote women's human rights are becoming more commonplace. In Turkey, both the Turkish NWM and the women's NGOs have benefited from the donor strategies to promote human rights, and women rights, and to strengthen civil society.

Goetz points out that international donor agencies' support for gender equality and women's machineries and programs have proved to be a double-edged sword. Many NWMs have been established because governments have been pressured in international forums, and to avoid embarrassment, they have made symbolic commitments, usually not backed by realistic resource allocations. This has meant that NWMS and many women's NGOs have turned to international donor agencies for funding. On the one hand, such support has lent strength and resources to gender issues. Donors have contributed to engendering the political agenda by building more links between women's NGOs and NWMs through networking, information building and consultation, conference, and workshops. But on the other hand, the danger that the legitimacy of gender issues as a "foreign import" has remained. In fact, the identification of programs to implement may be more influenced by the type of initiatives that donors are willing to fund than by a coherent strategy that links implementation and policy advocacy functions. Given that formulating a coherent gender equality policy and strategy is at the heart of NWM effectiveness, the donor driven projects may further discourage the formulation of self-driven, coherent strategies.

The budget of the DGSPW is very small and it receives external funds from a number of donor agencies. Yet, with external funding, the DGSPW has succeeded in establishing a technical base and developing resources in the field of women's rights through support given to universities to establish women's studies centers. There are now thirteen

women's studies centers around the country. Another basic achievement is the creation of a gender disaggregated data base at the State Institute of Statistics in coordination with the Directorate. These activities, along with many projects discussed below were actualized by mobilizing international resources, mainly from the UNDP, the World Bank, and Japanese Grant Fund between 1991-1994 since gender equality policies had not been addressed at an adequate level in the national budget.

Donor agencies that provide funds for projects involving women include the UNDP, FAO, UNICEF, UNFPA, ILO, the World Bank and the European Commission. These projects generally bring together NGO activists, academics and the bureaucrats; often the project team is made up from these groups. It is interesting that interviews revealed frustration by donors about the reluctance to collaborate among the women's NGOs, as well lack of NGO experience and effectiveness in the use of donor funds.³⁰

The World Bank supported a project titled "Women's Employment in Turkey" implemented by the DGSPW. Funds from this project were channeled to a variety of micro-projects of NGOs, many individual researchers and research groups or institutions. This led to the accumulation of analytical research and data with a gender perspective for the use of policy makers. The World Bank also supported the writing of a comprehensive report on "Women's Economic Status in Turkey". A project titled "The Strengthening of Women's Participation in Development" supported by UNDP led to the establishment of research centers on gender issues on seven university campuses. Another UNDP-Turkish Government Project titled "National Programme for the Enhancement of Women's Integration into Development" emphasizes the strengthening of the coordination and collaboration between the government and women's NGOs. One example is the new "consultative mechanisms" that allow government and NGO representatives to get together in specific issue areas. Donor agencies are clearly encouraging dialogue between the DGSPW and the women's NGOs. Activities funded by the above donors have included workshops on gender sensitivity training for municipalities; leadership training for women to encourage political participation, research projects and institutional support for research centers, capacity building workshops for NGOs, collaborative

activities among Turkish NGOs, Turkish NGOs and the government and between Turkish and transnational NGOs.

Conclusions:

The global gender equality regime has encouraged and contributed to the following processes within Turkey. First, the issues of women's human rights and gender violence were on the international agenda in the 1990s. The women's movement in Turkey also brought these issues to the Turkish political agenda. Funds from donors made it possible to publicize gender violence and publish booklets on women's rights, and hold workshops on citizenship education. Certain issue areas make it more possible to come to an agreement among women's groups more than others, and I think gender based violence was one of them. National campaigns on violence brought together diverse women's groups.

Second, women's groups in Turkey pressured the government to remove discriminatory clauses in legislation (as CEDAW stipulates) and several of these (including the annulment of paragraphs 438 of the Turkish Penal Code reducing penalties in the case of a rape of a prostitute, of the Civil Law article that gives the husband the right to regulate his wife's work life, of the higher punishment for women found guilty of adultery than men). Reports to the committee on CEDAW have encouraged greater information collection and collaboration between bureaucrats, academics and NGOs. In short, new forms of collaboration among different actors in Turkish government and society that have certainly been encouraged by the global gender equality regime and its stipulations.

Third, new legislation has certainly been influenced by CEDAW and its monitoring committee. The new legislation (aside from removing discriminatory legislation) on family protection law in 1998, and the establishment of the DGSPW in 1990 both came about as a result of three sets of conditions coming together. CEDAW and Beijing Platform for Action both stipulated the establishment of a women's machinery; the

activities of the women's movement in Turkey and a particular woman politician willing to promote and fight for this new legislation brought the DGSPW to life. Gender based violence had become the major campaign of the women's movement in the 1990s; international agenda supported women's rights, and another woman minister chose to bring the issue on the public agenda and make it a personal crusade. In both cases, structural conditions internally and externally provided windows of opportunity and the "policy entrepreneurs" took them up.

Fourth, the establishment of the DGSPW as a weak bureaucracy, and with donor funding, paved the way for new alliances between bureaucrats, academics and some NGOs. Various forms of collaboration, in designing and implementing projects, writing reports, and forming consultative commissions took place. In fact, the lines between the above different groups became blurred, as academics worked with the DGSPW as project directors, NGO activists became bureaucrats, and bureaucrats employed academics as consultants.

Fifth, donor funding has also made it possible for women's NGOs to strengthen their activities, offer gender sensitivity training to municipalities, capacity training for NGOs, legal rights and literacy education to women, sponsor public campaigns on women's human rights and gender based violence, and promote women's health. Such funding, such as a UNDP project in the southern region, has also recently begun to foster the establishment of new women's NGOs in different geographical regions, as well as greater collaboration among them.

On the other hand, it is important to note that donor funding and the DGSPW has privileged certain women's organizations more than others based on their ability to write project proposals, as well as their political orientation. The alliances discussed above are still new and need nourishment. The traditional gap between state and society, between elites and nonelites, as well as the difficulty of communication among diverse women's groups persist. It is important to note that the concept of a "civil society movement" has only recently been acknowledged. The Turkish government has in the last few years

given increased attention and importance to NGOs in general, and to women's groups in particular as potential contributors to legal and policy change, as well as service delivery. The extent to which women's NGOs who have built diverse identities will talk to each other remains to be seen. On the one hand, it is easy to see women from different perspectives, espousing different identities walking arm in arm, and working together in many cities. On the other hand, there is also evidence of a lack of tolerance and communication. This was brought home to me at a panel I attended at the Habitat Conference in Istanbul in 1996. The panel was on the role of Islam and the women's movement. Even though the panel itself was quite informative and the panelists open minded, the questions posed by a group of women dressed in Islamic attire, led to a longwinded "lecture" by one of the most staunch Kemalist feminists in the audience, and the walking out of a group of women dressed in the Islamic attire. The latter group had tried to ask questions to the panelists, but they were prevented from participating; in the end they just walked out.

The 1990s, with the advent of globalization and its paradoxical effect on the proliferation of identity politics has certainly provided greater space for women's identities to be questioned. Yet it has also brought along greater challenges of communication. . Diversity does not necessarily promote greater dialogue and compromise. For Turkey, the question of human rights, of Kurdish nationalism, and of Islamic approaches to politics and society remain to be resolved and women's issues cannot remain separate from these. Ultimately, women's equality and rights are inseparable from Turkey's future as a democratic society; if a synthesis can be reached – between Moslem and secular perspectives, between separatism for minorities and assimilation with rights, then it can also be reached in the case of gender equality. In all of these, global norms, donor funding and encouragement, and in Turkey's case, the attitude of the European Union will play a major role; but ultimately, the people of Turkey themselves will need to decide how to create and construct a shared reality out of distinct identities and diverse viewpoints.

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- ³ Alvarez, Sonia 1990 *Engendering Democracy in Brazil*. Princeton: Princeton University Press
- ⁴ Tekeli, Sirin 1981 “Women in Turkish Politics” in Nermin Abadan-Unat ed. *Women in Turkish Society* Leiden: E.J. Brill.
- ⁵ Migdal, op.cit. p. 32.
- ⁶ Cagatay, Nilufer and Yasemin Soysal. 1990 “Comparative Thoughts on the Process of Becoming a Nation and Feminism (in Turkish) in Sirin Tekeli ed. *A Women’s Perspective on Turkish Women in the 1980s* Istanbul: Iletisim Yayinlari.
- ⁷ Molyneux, Maxine 1981 “Women in Socialist Societies: Theory and Practice”, in Kate Young, ed. *Of Marriage and Market: Women’s Subordination in International Perspective* London: CSE Books.
- ⁸ Alvarez, Sonia, op.cit.
- ⁹ Goetz, Anne Marie. 1995 *The Politics of Integrating Gender into Development Processes: Opportunities and Constraints in Bangladesh, Chile, Jamaica, Mali, Morocco and Uganda* Geneva: UNRISD
- ¹⁰ Tekeli, Sirin 1989 “The Development of the Turkish Women’s Movement in the 1980s” (in turkish) *Birikim* (3): 34-41
- ¹¹ Erturk, Yakin 1997 “Identity Politics: Implications for Gender Analysis and Training”, *Instraw News* No. 27, Second Semester, p. 9-15.
- ¹² Erturk, yakin 1997 “Identity Politics: Implication for Gender Analysis, Policy and Trining”, *Instraw News* 27 Second Semester, 9-15.
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- ¹⁶ Kardam, Nuket, op cit.
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- ²⁰ Acar, Feride, personal communication, December 1999, Middle East Technical University, Ankara.
- ²¹ Kardam, Filiz 2000 *Flying News* English Language Publication of Ucan Supurge (Flying Broom), a Women’s NGO based in Ankara, Turkey. P. 2.
- ²² Gulcur, Leyla, March 2000 *Flying News*, pp. 13-14, Ankara.
- ²³ Atauz, Akin, December 1993 *Research and Pilot Projects on NGOs: A Final Report* National Programme for the Enhancement of Women’s Integration in Development, funded by UNDP and prepared for the DGSPW, Ankara.
- ²⁴ One example is the activities funded by the UNDP Agenda 21 Project in Antalya, and more recently the European Commission has initiated a program to encourage women’s NGOs to find “partners:” in the Mediterrenan region.
- ²⁵ Anahaber, July 2000, No. 5.
- ²⁶ Gulcur, op.cit, p. 14.
- ²⁷ Daily News, October 15, 1990.
- ²⁸ Cumhuriyet, March 9, 1997, p. 3.
- ²⁹ The Turkish Official Gazette, April 20, 1990. P.2
- ³⁰ Interviews by the author with staff of the European Commission and the UNDP, November 1999, Ankara, Turkey.