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Civil Society Development in Rural Areas

Civil Society Support Programme III —
MARCH 2022

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Foreword

In recent years, CSOs in Turkey have been on the agenda more effectively, both quantitatively and qualitatively. This is also reflected in the increase in the number of CSOs. According to the data of the General Directorate of Foundations and the General Directorate of Civil Society Relations, there has been a steady increase in the number of associations and foundations since 2008.

Healthy food and a clean environment are among the primary sensitivities of today's society. Many CSOs also operate in this regard, but they have difficulty in taking part in the decision-making mechanism. "The effects of misuse of pesticides" came to the fore in the meetings of our association with the CSOs operating in the province of Mersin.

Glyphosate-effective herbicides (weed pesticides) are used in agricultural enterprises in Mersin, which are stated to carry cancer risk, especially for humans (WHO and IARC). These herbicides used pose a threat to the environment and human health by mixing with the groundwater as a result of precipitation and/or irrigation in the soil where it is applied. Since it makes residues in the soil, it affects the living things in the soil and disrupts the physical and structural properties of the soil. In addition, the applied herbicides leave pesticide residues (pesticides) in the weeds, making it inconvenient to be used as animal feed and green manure, and preventing the activities of bees, which contribute the most to natural life.

As a result of the dialogue and negotiations between us and the CSOs operating in the field of Agriculture and Rural Development in Mersin, it was observed that there were no CSOs involved in advocacy and lobbying activities and decision-making during the formation of policies in the field of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment.

The Civil Society Development in Rural Areas Project, numbered TR2016/DG/03/A3-01/018, implemented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Directorate for EU Affairs, under the leadership of the Mediterranean Natural Life Association (NATURELDER) within the scope of the Civil Society Support Program – III, of which the Central Finance and Contracts Unit is the contracting authority has been implemented to increase the organizational and institutional capacities of CSOs, and to encourage participation in decision-making processes at local and national level, through better civil dialogue to bring this issue, that is to draw attention to the misuse of pesticides, which is one of the important problems in Turkey, and to encourage weed control, especially by cultural, mechanical and biological means to the agenda in the city councils and the Agricultural Extension Activities of the Ministry of Agriculture through more active democratic participation in policy and decision-making processes in cooperation with local Public Institutions and CSOs in Mersin.

I would like to thank and extend my respects to the European Union and the European Union Delegation to Turkey, which provided financing for our project aiming to support healthy food, a clean environment, and a strong civil society, to the Directorate for European Union Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for their support, to all our project participants and project stakeholders for their contributions to our project, during the project implementation period, to the project team and NATURELDER members who worked with devotion within the scope of the project.

Avni TAŞYÜREK

President of the Mediterranean Natural Life Association

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Importance of Civil Society in Local

Civil society has extremely important functions and roles in the democratization and strengthening of democracies of countries. In recent years, this importance has been realized and civil society has started to be included more and more in political, economic, and social development discourses. As a matter of fact, thanks to civil society, it becomes easier for citizens to announce their demands more holistically and systematically by rising from the base and finding solutions to the real problems of citizens.

The democratization of local governments and the strengthening of their democracies require the cooperation of all local and non-civil organizations. This cooperation will take place with the participation of the local people and the CSOs representing it in the decision-making processes.

The inclusion of civil society in decision-making mechanisms is also of critical importance in the process of continuous improvement of transparency and service quality. Due to these benefits, civil society has become a frequent stakeholder not only at the level of central governments but also at local governments and local development processes.

Although governance discussions at the local government level are not new, their evaluation together with civil society has given a new impetus to the discussion. Therefore, discussions on local democracy in the context of CSOs have a function to ensure that democratic gains at the local level are more permanent.



Civil Society Support Programme

Civil Society has stepped forward as an important actor in the negotiation process that is carried out based on the Copenhagen political criteria, alignment with the EU Acquis and civil society dialogue. The understanding that a sound democracy, achieving EU standards and establishing permanent links between the Turkish and EU communities are only possible.

Civil society support provided to different priority areas and various target groups until 2014 were gathered under the “Civil Society Sector” umbrella in the second period of the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II) that covers 2014-2020. As the lead institution of Civil Society Sector, Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Directorate for European Union Affairs, became the responsible authority for programming, implementation and monitoring.

Civil Society Sector supports four priority areas:

1. Improving the legal framework for Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)
2. Supporting public sector-civil society cooperation
3. Strengthening the capacity of CSOs
4. Developing civil society dialogue between Turkey and the EU

34 projects receive 3,2 million euros in grants during The Third Phase of the Civil Society Support Programme, which has begun in April 2021 and is scheduled to continue until 2023. With these supports, increasing the institutional capacity of CSOs and promoting partnerships between CSOs; it is aimed to support active citizenship and participation of CSOs in decision-making processes and finally to develop the legal framework for active citizenship.



Information About the Project

Project Name:	Civil Society Development in Rural Areas
Contract Number:	TR2016/DG/03/A3-01/018
Project Coordinator Beneficiary:	Mediterranean Natural Life Association
Project Associates:	✓ Erdemli Ziraat Odası ✓ Mersin İli Arı Yetiştiricileri Birliği ✓ Tarsus Süt Ürünleri Tarımsal Üreticileri Birliği ✓ Mersin Damızlık Sığır Yetiştiricileri Birliği ✓ Tarsus Tarım, Hayvancılık ve Doğal Kaynakları Geliştirme Derneği ✓ Mersin Tarım ve Orman İl Müdürlüğü ✓ Tarsus Tarım ve Orman İlçe Müdürlüğü ✓ Erdemli Tarım ve Orman İlçe Müdürlüğü ✓ Akdeniz Doğa ve Yaşam Derneği ✓ Mersin Toroslar Doğayı Yaşatma ve Eko Turizm Derneği ✓ Ekolojik Yaşam Girişimcileri ve Gönüllüleri Derneği
Budget:	111.066,00 Euro
Starting Date:	1 April 2021
Duration:	12 Month
Implementation Region:	Mersin, Türkiye
Project Signatory:	Avni TAŞYÜREK
Project Coordinator:	Havva ERAT
Project Assistant:	Hasan Burak TAŞYÜREK
Project Website:	https://kirsalalanlardasiviltoplumgelisimi.com



Introduction To The Public

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

We organized a cocktail to inform the public about the purpose, activities and funding source of the project. Representatives of public institutions, chambers of agriculture, CSOs operating in the field of agriculture and rural development, managers of companies and workplaces providing input to the agricultural sector, other stakeholders operating in the field of agriculture and rural development, and the press were invited to the program.

A total of 110 people, including Mersin Provincial Director of Agriculture and Forestry Arif Abalı, Mersin Provincial Civil Society Relations Director Aysun Kıldan, Tarsus District Agriculture and Forestry Director Hayri Erdoğan, Mersin Provincial Beekeepers Association President Adem Kurt and Mediterranean Nature and Life Association President Selçuk Şahutoğlu, representatives of public institutions, farmers, trainers and members of the press, attended.



Current Situation Analysis of CSOs in Mersin Province

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

We analyzed the advocacy and lobbying capacities of CSOs working in the field of agriculture and rural development in Mersin.

Within the scope of the research, focus group survey interviews were conducted with 8 CSO representatives who are related to different CSOs and the survey study was shared with 255 CSO members and employees.

In the analysis study, the SWOT analysis method, which qualitatively classifies the internal and external factors related to the functioning of the organizations, was used. In the analysis, subjects such as the structure of the organizations, regional characteristics, advocacy and lobbying, public influence and recognition, recognition and influence in the press were included.

This analysis is the first analysis we know of in our country, on the advocacy and lobbying capacity of CSOs operating in the field of agriculture and rural development.



Training on Decision-Making Mechanisms of CSOs

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Members of the decision-making bodies of CSOs operating in the field of agriculture and rural development in Mersin were given 30 hours of training on advocacy, lobbying, and mistakes made in the use of herbicides. Thanks to the quality training provided by the experts in their fields, the understanding, opinions, and capacities of the decision-making mechanisms of the CSOs have been increased, and we have reached our activity target and exceeded the 20 participants targeted in the project.



Training on Decision-Making Mechanisms of CSOs

PROJECT ACTIVITIES



Training of Civil Society Organization Members

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

We provided training on advocacy, lobbying and mistakes made in the use of herbicides to CSO members operating in the field of agriculture and rural development in Mersin.

The training program was held at three different points on three different days, in Tarsus, Mersin and Erdemli, and 200 members of CSOs such as agricultural chambers, producer unions and associations successfully completed their training and received their certificates.



Training of Civil Society Organization Members

PROJECT ACTIVITIES



Study Visit Abroad

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

We made a study visit abroad to observe the advocacy and lobbying activities with 12 CSO members and the fight against herbicides.

Our participants had the opportunity to examine the studies carried out in Czechia by visiting the Czech Republic GreenPeace, Arnika Association, Czech Agricultural University, Innovative and Sustainable Agriculture Association, Nadace OSF, Czech Agricultural Union and the Embassy of the Republic of Turkey in Prague.



Project Website, Informative Booklets and Brochures

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

A website containing information about the project, its aims, activities and news has been prepared. The website can be accessed at <https://kirsalalanlardasiviltoplumgelisim.com>.

A booklet and brochure have been prepared to inform CSOs on Advocacy, Lobbying and Correct Weed Control Methods. 1000 copies of booklets and brochures were printed and distributed to the relevant stakeholders to inform their members and benefit them in a long-term way. The online version of the booklet and brochure is available at <https://kirsalalanlardasiviltoplumgelisim.com> and <https://naturelder.org>.



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Campaign

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

In order to establish working groups (departments) to deal with Agriculture and Rural Development problems in all municipal city councils, starting with Mersin province, and to include both the public and civil society in these working groups, A signature campaign was carried out on change.org. In addition to this petition, a paragliding and classic cars event was held in order to raise awareness and attract attention.



Campaign

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

change.org Bir kampanya başlat Kampanyalarım Göz at Destekçi ol

Change.org'a tekrar hoş geldin! Senin gibi imzacılar sayesinde her saat yeni bir kampanya başarıya ulaşıyor.

Kampanyanın yönetici paneline git

Mersin İlinde Belediye Kent Konseylerinde Tarım ve Kırsal Kalkınma Bölümleri Kurulsun!

**TARIM VE KIRSAL KALKINMA KENT KONSEYLERİNDE!
İTAKIRKİRSAL KALKINMA KENT KONSEYLERİNDE
KAMPANYAYA SEN DE KATIL**

793 kişi imzaladı. Hedefimiz 1.000.

1.000 imzaya ulaşıldığında, bu kampanyanın öne çıkarılan kampanyalarda yer alma ihtimali artar.

Mersin İlinde Belediye Kent Konseylerinde Tarım ve Kırsal ...

Facebook üzerinde paylaş

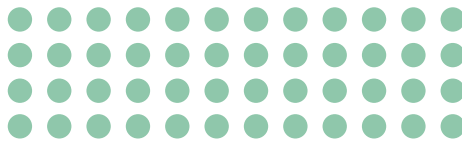


Campaign

PROJECT ACTIVITIES



At the end of the campaign, the agriculture and rural development department was established in the municipal city councils of our four districts in Mersin, Tarsus, Yenişehir Erdemli, and Akdeniz and civil society was included in the decision-making mechanism in local governments.



Healthy Use of Herbicides Training Program Workshop

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

We held the "Healthy Use of Herbicides Training Program Workshop" on 18-19-20 January 2022 with the participation of the public and CSOs. Public institutions and CSOs operating in the field of agriculture and rural development in Mersin came together and expressed their problems and solution suggestions regarding the use of herbicides. In addition, representatives of the International Agricultural Training Center Directorate, Adana Agricultural Production Enterprise Agricultural Extension and In-Service Training Center and Adana Provincial Directorate of Agriculture and Forestry attended the workshop from outside the province of Mersin. During the workshop, the "Effective and Correct Methods of Combating Weeds" booklet and training presentation were prepared to be used in the Farmer Training Extension Program of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, with the cooperation of the participants.

In addition, the "Effective and Correct Methods of Combating Weeds" training has been included in the 2022 Extension Program by the Mersin Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Directorate and will be programmed as a 5-Year Extension Activity in 2023.



Healthy Use of Herbicides Training Program Workshop

PROJECT ACTIVITIES



Project Final Meeting

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

We organized a cocktail to inform the public about the implemented activities of the project, the targets achieved, and the funding source. Mersin Provincial Directorate of Agriculture and Forestry Deputy Director Mustafa CAN, Adana TAYEM Deputy Director Bülent AYHAN, Erdemli District Agriculture and Forestry Director Mesut Yıldız, Mut District Agriculture and Forestry Director Ekrem BAYIR, Tarsus District Agriculture and Forestry Director Hayri ERDOĞAN, Yenişehir District Agriculture and Forestry Director. Forest Manager Nadi TEKİN also attended.

Adem Kurt, President of Mersin Provincial Beekeepers Association, Ergun Doğan, President of Anamur Fruit Production and Marketing Cooperative, Begüm Balcı, President of Bozyazı Weaving and Cultural Products Development Association, President of Eurasia Agriculture Association Hatice Dilek Çelikkaya, Mut Women's Cooperative President Gülsüm Kevser Mut, DOYADER President Selçuk Şahutoğlu made a speech and talked about the value that the project adds to their organizations and agriculture.



Conclusion

In our project journey that started on April 1, 2021, and lasted for 12 months, the advocacy and lobbying capacities of CSOs working in the field of agriculture and rural development were analyzed and their strengths and weaknesses were determined. CSOs working on this issue have been brought together, unity and dialogue have been established, their capacities have been increased by providing advocacy, lobbying, and weed control training to 230 civil society members, and they have been prepared to represent civil society in local policy-making efforts by being included in decision-making mechanisms.

The cooperation we have established with the CSOs in this effort has shaped our campaign activities and agriculture and rural development working groups have been successfully established in the city councils of our Erdemli, Yenışehir, Tarsus and Akdeniz districts, and CSOs have been included in the decision-making mechanism in local governments.

Our project participant public institutions, Mersin Provincial Directorate of Agriculture and Forestry, Erdemli, and Tarsus District Directorate of Agriculture and Forestry, which are aware of the importance of preventing the misuse of weed pesticides, which is our project subject, for our country and region, and are currently working on this issue, have duly fulfilled their duties in the project. They worked together with CSOs to solve the problems by sitting at the table in our workshop activity and included the training program created together with CSOs in their farmer training activities.

Considering the project outputs as a whole;

Civil society has developed through the development of communication and advocacy skills of local CSOs and more active democratic participation in policy and decision-making processes in the field of Agriculture and Rural Development,

A section has been opened for local CSOs working in the field of Agriculture and Rural Development in Erdemli, Yenışehir, Tarsus, and Akdeniz city councils in Mersin, the healthy use of herbicides training program has been added to the farmer training program by the Mersin Provincial Directorate of Agriculture and Forestry. The use of herbicides in weeds has decreased and will continue to decrease thanks to the conscious civil society members, and with the widespread use of alternative methods in weed control, healthy food production will increase over time.

In conclusion, our project was beneficial for developing the capacity of CSOs working in the field of agriculture and rural development in Mersin, which is one of the biggest factors of agriculture and rural development in Turkey, including them in policy and decision-making processes, strengthening civil society, especially agriculture and rural development in whole Turkey, especially in the Mediterranean region, and raising awareness of the benefits of including civil society in local governments. Because all of our activities mentioned above represent the firsts in the local area, especially in the field of agriculture and rural development, besides the success of our project with its measurable and concrete outputs such as the creation of working groups in the city councils, the creation of the training program and its continuity, the project also sets an example for how the public and civil society can work together at the local level and the steps that civil society must take in order to be involved in policy and decision-making processes.

However, it should not be ignored that new projects should be developed and more effort should be spent in order to spread all these developments throughout our country and make a difference in the national arena.