

Sustainable women policies in local administrations

Isparta practice

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Abstract

Nowadays, feminine policies have begun to set the agenda economically, socially and politically. Resolving inequality and sexual apartheid in community and sustaining it, is a fundamental principle of democracy. This principle also, constitutes one of the fundamental principles of the sustainable development. Therefore, while making feminine policies sustainable and generalizing in community, there are a lot and different things to do for different institutions, and there is a need to handle this subject integrated and cooperatively.

In this study, local governments' feminine studies and sustainability of this are worked on. For this purpose interviews have been made, studies of institutions are investigated on site

and evaluated. The place of women in Local development plans and appreciation are worked on. It is thought that the awareness on woman will rise with this study, which emphasizes that with policies and implementations which are not sustainable; actions taken will not be persistent.

Keywords: Sustainable development, Local government, Development plan, Feminine policies, Women.

1.INTRODUCTION

Up to now, in nearly every society, policies and structures have been shaped favouring male benefits, and male-dominated structuring has brought along gender inequalities. Corporate and cultural structures affected by the norms of patriarchal societies have forced women to a secondary status against men. Housework and motherhood roles, which have occurred as a result of the sexist labour division, have been considered as women's natural roles in the society (Dedeoglu, 2011:63). While women were kept outside the public fields by usually being employed as nurses or teachers, which are suitable professions for their traditional roles, men have continued to be the ones who make the laws (Meena, 1992). While the social labour division has restricted women with specific fields, it has integrated men with the public fields (Caglar, 2011:62). Women have remained as small minorities concerning the parliament, cabinet, and the administrative positions in the public/private sectors (Meena, 1992).

Women and men do not use the common living spaces in the same way and value. The chances they possess for benefiting from the socio-economical opportunities offered by the living environment as well as their needs and problems are not the same. Thus, (lack of) policies intended on common living spaces have a greater effect on women (Alkan, 2004a). The factors and cliché judgements that effect women's reach/equal reach to several fields such as education, health, land management and finance do not only restrict women's hope but also the future of nations. It is highly necessary to make legislations in order to support women in realising their potentials, defending their rights and empowering (Bachelet, 2012).

“Studies which focus on preventing gender discrimination and increasing the status of women in the society are among the most seriously conducted activities of the modern societies of our day. In this sense, in many countries new regulations protecting women's rights are passed and some malfunctions which cause inequalities between men and women in the society are worked on to eliminate them” (Tugen, Ozen, 2008:2).

The right to vote and stand for election has been entitled to women, however they have been prevented from participating in the decision making processes using their traditional role as an excuse or it has not even been seen necessary for women to think on these kinds of issues. Because the primary duty of a woman is being a mother and wife and it would be unfair to her if she were given more duties (!). The number and variety of the obstacles brought to women have increased day by day such as poverty, timelessness, lack of technical information, lack of self-esteem, family, neighbourhood and tribe relations and honour codes

(Bora, Isat, 2006:13). Even labour unions have maintained a patriarchal point of view while defending women's right to work instead of considering women's priorities first. They have defended equal wages for equal labour but kept their silence on the issue of women's employment on equally valued positions (Urhan, 2009:85).

2. SUSTAINABLE WOMAN POLICIES

The quality of life depends on the quality of the environment. The right to live is universal for every living being and it is unacceptable to think that a species is entitled with this right more than any other species is (Yıldıztekin, 2009:370). However, in nearly every society policies, decisions and actions have always emerged with a focus on men, women have always followed after men or been forced for that deliberately or not, and their rights have always been more restricted. Politics has been perceived as a tool belonging to and empowering a minority –men- in the society, and policy makers –men- have always obtained the power by using politics. Women's struggle to show and prove themselves (entering to business life, founding organisations or becoming members of them) has been perceived as a threat, which might harm the balances in the society and has been subject to resistance (Bora, Isat, 2006:15). However, sustainable development depends on the equal distribution of the sources for today and tomorrow. This can never be managed without gender equality. Gender equality is not only a key issue for sustainable development, but also an objective on its own for social development and environmental sustainability (Informal Document, 2011:7;Flannery, 2011).

If the main objective of sustainability is thinking of future, assuring the benefits of future generations, and meeting their current needs without limiting their skills and opportunities; women should also be included in the process of sustainable development (Ozyol). Sustainable development cannot be maintained without the equal distribution of the sources both today and tomorrow. While meeting the needs of people, these policies should definitely avoid risking the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Informal Document, 2011:20).

In order to ensure woman participation to the development process, patriarchal ideologies should change. Giving women no chance of involvement in the economical sustainable development plans shall make a sustainable development impossible. Sustainable development is only possible with proper planning and management of quality human resources (Meena, 1992).

Regarding the active participation of women to sustainable development, education is an important factor. Educated women are able to bring up the future generations. They make more suitable and proper preferences on that sense and they bring up healthy generations

(Vizyon 2050, 2010:48).* In this respect, investments which target improving women's living and lifestyle are quite important concerning sustainability. Management of the natural resources and climate changes affect primarily women due to their role in the family (Bachelet, 2012). It is easier for educated women to adopt a sustainable lifestyle. Educated women contribute to society in several ways as mentioned below: (Vizyon 2050, 2010:48);

They possess detailed product information or demand information.

They share feedbacks with the companies from which they purchase the products (sharing expectations and areas of interest). This way they provide chances for increasing the abilities of these companies for managing sustainability.

Life quality of women increases with education. Thereby their negative impact on the ecological environment decreases and they find solutions.

They transfer the traditional knowledge and skills to future generations.

They contribute to environment in terms of hygiene and recycling.

3.SUSTAINABLE WOMEN POLICIES IN LOCAL ADMINISTRATIONS

It has been accepted in 1992 United Nations Environment and Development Conference held in Rio de Janeiro that social, economical and environmental factors affect each others' concerning sustainability. The resolutions that emerged from this summit are called 'Agenda 21' and with those resolutions it was aimed to prepare the World to the next century. 'Agenda 21' is an action plan including the activities local administrations should follow as well (Yapıcı, 2003:225). It was stated in the action plan that together with other actors, local administrations should start a participatory process, determine the environmental and development problems in the cities and build a local agenda (Bora, Isat, 2006:42). Local administrations are parties of this responsibility in terms of their position and structure. Local administrations meet the spatial, public, socio-cultural and common economical needs of the people residing in a city and solve the problems of people*1. Local administrations are obliged to ensure that people live and work in secure, healthy environments and urban areas are used efficiently. While providing these services, they also have to participate in the

* -such as a decrease in infant death rate, malnutrition cases and birth rate, making conscious preferences concerning consumption, creating an awareness relating the importance of insurance against the risk of disasters, increasing household income levels-

*Tasks such as construction, water, sewer system, fire departments, police service, traffic, marriage registration, providing vocational opportunities, public transportation, landscaping, protection of the land, preventing erosion, supports, forestation, building parks and gardens, emergency rescue, social services, protection houses for women and children, civil defence duties, and duties concerning the elections.

decision-making processes concerning the areas they are responsible for and audit the services provided (Tokman, Kendirci, 2006). Local administrations are accepted as the schools of democracy and they are more advantageous compared to central administrations in determining the needs of people properly and meeting those needs directly (Seyyar, 2008:30). Although women are in close relations with the environment they live in and sustainability, they are not participating adequately to decision-making processes concerning sustainability issues both in the local and national levels. Participation of women to local administrations is lower than 1 % (Bora, Isat, 2006:35). In this respect, it is obvious that women should be included to the decision makers of local administrations.

4. EVALUATION OF THE (LACK OF) SUSTAINABLE POLICIES TARGETING WOMEN IN ISPARTA LOCAL ADMINISTRATIONS

The scope of this study is, determination of the work conducted by Isparta Provincial Administration and Isparta Municipality with the aim of reaching women who are among disadvantageous groups, evaluation of the sustainability of these studies and introduction of new strategies on this regard.

In this study one of the most important findings is the fact that local administration units are not conscious enough in women studies and this situation has restricted the service areas aimed at women (training courses, women assemblies, women clubs, women guest houses, art centres, kindergartens etc.) This restriction has narrowed our work areas as well. During the study, relative literature obtained from the secondary resources has been examined; data obtained from Isparta Provincial Administration General Secretariat and Isparta Municipality Cultural and Social Programs Directorate (ISMEK) has been evaluated and face-to-face interviews have been conducted with officials.

The low percentage of woman participation in the decision-making processes around Turkey is quite noticeable in Isparta local administration units as well. During March 2009 Local Administrations Election, only 3 women were nominated as mayor candidates in 13 provinces in total including Isparta centre province as well. When the 2009 Provincial Council nomination and election outcomes are evaluated, it is seen that 26 (9, 7%) woman candidates participated the elections against 240 (90, 3%) male candidates and only 1 (0, 3%) woman entered the city general assembly. For 2009 Municipality Council Elections 558 (88, 9%) candidates nominated while the number of woman nomination was strikingly only 63 (11, 1%). After the elections the total number of women in the municipal councils of 13 provinces was 12. Again in 2009 in the centre province of Isparta there were only 3 (4, 8%) women neighbourhood headman (mukhtar) against 59 (95, 2) men headman (Tureli, Caglar 2010:34). Under the light of all this data, it is clear that woman representation in Isparta Local Administration Units is notably limited.

It was announced in 2006 that a 'Woman Guesthouse', which is based on providing direct services for women was founded in Isparta. Isparta Municipality provided the building for the

‘Women Guesthouse’ and Isparta Provincial Administration furnished it. Isparta Municipality’s studies on women were examined, it was seen that ‘Productive Women Bazaar’ Project organized within the scope of Isparta Municipality Arts and Vocational Courses, which are known as ISMEK in short, have entered into service starting from 2010 and have met a considerable interest regarding the appreciation of woman labour. In the scope of 2010 ‘8 March International Women’s Day’ 160 women opened food and handicraft stands in ‘Productive Women Bazaar’, which was arranged in a shopping mall for a short period of time, 7 days. ‘Productive Women Bazaar’ organized in the city centre every year on April lasts for 6 months and no stand fee or charter fee is demanded from the women. ‘Productive Women Bazaar’, which is a social project, is applied in the districts which are popular among the society.

When women producers who open stands in productive women bazaar are evaluated on yearly basis, it is seen that women contribute to family budget with the profit they make from food and handicraft stands (Table 1).

Table 1. Women Producers that Open Stands in Productive Women Bazaar

Participation	Food Stand Participation		Handicraft Stand Participation		Total Participation	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
2010	298	54	255	46	553	100
2011	104	40	158	60	262	100

Source: ISMEK, Isparta, (30.03.2012).

When the data of Isparta Municipality is examined, vocational courses operating in cooperation with Isparta Public Training Center and Evening Vocational Schools draw attention. It was observed that only women preferred courses planned according to traditional woman roles such as sewing, lace and ribbon works. It was determined that both men and women participated in foreign language, literacy and computer courses.

When the course distribution according to gender is examined (Table 2), the lack of courses intended only for women compared to the number of courses to which women and men participate together draws attention.

Table 2. Course Distribution According to the Gender of Participants

Courses Participants	Courses opened in 2009		Courses opened in 2010		Courses opened in 2011	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Woman+Man	59	94	36	77	48	84
Woman	4	6	11	23	9	16

Total	63	100	47	100	57	100
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Source: ISMEK, Isparta, (30.03.2012).

When the distribution of certificates regarding the gender of participants is examined (Table 3), it is seen that the number of woman participants obtaining certificate is higher compared to men on a yearly basis. Women participation to the courses is higher than man participation. We can perceive this as an indicator of women's endeavour and demand in having a profession and being active in public fields and business life.

Table 3. Distribution of Certificates Regarding the Gender of Participants

People that received certificate	2009		2010		2011	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Women	954	70	671	75	626	79
Men	417	30	226	25	166	21
<i>Total</i>	1.371	100	897	100	792	100

Source: ISMEK, Isparta, (30.03.2012).

5.CONCLUSION

Sustainable development cannot be managed without complete and equal participation of women on every level. Up to now, concerning both the national and local level, women have been inadequately represented. It should be assured that women participate the national and local decision-making mechanisms equally with men. Political parties should abandon the perspective (inequality) which considers women as keys of reaching households during election processes, and after that violates their right to possess seats in the councils or gives them seats only in the number political parties themselves shall decide. The main intentions of local equality action plans are establishing strategies to increase the level of woman participation concerning local decision making processes, increasing their standards of living, ensuring the implementation of these strategies and managing equality on every level. However Isparta local administrations have not started any activity yet in the scope of Local Equality Action Plans.

On the local level (in Isparta) the status of woman should be determined socially, economically and politically and a case assessment (demographical structure, number of woman enterprises, woman foundations, number of woman executives) should be conducted. The problems of the groups, which will be formed according to the outcomes of this assessment and their casual relations, should be discussed and objectives should be determined. Control points should exist during the implementation of the activities (producing local projects, finding funds, protecting the environment and health of women, increasing their standards of living) arranged with the aim of reaching the objectives and deficiencies should be eliminated on time. It is also highly important not to forget supporting the productive and reproductive role of women when policies are concerned (Meena, 1992).

While arranging action plans regarding the objectives, collaborators and partners (media, universities, political parties, and associations) should be determined and the sources we have should be combined. Local women organisations, assemblies, expertise councils and provincial councils should be formed with equal participation of women in order to eliminate the cliché judgements in the society such as the place of woman is her home or husband is free to beat or caress his wife*2 (Alkan, 2007b). It must be made possible for women to live in an easier and more secure way in the cities. Local administration units should follow action plans formed upon equality. During those implementations women's value and sustainability should be placed to the centre of life, and this consciousness should be obtained throughout the society under the leadership of local administrations.

In Isparta where we conducted our study, the lack of sustainable policies for assuring equality between women and men in local level, empowering the status of women in public context and ensuring their representation in decision-making processes is quite noticeable. This is a clear indicator of women's secondary status.

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