

## THE ASPECT OF SOCIAL SERVICES IN TURKEY

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**Abstract:** In Turkey, social services term is used in the sense of “social welfare” and “social assistance services” provided to socially or economically disadvantaged citizens. The Social Services and Child Protection Agency (SSCPA) has a biggest responsibility for copying out social services in Turkey. Social services has need to extend by the government, priority in this region. In this context helping the clients to maintain a quality of life in different stage of life is increasingly accepted as a goal of SSCPA.

**Key Words:** Turkey; Social services; Social welfare; Social assistance; Social work

### 1. General Information About Turkey

*Geography, history, and political organization:* Three percent of the total area lies in southeastern Europe, and the remainder is in southwestern Asia. Turkey is a Republic. The total area is 780,580 km<sup>2</sup>, slightly larger than the size of Texas. Turkey has been described as a bridge between Europe and Asia. The capital is Ankara. Major of the population lives in developed or underdeveloped cities. 99% of the Turkish population is Muslim. Turkey is a secular state which guarantees freedom of worship to non Muslims. And the Turkish Republic is a parliamentary democracy. Turkey is administratively divided into 81 provinces. These are further subdivided into districts, subdivisions, and villages.

*Social and cultural features:* Turkey has a highly heterogeneous social and cultural structure, with sharp contrasts among population groups. The modern and traditional exist simultaneously within the society. Family ties are strong and influence the formation of values, attitudes, aspirations, and goals.

*Economy:* Turkey can be classified as a middle-income country. The rate of economic growth has been comparatively high in recent years, and the economy has undergone a radical

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transformation from an agricultural base to an industrial one, particularly since the 1980s.

*Population:* Turkey is the most populous country of the Middle East. The population was 72 million in 2005 and is expected to reach 76 million by 2010 and 88 million by 2025. Approximately 35% of the total population live in rural areas. Twenty-six percent of the total population are younger than age 15; only 7% are older than age 65. Mean life expectancy in women and men is 74.0 years and 69.1 years, respectively, with an overall mean of 71.5 years.

*Education:* Formal education includes preschool, primary school, secondary school, and higher education institutions. Eighty-seven percent of the population are literate (SIS, 2002; TSI, 2006). Now, we can start to analyze how defined and perceived the concept of social services in Turkey is, briefly.

## **2. Historical Background of Social Services in Turkey**

Turkey has a deep rooted and historical background in regard to social services. During the Ottoman period, foundations, mosque organizations and certain professional organizations (Lonca) performed important role in the field of social assistance and social security. With the proclamation of the Republic, studies were directed towards having these duties carried out by public organizations and institutions.

The implementation of social services during the period of the Republic commenced with the establishment of the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TGNA). The Children's Protection Association was founded on June 30, 1920 by close friends of Atatürk and it rallied voluntary public support for its activities. In 1922 all orphanages which were public institutions were put under the supervisory authority of the Social Aid Committee of the TNGA, which was a milestone in state efforts to organize all social services under the guidance of the state. An act on the Protection of Needy Children was adopted in 1949.

After this time, Turkey has gone through the constitutional and legal procedure for providing a state guarantee to protect the rights of people in need of social services. The training of professional staff to work in the field of social services gained great importance as a result of the "Social Services Institute" Law passed in 1959. "The Social Services Academy" founded in 1961, was attached to the Ministry of Health and Social Assistance until 1982, when with the passing of the

new Higher Education Law, it was affiliated to Hacettepe University and renamed "School of Social Services". The curriculum of the School aims to train professional social workers under the guarantee of the state.

The inclusion of social services training in the contemporary system of education has led to considerable improvements as regards social service policy and planning. The Law of the Social Services and Child Protection Agency (SSCPA), promulgated on 24.5.1983, is a good indicator of this professional view and approach. In addition to bringing about many legal, administrative and financial renovations, the Law has a "social reform" aspect, which provides for the reorganization of social services in accordance with changing and developing needs of Turkey (Bol, 1997).

### **3. Definition the Term of Social Services**

It is well known that the concept of "Social Services" varies from country to country in line with social and economic characteristics and the level of development. In Turkey, a country in a period of rapid social and economic development, the term is used in the sense of "social welfare" and "social assistance" services provided to socially or economically disadvantaged citizens. The concept of social services in Turkey includes both of the above types of service. The legal framework provided by decree Law no. 2828 places both groups of people within the field of responsibility of the SSCPA. The legal definition, taken from Law no. 2828 (May 24, 1983), is as follows:

Social services are systematic, programmed services with the objective of helping individuals or families deprived through no fault of their own but on account of their environment to avoid and solve material, moral and social inadequacies and social problems and/to improve their living conditions.

There are thus criteria for determining who, being poor, should benefit from social services and who should not (Social Services Magazine, 1989).

However, it is important to add that social services are not only concerned with the removal of problems caused by poverty. In Turkey, as elsewhere, there are those who, although not actually poor, are unable to enjoy the living standards of the average member of society and need to adapt. The mentally and physically handicapped, the aged

and lonely and working parents requiring day care for their children are all in need of social services even though few of them are actually in poverty. Social services can thus be thought of as services provided, with or without charge, to both (a) people whose living conditions are bad due to their economic situation and (b) people who do not face economic problems but who are in need of various professional services.

Turkish regulations define social services as services rendered to remedy material, moral and social deprivations of individuals and families, caused by conditions beyond their control, prevent and when necessary solve their psychological or social problems and better their living standards through the utilization of a systematic programme. Social services which offered gratis to people who suffer from material deprivations are defined as “social aid services” and those which are offered to those who suffer from psychological or social deprivations are defined as “social welfare services”.

Today, social work in Turkey begins with direct contact with the client in his/her psycho-social position as an individual and as a member of society. It wants to help the individual human being to cope with his/her psycho-social difficulties in situations of want and conflict which considerably impair his/her ability to “function socially” and which cannot be overcome by himself/herself. It aims at activating the client’s own energies and it is therefore chiefly assistance to self-development, rehabilitation and social functioning. This kind of social work is not a one-time act of personal care, but essentially a process that requires a systematic approach, i.e. planned, orderly and gradual action on the basis of sociological and methodological findings. Such skilled forms of assistance are indicated for young persons and adults; we find them in all branches of social assistance. We call the helper a social worker and he is specialist in his/her field. Training for social welfare services includes specialist training of social workers.

### **The Main Operations of the SSCPA in Turkey**

The main operations of the General Directorate of the SSCPA which has the biggest responsibility for copying out social services in Turkey, can be summarized as follows.

The SSCPA has the specific characteristic of extending its activities to all the people living in Turkey. In other words, people who have no economic problems but who are socially or psychologically deprived are also considered within the scope of the activities of the

Agency. However, most of those benefiting from its operations are economically deprived and in need of continuous care, protection and training services. Legally all citizens have the right to benefit from the services given by the Agency. For example, citizens can benefit from Creche and Day Care Centers directed by the SSCPA.

The current social services of the SSCPA can be grouped as follows; (1) social services for children in need of protection, (2) social services for the elderly, (3) social services for the handicapped, (4) social assistance services, (5) Women's Shelter (6) Community Centers. *Table 1* shows, social services which provided by the SSCPA in Turkey.

**Table 1: Number and Capacity of Public Social Service Institutions In Turkey**

Type	Number	Capacity
Children's Homes (0-12 Ages)	103	10,041
Training Institutions (13-18 Ages)	113	10,443
Children and Youth Clubs	10	400
Elderly Homes	52	5,545
Rehabilitation Centers	54	3735
Women's Shelter	23	477
Community Centers	28	6,000

**Source:** The General Directorate of SSCPA, 2001

### Services for Children in Need of Protection

Social services, for children in need of protection, can only be carried on by the SSCPA, as clearly stated in law no. 2828. The children who need protection are those whose physical, emotional and moral developments or personal security is unsafe and, (1) who have no mother and/or father, (2) whose mother or father, or both of them are unknown, (3) who have been abandoned by the mother and/or father, and (4) who due to neglect are faced with social risks such as being encouraged to prostitution, begging, using alcoholic drinks etc.

Children considered within the limits of this definition can profit from the above mentioned services after the detailed social study of the competent authority. The social services for children in need of protection are carried out through "Children's Homes", for children between 0-12 years, and "Training Institutions" for

children between 13-18 years. At present there are 10,041 children in 76 Children's Homes and about 10,443 young adults in 113 Training Institutions. On the other hand, about 400 children are under the protection of foster families. Today, about 5.000 children have profited from the foster family services which started in 1961. And, in 10 Children and Youth Clubs Centers to about 6.000 persons is given preventive, educational, treative and rehabilitative services.

In Turkey, there is no serious obstruction in the institutional care of abandoned children. On the other hand, the demand of older children to be accepted into institutions is very high in Turkey, because these institutions are sometimes wrongly looked on as "boarding schools". It is expected that as the number of education - based social services provided by the voluntary organizations and foundations increases, the tendency to consider these institutions as "schools" will decrease. In that case, institutions would continue to render service as rehabilitation centers for narcotics addicts children forced into prostitution and children defenseless against social risks. A professional approach to the examination of care applications is being stressed, and also the necessary studies have been carried out in order to provide "social assistance" to poor people who want to place their children in institutions.

In Turkey, the prevalence of child labour is growing in parallel with an increase in the population. Traditionally, Turkish children have helped with the work being done in rural areas. Now, with migration to the cities and unplanned urbanization on the rise, children are increasingly living in the streets and working in shops and even factories. Of the total number of persons employed in Turkey in 1994, one in 20- or about 4 million- are children between ages of 6 and 14. 72% of these children worked and also attended schools, while 28% worked but did not attend school. Another problem concerns the need for children in some families to work to augment adult income. Some children do not attend school because of the need to earn income, according to data provided by the State Institute of Statistic.

It is difficult to make a definite estimate of the number of children who need protection in Turkey. In fact, the number of destitute or completely abandoned children is not very high and it is known that the SSCPA provides the necessary services to that group

of children. The Law no. 2828 has laid down clear procedures for the protection of deprived people outside institutions and in their home and environment. To protect street children, the number of the Street Children Centers has need to extend by local authorities.

### **Social Services for the Elderly**

Migration and the rapid change in the composition of the population do not only affects the situation of children, youth, and women but also that of the elderly living in urban areas. The situation of old population is becoming more problematic due to insufficient retirement funds, lack of retraining organizations, changing family relations and shifting traditional values. It is widely believed that the needs of the elderly are solved or should be solved within the traditional family and kinship relations of the society. So, elderly homes and other social security systems for the elderly are not developed. It is observed, however, that many elderly persons do not wish to reside in these dwellings, even if they need to do so, because of persisting traditional values. Thus, the homes are only providing service to those elderly persons who have no relatives and are living alone.

In principle, the SSCPA has given priority to protecting old people who cannot benefit from the social insurance programmes and who have economic problems. Old people who need social and economic help can benefit from the services of the SSCPA. Today, SSCPA has 52 Homes for the elderly with a total capacity of 5.545. However, those outside the big cities generally work below capacity. The main reason for this is that in Turkey, which is a country protecting its traditional values, people tend to live with the old members of the family. Also, SSCPA has 6 Counselling Center for the Elderly. The SSCPA is also responsible for guiding, supervising and issuing licenses to other public, private and voluntary organizations involved in residential care for the elderly.

### **Social Services for the Handicapped**

It is characteristic of the modern ideals of social work that the integration efforts also extend to the people, whose skeletal, muscular and locomotor systems are effected by aging processes or other reasons. In keeping with the principle of preventive social work, integration assistance also applies to people who are not yet handicapped but seriously in danger of becoming so. Early

diagnosis and early treatment of the impairment are of great importance for effective help to these clients.

The SSCPA has been providing services for blind, mentally handicapped and spastic children in 54 Rehabilitation Centers. In those Centers 3.735 handicapped are rehabilitated. The social assistance, offered by the SSCPA have also successfully helped to meet the fundamental needs of these people. Today, the SSCPA has tried to improve its services for handicapped people by supporting private and voluntary organization with material and staff. Moreover, the SSCPA is conducting studies on the possibility of providing financial support of handicapped people for their health and educational needs.

### **Social Assistance Services (Services for Family and Society)**

Although public welfare represented considerable social progress as compared with the poor relief of the past, it could no longer cope with modern social requirements arising from the social changes of recent decades. Moreover the Basic Law of the Turkish Republic has created a new standing point in the shape of the liberal and social basic rights as well as in the guiding norms of the social state and the state under the rule of Law. A decent life includes obviously meeting the financial needs of the individual and the families. The subsistence needs of everyone are not met despite the comprehensive social security system and social assistance frequently has to be given as a supplementary income aid. In this respect social assistance offsets a deficiency in the social security system.

Social assistance comes under the competence of the SSCPA General Directorate of the state Retirement Fund, which operates under Law no: 2022, The Social Assistance and Solidarity Fund Council of the Prime Minister, which operates under Law no: 3294. However, the issue of social assistance has gained a new meaning with the acceptance of Law no. 2828. Although Law no. 2828 is principally concerned with social assistance, it also clearly regulates the provision to deprived people in their environment and homes, without placing them into any social institution. Thus, the "Social Assistance Regulation of the SSCPA" which was prepared in line with the above mentioned regulations, determined priorities and operating principles for the social assistance services to be rendered



by the SSCPA.

General Directorate of SSCPA provides temporary and permanent assistance in cash and in kind-to the individuals- who are not under any of the existing social assistance schemes, (1) to the children who are in need of protection and their families, (2) to all risk groups who are in economical poverty, (3) to the individuals who have social security but they couldn't reach minimum life standard and, (4) to the students who can't attend the school due to their economical poverty.

The SSCPA has started to develop its studies - taking these needs into consideration on family counseling and guidance services. The alleviation of economic and social problems caused by the family, the rehabilitation of handicapped children and the protection of the elderly in their own environment will be the main subjects to be handled through the intervention of the "Family Counseling and Guidance Centers". Therefore, it will be possible to attend to the needs of important groups in Turkey through these family counseling centers.

### **Women Shelters**

First women shelter giving services directly to the women who have problems, is opened in 1990 by the SSCPA in Turkey. Women Shelters are social service institutions in which women who are abused physically, sexually or emotionally can stay with their children, if any, temporarily. In these institutions, the problems of the women with their families or husbands are tried to solve and professional studies are done. These studies consist of psychological support, individual or family counseling, legal advisory and taking some measures in getting a job or profession (Bor, 1997).

There are Women Shelters in 23 provinces. 477 women have been served till the end of 2008. The applications for staying in these institutions are evaluated by the Provincial Social Services Managements. Because of the specialty of the service, the addresses and the telephone numbers of the institutions are kept secret. All of the staff of these institutions are women. In Women Shelters, there are a director who is a social worker or a psychologist, other technical and supportive services staff. The most of the women who stay in Women Shelters leave the institutions after their problems with their

families have been solved. These women can stay in these institutions maximum 3 months but if it is needed this period can be lasted by the social worker. There are studies improving the activities and the efficiency of the given services in the institutions.

### **Community Centers**

Big cities are surrounded by increasing social problems. The people living in “gecekodu” settlements (squatter housing) face with poverty, unemployment and lack of education. They need to the supportive services and social sources. As a service politics, the problems of local communities are solved in corporation with local communities. It is aimed that the main services are localized and are in the service of the citizens. Community Centers also have protective, preventive, educational, improving, treative and rehabilitative functions. In these Centers socio-culturel activities are held. In other terms, they are the models of SSCPA to reach all kind of clients, women, children, young, old and handicapped who need help and services. We can list the given services in the 28 Community Centers by the SSCPA as below:

Mother and child training, training for preschool children, training for the women who will give services as a mother in the institutions, to support and improve the statute of the women living in “gecekodu” settlements, to find the solution for the problems of primary and secondary school students, reading and writing courses, adulthood problems, to be married the couples officially who got married only the religious ceremony, advice centers for the sick, particularly psychologically afflicted persons, addicts and persons in danger of becoming addicts, and leisure time and training centers of all kinds for young people and meeting places for the aged (Bor, 1997). Besides, psycho-social and economic problems, family problems, health and educational problems, legal consultancy guidance are held in these Centers. Also, SSCPA are planning to establish new Centers in rural regions and suburbs of the big cities.

### **4. The Situation of the Social Services in Turkey and Prospects for the Future**

What is the situation of social services in Turkey today? In terms both of programs and personnel, the Turkey social work

structure of today is quite varied and complex. Turkey has public as well as private social work agencies. The public agencies, because of lack of funds, carry limited programs in the areas of public assistance, child, youth, elderly welfare and so forth; some of them, especially in the SSCPA, are now staffed with trained social workers, most of them are not. In general, public welfare programs on the local level have a broader coverage in the urban centers of the West than in the East because of economic reasons. As to private, voluntary agencies, the picture is also quite varied, depending on the city or town concerned. Turkey has very few voluntary agencies on a state level and this seems to account, in part, for the above mentioned local variations. In some large urban centers, voluntary agencies have programs focused on special groups (women, handicapped, homeless, street children and so on) and several of them have good standards of work.

Social workers frequently hold authoritative and management positions. The functions of the social workers are constantly evolving. The authorities are increasingly calling upon social workers to discharge their social tasks, and this is why the demand for social workers is great and far from being met. Everyday practical work makes very great demands on this professions and comprehensive occupational training is therefore needed. As a profession, social work in Turkey has made tremendous strides over a period of about a decade. There are about 3,855 trained social worker today in Turkey, and the demand for social workers is so great that usually a social worker is offered employment about 3 months before he terminates his studies and graduates from the school. Unfortunaly, this implicitly reveals that in many agencies social work jobs are presently done by employees who are not professionally trained; yet the continuous demand for trained workers is an encouraging omen. To protect their professional interests the social workers have organized themselves in Social Workers' Association in Turkey. Today there are 7 school of social work in Turkey [Hacettepe University, Başkent University, Selçuk Univertsity, Adnan Menderes University, Süleyman Demirel University, Sakarya University and Düzce University].

It is getting more and more difficult to sustain social cohesion in a context of rapid global change and interaction. To overcome this difficult task, complementary policies should be mobilized in all areas. Turkey needs both a revision in some of its past practices and

a vision of prospects for future policies. In all these attempts the focus should be the recovery of excluded groups. Primacy should be given to women, children and, youth. Today, to achieve these goals principles and policies of social services in Turkey are briefly, as follows:

In the implementation of social service programmes, priority will be given to children, handicapped and elderly people who are destitute and need protection

It is essential to increase social services and benefits in proportion to social and economic developments and in accordance with means and structure of the society.

Social service programmes will be devised and extended in a way to cover the needs of families, children, the handicapped, the elderly and other people who need protection.

The principle is to assist individuals and families in eliminating their financial, moral and social difficulties, meeting their needs, preventing and resolving their social problems, and to improve and enhance their standard of living.

The social services will be conducted as a whole under the supervision and control of the State and with the voluntary co-operation of the community.

As a national institution, religious foundations have an important place in the Turkish society with respect to social assistance and service. Foundations will therefore be encouraged in accordance with the law and culture on foundations without any deviation from their features.

Efforts will be made to augment the existing capacities and service efficiency of Creches and Children's Day Centers and bringing them up to a level capable of needs the present requirements in terms of quality and quantity.

Training institutions providing special training for the blind, the deaf, the orthopaedically handicapped and for mentally retarded children will be improved in number and quality.

Turkey must urgently upgrade its emergency response system in order to be prepared for large scale natural disasters in the future.

The demand for social workers is so great that usually a social worker is offered all of sector. The number of School of Social Work must be increased in Turkey.

### **Conclusion**

All of the positive indicator of development of the social and economic situation in Turkey provides new insight into applied economic research concerning public financing of the welfare state. Within the last 10 years, the standard of living in Turkey has fallen, income inequality and unemployment have risen dramatically, and the quality of and availability of medical and social services have declined. There are sharp class distinctions and increasing income inequality. Especially after earthquake on August 17, 1999, majority of people who live in this region lost their family or spouses. Most of them left injure and homeless. They need psychological and social rehabilitation. Migration from this region is increasing every day. In our big cities specific groups (women, child, handicapped, old people) also waiting intervention and services. Social workers can't cope with all client by themselves. Because of this, today, social services in Turkey has need to extend by the government.

The problem of social cohesion in Turkey is multidimensional. In order to deconstruct its multidimensional nature this section bases its analysis on three elements that constitute the social background of the problem: migration, and urban changes based on identities. The analysis focuses on the influence of these three element on three particular groups: children/youth, women and, the elderly. The processes of exclusion of these groups is conceptualized with the frame of a triangle formed by the state, the individual and civil society.

The social work profession has, from its beginning, charged itself with bringing about social change. WADE summarized this core responsibility by stating:

The most important mission ahead for social work is the application of its professional knowledge to the processes of social change needed to bring lives of freedom and decency within the reach of all our citizens (WADE, 1963).

This responsibility for promoting social change has come more and more into the forefront of the social work profession as minority groups press for equal justice, social problems reach critical proportions, all citizens act out against double standard, and the inadequacies of the social systems in which we live demand repair.

Turkey is a rapidly developing country. At present because of social and economical changing processes, it is possible to see the different needs for social services. The inclusion of social services training in the contemporary system of education has led to considerable improvements as regards social services policy and planning. Internal migration will continue to have decisive importance in Turkish economic and social development. We should, then accept the paramount need for extensive additional studies on internal migration, and structure and needs of special groups which is needed protect such as child, women, handicapped and elderly person. We think that there is a need to ensure legal protection of working children from exploitation and abuse through an understanding and definition of their needs.

Furthermore, it was a time when rural-to-urban migration became more intensified, by growing industrialization. We know that in general the development of social work services is considerably influenced by the industrial and urban development of a county. Thousands of people who live in eastern and other territories of Turkey moving to the industrial centers of western Turkey. Social work appeared to have, and did have, the additional value of providing an instrument for meeting the serious social problems that arose from this large internal migration.

The particular vulnerability of children in the current situation is leading to greater negative consequences for them and a worsening of the conditions under which they have to live. The economic crisis is likely to increase the demand for child labour. Combined with the hardships of the region's inhabitants this can be expected to lead to a significant increase in the number of children seeking and finding employment. The main aim of social services in this context is to provide to clients rehabilitative, educational, health, nutrition and psycho-social and crisis counseling services. Helping the clients to maintain a quality of life in different stage of life is increasingly accepted as a goal of SSCPA.

Today, it is essential that women participate in all fields of social life as individuals of equal status in Turkey. Measures will be taken to improve the status of women and to eliminate the disparities in the fields of education, health, professional life, social security, and employment. Efforts to eliminate factors which have negative impact on the social status of Turkish women will continue. Education of girls and women will be emphasized with the aim of increasing social welfare and enabling women to enjoy the benefits of welfare at the maximum level, and integration of women in development will be enhanced.

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*RESUMO: Na Turquia, a expressão serviço social é utilizada no sentido de "bem estar social" e "serviços de assistência social" destinados aos cidadãos social ou economicamente vulneráveis. A Agência de Serviço Social e Proteção à Infância (SSCPA) tem a maior responsabilidade por efetivar os serviços sociais na Turquia. Os serviços sociais necessitam ser ampliados pelo governo nesta região. Neste contexto, ajudar os clientes a manterem sua qualidade de vida nos seus diferentes estágios é gradativamente aceito como um objetivo da SSCPA.*

*PALAVRAS CHAVE: Turquia; Serviços sociais; Bem estar social; Assistência social; Serviço Social.*

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