

Nutrition of Children in the Spiral of Poverty

Project on Access to Safe Food for Children Living in Ankara

Process Report



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Abbreviations

UN : United Nations

FAO : Food and Agricultural Organization

GEF : The Global Environment Facility

İŞKUR : Turkish Employment Agency

OECD : Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development

OHCHR : Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

SGP : Small Grant Programme

CSO : Civil Society Organizations

SASF : Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundation

TURKSTAT : Turkish Statistical Institute

UNICEF : United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

RPBS : Regional Primary Boarding Schools



Introduction

With the effects of the deepening economic crisis after the coronavirus pandemic, access to safe food has become one of the most visible problems. Ending hunger and malnutrition by 2030, and ensuring that everyone, especially all vulnerable groups, including the poor and the children, have access to safe, nutritious, and sufficient food all year round, is at the top of the Sustainable Development Goals set by the United Nations, which makes the subject even more striking. In the last quarter of 2022, with the price increases caused by the government's economic development preferences, the depreciation of TL against foreign currency, the increase in the loss of income of those who do not have job security due to the coronavirus pandemic, the increase in foreign dependency on both local and national scales, and the decrease in the access of the poor to food, urban poverty became an even more visible problem and has reached a significant level with getting food from garbage becoming a daily meal.

The study of the Deep Poverty Network, which does not fully reflect the effects of the crisis we are in due to the time of its implementation, shows, from the nutritional point of view that 85 percent of the interviewed families cannot reach sufficient food and the children of these families face serious health problems. 38.7 percent of households skip meals almost every day and 39 percent do not have access to clean drinking water. With the unique problems created by the pandemic, this crisis has increased and is likely to increase the number of children who are malnourished and completely disconnected from formal education.

This study focuses on Ankara as a place and children as a subject for access to safe food. It has set the target to identify the problems encountered in children's access to food in the poor areas of Ankara, to evaluate the studies on this issue, to question how they can be strengthened and to examine possible opportunities. In line with this goal, since children's access to safe food is a multi-layered social problem that requires the cooperation of different actors, a process such as a workshop that brings together the stakeholders of the issue and offers the opportunity to produce common ideas and build a solidarity mechanism has been followed as a method of approaching the problem. The main purpose of the project is to organize a workshop that brings together the relevant actors who can make an original contribution to the subject, where they can develop solutions and cooperate with a participatory method, and to propose a model for approaching social problems. In this context, desk research, key actor interviews and field visits were conducted during the workshop preparation process. Based on the workshop outputs, this report has been prepared as a process report containing recommendations to policy makers and actors dealing with issues involving access to safe food and child nutrition.



“Throughout the 20-year history of the Development Workshop, we also focused on the nutrition and development of children in every study we conducted. For two decades we have thought about solutions, generated ideas, developed programs and projects that support local employment and local development, but these have not resulted in substantial, concrete changes. **The issue still remains as a problem before us.** We are aware that this is a long-term and multidimensional issue and actually forms a part of the fight against poverty and we do not want to stop. **We will continue to work to go beyond the known and break the mold, to find new ways.**”

Ertan Karabıyık, Development Workshop Cooperative

Roadmap of the Study

The right to food, which expresses everyone's sustainable access to sufficient, safe, and healthy food, is one of the most basic human rights protected by international law. The inability to provide this right becomes a problem that requires an urgent solution when it comes to children who need sufficient and safe nutrition in order to grow up, develop, be protected from diseases, actively participate in education and have physical vitality.

Solutions to ensure that children who experience poverty and hunger have access to food are frequently found in the policy documents and social aid systems of public institutions, the services of local governments, the projects and advocacy works of civil society organizations, and the initiatives of charitable individuals and communities at a more local level. However, these solutions fall short in tackling poverty and ensuring children's access to healthy and safe food. On the contrary, this problem is intensifying due to the hunger and poverty deepening because of the inequalities in income distribution, fluctuations and crises in the country's economy, climate change and the approaching food crisis as a result of agricultural policy choices, and the number of people affected by hunger at the global level is increasing day by day. Therefore, children's access to safe food remains a much deeper and more challenging issue. It makes it necessary to come together again and again and to work to develop comprehensive and applicable models by constructing more holistic solutions.

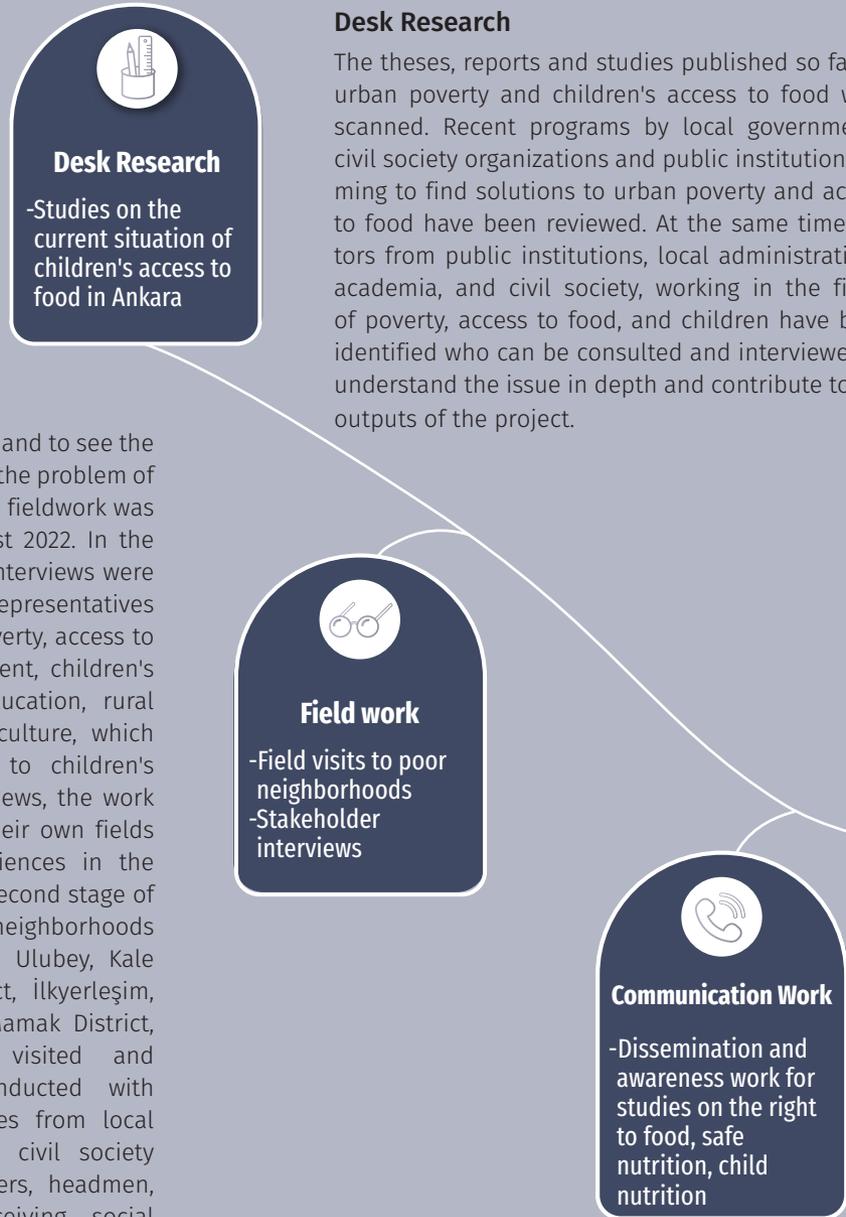
Addressing the issue of children's access to safe food, which is very challenging with its multi-layered and multi-stakeholder nature, should first of all aim to build a solidarity mechanism that is worthy of human dignity, far from the perspective of help-goodness-philanthropy, and in line with human rights. In the light of this basic principle, desk research, fieldwork, workshop design / organization and reporting of project outputs were carried out in order to understand deeply how to approach, think and discuss the problem of nutrition of children, to see the current situation and needs within the scope of urban poverty in Ankara, and then to bring the relevant actors together on a common ground and develop solution proposals.

“The United Nations encourages member states to develop strategies to deliver healthy food to citizens of all ages, but this is not a stand-alone issue, it is something we must address within the framework of human development. Within this framework, we have responsibilities such as making improvements in agricultural policy and establishing equitable solidarity environments in production methods. **We need to go beyond answering the question "who is responsible for these processes" with the "state", and include civil initiatives, neighborhood communities, and provincial/district directorates of the central administration in the construction of solution processes.** We are working on how we can develop answers when there are problems in the production and consumption process of food, how we can implement an understanding that does not turn its back on the production basins of the cities. We want to reconsider, restructure, and prevent the disappearance of food production, which is hardened in a way that will harm the ecosystem, without considering the social, economic problems or nature that cause people to withdraw from the rural areas that can feed the city. (...) **We are in the midst of a fire in which we feel hopeless in terms of pandemic, human rights, poverty, the approaching food crisis, and we may lose our chance to think strategically, but without doing that, we want to ask if we can put it into practice by designing innovative examples that we have not thought about before.** In 5-10 years, we may not have a chance to do this. We can develop projects to set a good example, to remove the obstacles before good examples, to make an ancient knowledge accumulated somewhere, an understanding or a practice from the past feasible.”



Gökmen Argun, United Nations GEF Small Grant Programme (SGP)

Figure 1: Process Chart



Desk Research

The theses, reports and studies published so far on urban poverty and children's access to food were scanned. Recent programs by local governments, civil society organizations and public institutions aiming to find solutions to urban poverty and access to food have been reviewed. At the same time, actors from public institutions, local administrations, academia, and civil society, working in the fields of poverty, access to food, and children have been identified who can be consulted and interviewed to understand the issue in depth and contribute to the outputs of the project.

Field Work

In order to deepen the desk research and to see the manifestations of urban poverty and the problem of access to food in Ankara, a two-stage fieldwork was carried out between July and August 2022. In the first stage, online and face-to-face interviews were conducted with seven civil society representatives with experience in areas such as poverty, access to food, food security, child development, children's rights, food waste and losses, education, rural development, and sustainable agriculture, which are directly or indirectly related to children's access to safe food. In these interviews, the work carried out by the institutions in their own fields and their observations and experiences in the Ankara field were discussed. In the second stage of the fieldwork, some of the poorer neighborhoods of Ankara (Altındağ District, Önder, Ulubey, Kale Neighborhoods; Yenimahalle District, İlkyerleşim, Gayret, Karşıyaka Neighborhoods; Mamak District, Şafaktepe Neighborhood) were visited and face-to-face interviews were conducted with 25 people, including representatives from local governments, Ankara City Council, civil society organization representatives, teachers, headmen, and neighborhood residents receiving social assistance. Although extensive research is needed to deeply understand the urban poverty in Ankara, the interviews conducted revealed strong observations on how the problem was handled and problematized by different actors, how these actors positioned themselves within the social support mechanism, and these observations are shared in the report.

Field work

- Field visits to poor neighborhoods
- Stakeholder interviews

Communication Work

- Dissemination and awareness work for studies on the right to food, safe nutrition, child nutrition

Communication work

A communication plan was prepared and implemented to ensure the visibility of the project. The purpose of the communication work is to both announce the project process and activities, and to raise awareness on the issue by sharing the work and discussions carried out by different actors within the scope of the project issues such as poverty, the right to food, food safety, and child nutrition. The target audience of these studies consisted of local governments, public institutions, activists carrying out advocacy work for disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, CSOs operating in the field, academics, representatives of the relevant private sector and members of the press



Figure 2: Stakeholder List



Workshop on Access to Safe Food for Children Living in Ankara

After the desk research and field studies, the Workshop on Access to Safe Food for Children Living in Ankara was held, which would enable the issue of children's access to safe food to be considered collectively and to develop solutions. Representatives from civil society organizations, local governments, and academia from different fields such as children, education, health, environment, and Ankara residents who are interested in the issue participated in the workshop, which included a full-day program including agenda talks, panels and working groups. In addition, all the actors interviewed during the fieldwork were invited to the workshop and most of them participated. The themes focused on in the agenda talks of the workshop and the contents of the working groups were created in cooperation with these actors. Headmen and civil society organizations operating at the local level participated in the panel section, ensuring that observations and experiences in the neighborhoods were carried to the workshop discussions. Adding to this, Prof. Dr. İlhan Tekeli discussed how to approach the problem of children's access to safe food and how to think about solutions from an analytical perspective and drew the framework of the working groups.

Looking at Poverty as a Wicked Problem

The first two of the United Nations' commitments for 2030 are to end hunger and malnutrition and to ensure that everyone has access to safe, nutritious, and sufficient food throughout the year. On the other hand, the issue of children's access to safe food is also related to many of the global goals. From "Quality Education" to "Clean Water and Sanitation", from "Gender Equality" to "Sustainable Cities and Communities", many goals to be achieved also constitute the assurance of children's access to safe food.



Figure 3: Sustainable Development Goals 1 and 2



Poverty

Poverty refers to the situation where individuals do not have the necessary income and productive resources to provide a sustainable livelihood. Manifestations of this situation include hunger and malnutrition, limited access to education and other basic services, social discrimination and exclusion, and lack of participation in decision-making processes.



Deep Poverty

It is a state of poverty in which people are below the poverty line and cannot reach even their most basic rights, and where social exclusion and discrimination are the cause and effect.



Child Poverty

It refers to the fact that children are deprived of the material, moral and emotional resources necessary for their healthy birth, survival, growth, and development, and that they have to continue their lives with the negative consequences that may arise as a result of all these, so that they cannot benefit from their rights, cannot fully develop their potential and participate in society as equal members.



Right to Food / Nutrition

It refers to the right of individuals to have regular, permanent, and unrestricted access to sufficient food, both quantitatively and qualitatively, that will enable them to lead a physically and mentally satisfying and dignified life. It is one of the oldest human rights accepted by the UN Declaration of Human Rights of 1948.



Access to Food

It refers to the ability of individuals to have access to sufficient resources to obtain suitable foods for a nutritious diet.



Food Security

It is a concept that emphasizes the ability of a society to produce sufficient and accessible food to meet its nutritional needs and the continuity of access to the food produced. The concept of food security refers to the state of physical and economic access to sufficient, healthy, safe, and nutritious food in order to meet the nutritional needs necessary for people to lead a healthy life.



Food Safety

It is a concept that deals with the approaches that will prevent, render harmless or eliminate various risk factors of physical, biological, and chemical nature that cause food-borne or other diseases, in the process of harvesting, transporting, processing, preparing, storing and presenting food to the consumer.



In a properly functioning society, we do not encounter a problem such as malnutrition. This issue is a matter left to families in normal societies. One of the main functions of being a family is to feed the child. The ties of the child in the family, the love of his mother and father, all of these depend on it. **If the family cannot feed their child, the problem is not a nutritional one, it is much deeper. It means there is no family.** It means that there is a problem in the structure of society. The problem of nutrition is not only a problem of food, but also a decisive and instrumental element in the relationship between the child and the family that provides the formation of the family.

So, if that's the way it should be, what's the obvious solution before us? To ensure that families earn sufficient income. So, the problem is a distribution problem. It is the problem of families not getting enough share of the added value created by society. The main responsibility for this is the state. The state should have established more equitable distribution mechanisms to solve this problem, but we know that states in the world are not like that, they are not as they should be. These states cannot ensure fair distribution and cannot provide equal and fair nutrition.

Prof. Dr. İlhan Tekeli

Prof. Dr. İlhan Tekeli explains this multidimensional nature of the child nutrition problem with a concept from the city & regional planning literature: Wicked Problem. According to Tekeli, this concept refers to a complex and insoluble problem faced by a society. It is a problem that is not solved at the point that is thought to be solved even though it has been worked on. The reason the problem cannot be solved is that its roots go much deeper, and it is not as simple as it is thought to be. Tekeli recommends approaching the issue with an analytical and correct perspective in order to produce solutions that would not let those who work in this field deceive themselves.

For this, first, the data reflecting the current situation in the field of poverty and access to food in Turkey can be reviewed:

- According to Türk-İş's October 2022 data, the hunger threshold has increased to 7 thousand 425 TL and the poverty threshold to 24 thousand 186 TL.
- Turkey is the second country with the highest rate of poverty among all OECD countries in the 0-17 age group.
- According to the data of the Turkish Statistical Institute (TURKSTAT), annual consumer inflation was 83.45 percent in September 2022, while food prices increased by 92.4 percent in the same period. The UN Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) Global Food Price Index, on the other hand, increased by 3.8 percent annually for the same period.
- According to the Food Assurance data of the Ministry of Health's 2019 Turkey Nutrition and Health Survey;
 - ☉ 23.4 percent of individuals are concerned that they will not be able to find sufficient food due to the lack of money and other resources.
 - ☉ The rate of those who cannot consume healthy and nutritious food is 22.7 percent.
 - ☉ The rate of individuals experiencing a decrease in the type of food consumed is 22.8 percent.
- According to the data compiled by the Deep Poverty Network in the "Child Malnutrition Fact Sheet";
 - ☉ The frequency of individuals who had to skip meals in the last year is 13.1 percent.
 - ☉ The frequency of those who consume less food than necessary is 16.5 percent.
 - ☉ The frequency of those who could not eat despite being hungry is 8.4 percent.

- According to the results of the interviews conducted by the Deep Poverty Network with 103 households who do not have a regular income and work in daily and insecure jobs in Istanbul during the pandemic,
 - ☞ 85 percent of households do not have access to sufficient food.
 - ☞ 38.7 percent of households skip meals almost every day.
 - ☞ 39 percent of households do not have access to clean drinking water.

Children are the group most affected by the situation of food insecurity, where access to food has become insufficient. Malnutrition causes children to experience much more serious effects than adults:

- Nutrition is directly related to the mental, emotional, and physical development of children. Malnutrition reduces the energy and vitality of children and prevents them from participating in education and life.
- While they should consume nutritious foods every day, children who are faced with food insecurity have difficulties in education. They have learning difficulties in their day-to-day lessons, their interactions with their environment are weakened, and their social skills are hindered.
- Malnutrition causes a series of health problems in children. Children face problems such as stunting, underweight or obesity, weakened immune system, mental development disorders.
- Experiencing hunger also negatively affects children's psychology. Children struggle with the feeling of distress caused by not having access to food, concerns about their parents' well-being, anger, disappointment, and sadness caused by not eating, shame about the family's situation, and the tension that food insecurity creates on family dynamics.
- All of this has lifelong effects for some children, and children who do not have access to healthy food during their developmental years are less likely to fulfill their potential.

One aspect of malnutrition is the problems in accessing quality and safe food. The foods that will ensure the continuity of the state of being healthy also require that they have nutritional value and do not contain harmful substances such as bacteria, viruses, parasites, or chemicals. Children, who constitute a more vulnerable group in the face of poverty and food insecurity, are also at higher risk than adults in the face of health problems that arise when food safety is not provided.

The relationship between food waste/loss and food security is one of the issues worth considering in children's access to food. Slowing down the decrease in the world's food resources by preventing food waste or utilizing food losses in the chain from the field to the end consumer has the potential to create an important resource in ensuring access to food for those facing poverty.



“Poverty affects children the most. An adult’s inability to access food is not the same as that of children. Families allocate the support they receive to their children, do not eat them themselves, but feed them to their children, but it is still not enough. Since children are in the growing process, this situation prevents their healthy growth. **Not only food, but also children cannot reach sufficient stimuli to ensure their mental and physical development, and their physical safety cannot be ensured due to unfavorable housing conditions.** Other consequences of poverty are detachment from education, early marriage, and work. Going to school requires physical safety, nutrition, and school uniforms, and many families cannot afford them, so children are unable to attend school. Even if they start school, they may lag behind their peers mentally and physically because their current development is not sufficient. They start school with a developmental disparity and need more support academically. When this academic support is not provided, detachment from school begins. **So, we are talking about a multidimensional child poverty problem.”**

Selen Yüksel,
Deep Poverty Network



“Food safety refers to the whole of approaches and methods to ensure that foods are freed from physical, chemical and biological hazards that will harm human health, or to control these factors. Food safety is closely related to child health and nutrition. There are several problem areas that are important for food safety. The first is the climate crisis that we thought was a problem of the future, but in fact is happening right now. The climate crisis is something we are experiencing at the moment; it is important that we realize this. Another problem is toxic substance pollution, which is a global issue. Turkey made an industrial development move after the 60’s, especially after the 80’s, and this had very heavy costs on the nature. The load of toxic substances in environmental areas such as air, water and soil has increased considerably. Deforestation, loss of wetlands, decrease in the organic matter load in the soil are all very important problems in terms of food safety and not only in our country, but also in the world.

The most important problems caused by the climate crisis and toxic substance pollution which will deepen in the coming years are loss of efficiency in agricultural production and impoverishment in the nutrient content of food. The climate crisis is causing an overall reduction in the amount of crops harvested. On the other hand, impoverishment in nutrient content is also a big problem. We produce, we harvest, but the amount of iron and zinc in it is less now. **This, in turn, leads to what we call hidden hunger, the state of not getting enough nutrients despite eating a sufficient amount of food.** This, of course, affects children the most. I don’t want to be pessimistic, but I have to underline that the issues are very serious. For example, the organic matter rate in Turkey’s soil is very low. Organic matter content in 88 percent of our soils is below 2 percent, and in most places, it is below 1 percent. This means that **when we say soil, we are now talking about something dead. Soils have largely lost their organic matter content and biodiversity required for food production.** Therefore, in order to ensure the continuity of food production and food security, we strongly need a national program and perspective that will revitalize the soils and increase the organic matter load again.

So, who do these problems affect the most? Although every person is affected by adverse conditions, problems related to nutrition and food safety harm children the most, as children are in the period when their growth and development is at the fastest pace. Children under the age of 18, and especially children under the age of 5, including the time spent in the womb, have been at the center of public health debates for the past 10 years. According to a study by the World Health Organization, **88 out of every hundred people exposed to diseases caused by the climate crisis are children under the age of 5.** Children are also the most vulnerable groups against toxic pollution. **Some toxic substances, which do not cause problems in adults, cause very negative consequences in the neurological development, reproductive health, or cognitive development of children,** and some of these problems can unfortunately be permanent. Children are exposed to toxic chemicals through food, water, and air. **When we talk about future generations and the continuity of society, not only our own children, but all children should be at the focal point of social policy and implementation areas such as food, health, and nutrition.”**

Dr. Bülent Şık, Food Engineer



“We are facing a serious waste of food. Food loss and waste are among the most important causes of climate change. 10 percent of carbon emissions come from food waste alone. In other words, we are changing the climate with tomatoes thrown away at home. We have changed the climate irreversibly. In the past, it was said that deodorants will melt the glaciers, now those glaciers have melted. Today, the 21,000-year-old Cilo glaciers have melted. On the other hand, 828 million people in the world today are fighting hunger and do not have food security. It goes without saying that most of these people are children. **The food waste we cause is four times the total hunger in the world.** In other words, our two biggest problems are actually solutions for each other.”

Berat İnci, Food Rescue Association

What's Happening in Neighborhoods?

Urban Poverty in Ankara and Ways to Cope

The urban poverty encountered in metropolitan cities such as Ankara, which is cut off from the countryside and therefore the flow of food from the countryside decreases, creates a segment of people who, on the one hand, cannot benefit from the income and employment opportunities offered by the city, and is therefore isolated from the cities, having difficulty in meeting their basic needs such as health and nutrition, and on the other hand, not have access to the 'food coming from the hometown'. As a result, this segment of the population face an ever-deepening problem of poverty and access to food. There are many poor neighborhoods in Altındağ, Mamak and Yenimahalle districts of Ankara. Along with the urban transformation, the structure of the neighborhoods is constantly changing and those facing poverty are constantly being pushed into the poorer neighborhoods of the city. Those who could not migrate during the urban transformation, on the other hand, create decaying neighborhoods where deep poverty is experienced, surrounded by gated communities. In Mamak, Dikmen Valley, and Mühye, it is possible to come across such areas where wastepaper collectors generally live. Poverty does not end for those who have the resources to move to the multi-storey buildings built with the urban transformation. Difficulties in meeting basic needs due to unemployment and working for minimum wage may continue for the residents of these new buildings.



“The people living in the apartments are no longer regarded as needy, but when you go inside, you see that this is not the case, and we are even more aware of it during these times. (...) When donations come from associations and foundations, we may receive a request that “aid should be made in shantytowns”. However, the situation of the people who have moved to these apartments is not good either. Especially during the pandemic, there are families with two or three children whose breadwinners were unemployed.”

Evrim Bolat, Headman of Kayalar Neighborhood



“The connection of the poor in the cities with the countryside and benefiting from the products produced in the countryside is no longer a possibility, because there are no people to farm in the countryside anymore. Only the elderly remained in the villages, and they could not engage in agriculture. Young people immigrate to the city because there is no school or suitable education conditions in the countryside. And they face unemployment in the city and become impoverished. These adults somehow continue their lives with poor quality nutrition, but when the new generation of children is malnourished, they also fail in their education life.”

Fecire Yazan, Headman of İlkyerleşim Neighborhood



“Sometimes we chat with the children in front of the headman’s office. They often want stuff from me. It’s hard to explain here, you have to see it. **Children are very scrawny; they do not have proper clothes. They are really needy.** (...) There are houses which cannot afford milk and eggs. A box of eggs is not cheap, this is the fact of life. There are children who don’t get meat in their homes during Sacrifice Feast, or any candy during the Ramadan Feast. We try to help as much as we can.”

Evrin Bolat, Headman of Kayalar Neighborhood

Another factor that changes the structure of neighborhoods is settlements such as Önder neighborhood, where immigrants are settled. A significant part of the Syrian immigrants in Ankara live collectively in the neighborhoods where they were consciously settled. In these neighborhoods, a wall has been built between the Turkish residents and the Syrian immigrants, which is strengthened by the language barrier.

In poor neighborhoods, the number of households earning more than the minimum wage is quite low. Men often work in industrial sites such as furniture, marble production, or in daily or weekly jobs with earnings below the minimum wage, or they work as waste and paper collectors. Children undertake the burden of generating income by selling products such as paper tissues and led balloons in the city center, by working as car park attendants or working in casual jobs. Women do jobs such as housecleaning, cleaning the stairs in the apartments or peddling.

Facing poverty has made ways of coping with poverty a part of everyday life:

- ➔ One of these methods is the close follow-up of social assistance. Applying for financial aid or food aid cards distributed by various institutions, following official procedures, consulting the headmen for needs, searching whether there are other supports, waiting in line for aid distributions, queuing up with utensils to get food from soup kitchens, keeping track of where and what will be distributed during holidays constitute an important part of the daily life errand of individuals, especially women, who experience poverty.
- ➔ Daily meals are tried to be obtained through efforts such as collecting waste food in big markets and in the last hours of the farmers market and buying cheap stale bread reserved for animal feed.
- ➔ Expenses such as rent and bills are frozen for one or two months and paid alternately in order to distribute the limited income that enters the household in such a way that basic needs are met. Issues such as when the service will be interrupted if the bill is not paid, or how long the landlord can delay the rent, are pondered on a daily basis.
- ➔ Mothers have developed methods such as not taking their children shopping so that children do not want food that they cannot afford to buy, and if they take them to shopping, distracting them while they pass by the things children want, and diverting them in a different direction.

Children at Home, School, and Work

There are daily difficulties in meeting basic nutritional needs in poor neighborhoods. Mostly carbohydrate-based foods are consumed at home; each household buys at least 5-6 loaves of bread a day. In households where there is deep poverty, vegetables, fruits, eggs, and cheese are rarely found on the tables. Adults can sometimes work in a grocery store in exchange for fruits and vegetables without receiving a salary. Baby formula stands out as an important need. In cases where formula is not available, babies are given water mixed with sugar. Tap water is used as drinking water and the meals are also made with tap water. Although the actors in the field state that the mains water in Ankara is not very unhealthy and therefore does not cause serious diseases, dirty and rusty water can flow from the taps due to the old water pipes. Mothers stated that they tried to make children drink drinking water for this reason, because when they drank tap water, the children could have diarrhea.

According to actors who are in contact with children in the neighborhoods, many children cannot even have breakfast in the morning. In addition to the problems of access to food, the irregular working conditions of the parents are another factor. Women, who undertake the burden of cooking and feeding their children, do not have the opportunity to prepare a breakfast table for their children in the morning, as they are busy with tasks ranging from peddling, selling paper tissues, and begging. Cooking has other challenges as well. Cooking dry foods such as chickpeas and dry beans, which are usually included in aid boxes, is quite difficult due to the lack of suitable pots, lack or cost of natural gas, so these products can go to waste. This leads to feeding children with ready-made and processed foods. Packaged products such as cheap salami, cheap chocolate cream and cream cheese, which are generally consumed quickly, are fed to children by spreading / putting them on the bread. Processed products are the foods that children living in Ankara can access relatively easily. In the neighborhoods, children mostly buy open chips from grocery stores, and their breakfast may consist of dry bread or pastry. As a result of the insecure working conditions that have normalized, especially with the pandemic, there may be households that have little access to food, albeit periodically.

The persistence of this malnutrition, which consists of foods with low safety and nutritional value, is directly reflected in the physical development of children. It is seen that almost all the children in households experiencing poverty are smaller and shorter than their peers. In addition, extreme thinness or obesity is common. Children may also have other health problems such as eye disorders, prosthesis-orthotics needs, anemia, diabetes, and forgetfulness. This situation makes the struggle against poverty even more difficult for families who have problems in accessing health services.

It is also possible to observe the effects of the problem of access to food that children face in the school environment. Children in poverty-stricken neighborhoods do not bring lunch boxes to school or they contain small amounts of non-nutritive food. Teachers say that children who come to school without breakfast or with a carbohydrate-heavy breakfast such as pastry or bread, and who cannot get enough energy during the day because their lunch box is empty, feel tired and sleepy, and have difficulty concentrating on the lessons.



“In fact, we know that the problem of nutrition is not only a problem of today, it is a problem that has been around for a long time, but now we have reached to a point where this problem is much harder than we have ever encountered before. How did we notice this problem? We noticed it when we saw that children's lunchboxes were empty, or they had dry bread in their lunchboxes. In a sense, **it was the children's lunchboxes that made this much deeper problem visible to us.** If we didn't have a tangible problem like lunchboxes, we wouldn't have noticed it.”

Prof. Dr. İlhan Tekeli



“Research shows that the academic development of children who cannot be fed healthy and sufficiently is not good, so **they cannot show the social mobility expected from them.** You know, we expect a leap from them, or we want them to overcome the conditions they are in, to realize their potential and have a profession. This creates a vicious circle. The effects seem small, but in the long run the consequences can be devastating. This is not a matter of 1-2 years; it is necessary to look at the issue in terms of sustainability. **The deep poverty we live in right now means losing a generation.**”

Nilay Keskin Samancı,
Education Workshop



“There are children who bring pasta, bulgur pilaf, and tomato sandwich for lunch. There are children who can't even reach these, and sometimes a piece of pastry left over from the dinner table comes out of their lunch box. The price of toast in canteens is 20 liras. Ayran is 5 liras. Bottled water is at least 3 liras. There are also problems with access to safe water, and many children have to drink water from the school toilet. These are the facts of life, the facts of Turkey.”

Elif Yetigin, Kocaeli Bread and Rose Women's Solidarity Association



“Some of the children in our Kale neighborhood work as parking attendants in the touristic areas right next to us. They try to park the vehicles of the tourists. We try to attract them to Hayal Evi, but they don't pay much attention to us anymore because these children are hungry. **At first they were poor, now they are hungry.** (...) At the nearby Yeni Hayat primary school – I would also like to congratulate the school principal, Ms. Canan – an agreement was made with Kızılay; food is delivered from Kızılay every afternoon. Now our children eat lunch at school on weekdays. This gave us this: **The rate of children going to school was very low, now it is quite high.** Even though the children came to school, they were leaving the school and going out. They don't go anymore, now the children are more in school.”

Yücel Tatal, Roma Rights Association, Kale Neighborhood Hayal Evi (Dream House)

Children who cannot bring food to school sometimes shop at school canteens, but the food sold in canteens can also be expensive or not nutritious. School canteens, which were inspected by the Provincial Health Directorates in the past for food that are not suitable for sale in educational institutions, weaken in adapting to the sale of healthy food when they are reopened after being closed for a long time during the pandemic period.

Practices such as meal / snack distribution are implemented in schools from time to time to support the nutrition of children, but teachers mention there are experiences such as food spoilage, commotion during distribution and hygiene-based reactions of parents. The pandemic period increased hygiene concern even more. In the past, philanthropists occasionally bought and distributed snacks such as meals or bagels at schools. Today, there is a tendency to not accept this practice, even if it is not directly prohibited. Teachers mention some possible difficulties in the implementation of more comprehensive school meal programs. Especially in old school buildings, there are no interior spaces suitable for dining halls. Many schools cannot allocate kitchen area and personnel if the meals are made at the school, and even if the food is delivered by a transport system, there may not be an area where children can eat outside of the classrooms.

Children who cannot go to school with a full lunch box and do not have support such as a canteen that sells cheap and healthy products or school meals to make up for it can be cut off from education just because of this. Families may not want to send their children to school because they cannot afford to prepare a lunchbox or comparing their own lunch with the lunch of their peers may add a new one to the psycho-social problems caused by not having access to food and may drive children away from school. More research should be done on how children who have dropped out of school for this reason or for other reasons, and who are still working on the streets or in the workplaces despite being in developmental age, are fed, and that the programs to be developed should not only target children at school, but also children in this group.

Support Mechanisms



Efforts to alleviate poverty and increase access to food in Ankara offer direct financial assistance, shopping cards, food parcels, and hot meal distribution to a significant group of people who experience poverty, but these supports do not generally have a holistic approach to combating poverty, and they do not go beyond classical social policy mechanisms. There may be some negative consequences in the implementation of the support mechanisms maintained with the current approach.

 **Failure to achieve sustainability:** Social support is limited to resources or donations, and sometimes these resources and donations may be insufficient in terms of sustainability.

- The concentration of donations during Ramadan Feast and Sacrifice Feast makes it difficult to achieve the ideal of access to safe food throughout the year.
- The pandemic period has made the living conditions in the neighborhoods more difficult. Field workers state that hunger reached very serious levels during this period. There have been cases where it was not possible to continue the existing social work and respond to the ever-increasing need due to both social distancing and lack of resources. Therefore, food aid does not have a sustainable flexibility in the face of unexpected developments.
- In cases where the provision of social assistance in individual households is interrupted not only due to the pandemic but also due to bureaucratic reasons (change of residence, deficiencies in official documents), children's access to food decreases significantly, even for only 1-2 months.

 **Problems in access:** Although individuals who struggle with poverty on a daily basis have a high level of knowledge and awareness of social support, some families may be unaware. As a result of official document reviews and visits by social workers, it can be concluded that some families who really need support are not eligible for support. Due to the language barrier, migrant families may not be able to figure out ways to use the available support.

 **Psycho-social effects:** Efforts to show low economic status in front of every person and institution in order to reach aid harms human dignity. The negative effects of the aid approach, which left its mark on the social support system, are strongly observed. Those responsible for the delivery and distribution of direct aid can expect gratitude in return for these aids. There are patronizing approaches such as *the discourse that among those who face poverty, there is a segment that makes a habit of living only on support and therefore does not want to work*. There may also be psychological burdens arising from this hierarchy on the people responsible for the distribution of aid.

 **Inclusiveness:** The aid approach also creates hierarchies in the disadvantaged. Actors who are placed in the position of distributing aid in the support mechanisms established at the level of both institutions and individuals / communities can sometimes make political and arbitrary decisions about which social segments these aids will go to.



“During the pandemic, we had to seriously address the issue of aid, although it was not actually the subject of the Roma Rights Association. Philanthropic people and institutions reached us. We tried to distribute the food they provided to those in need. By preparing parcels ourselves, we gave priority to putting products such as milk and cheese, which are important for children, into food packages. We have packaged these products separately so that they can be opened and consumed without spoiling. We cannot provide nutrition for the children in the Dream House because we do not have such a budget, but there are times when we eat, drink and share what our volunteers have prepared with their own means.”

Yücel Tatal, Roma Rights Association, Kale Neighborhood Hayal Ev

Among the support mechanisms implemented by public institutions, civil society organizations, local governments, and local communities in Ankara for poor families and children’s access to food and other basic needs, the most prominent ones can be summarized as follows:

Public Institutions

Social assistance of the **Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundation (SASF)**, which operates under the governorship, is one of the main supports. SASF provides various aids to citizens who do not earn income according to disability, poverty, old age and who do not have social security, and distributes aid to immigrants within the scope of social adaptation programs/projects through the resources of other public institutions and international funds

Civil Society Organizations

Turkish Red Crescent Society is one of the important actors in terms of social assistance. The Kızılay Soup Kitchen in Ulucanlar, Ankara, distributes a single hot meal to approximately 4-5 thousand people every day. Its resources consist of offerings, sacrifice donations and other donations. In the past, before the pandemic, activities such as food distribution to primary schools under the name of Red Crescent promotion event, meat support to Regional Primary Boarding Schools (RPBS) in Ankara were carried out with the protocol of the Ministry of National Education.

The Red Crescent provides assistance by asking schools the names of students in need, as well as providing in-kind and cash support to families. There are shopping cards contracted with chain markets and Red Crescent Card programs, which are funded by international organizations and public institutions and offer cash assistance for immigrants and children in fragile households.

Apart from the Red Crescent, there are also smaller-scale civil society activities. With the aggravating conditions during the pandemic period, even civil society organizations that did not undertake a humanitarian aid mission distribute meals to the needy in their target groups by reaching various donations or using their own resources.



Local Governments

Ankara Metropolitan Municipality

The most comprehensive social assistance of *Ankara Metropolitan Municipality* is the **Başkent Card**. With the amounts uploaded on this card, people can do shopping and purchase natural gas. A certain amount of the cards is reserved only for meat and meat products. According to the actors who come into contact with the poor in the field, this initiative, called 'meat aid', is an important move in terms of access to nutritious food. The card application is also considered as a development that food aids made with parcels in the past are now left to preference.

Ankara Metropolitan Municipality Halk Ekmek ve Un Fabrikası A.Ş., which produces and sells cheap bread, produces nearly 1 million breads per day and at least 60 thousand of these breads are distributed to citizens receiving social assistance free of charge. Yet, there can be some commotion in the distribution of bread, and it is necessary to wait in long queues in the early hours.

Through the catering company **Belpa**, the municipality has implemented a food delivery service to Covid-19 patients who cannot leave the house during the pandemic period. However, some practices of the municipality, such as the distribution of one meal to all special education schools, can be terminated because of bureaucratic obstacles.

District Municipalities

Prominent examples of social assistance of district municipalities are listed as follows:

- **Altındağ Municipality's Golden Card application** is a food access system that replaced food parcels. With the cash uploaded on the cards, shopping can be done from the contracted markets. Altındağ Municipality also provides social assistance such as meat, coal, seeds, clothing, provisions etc.
- **Çankaya Municipality** started last year to offer free dinner to university students in its central building in Kızılay. **Çankaya** Municipality also has supports such as the People's Card and the Ramadan Food Card.
- **Etimesgut Municipality's soup kitchen** delivers hot food and bread every day to those in need.
- With **Yenimahalle Municipality's New Card**, cheap food shopping can be done at **Derman Market**, which operates with the support of money transferred to the card, food donations and municipality support. Derman Market, **a food bank system**, is considered to be a more sustainable practice.



“Food Bank is a system that aims to collect, transport, pack, store and deliver the surplus food in the private sector to those in need. It can be established by civil society organizations or municipalities. In this context, donations made by the private sector provide tax advantages to the relevant company. This system was unknown when we set out in 2017. There were no companies other than 2-3 food businesses that donated within the scope of food bank, and there were only three or four food banks all over Turkey. As the Food Rescue Association, we went door-to-door with associations working on humanitarian aid to explain food bank. We organized workshops with the participation of public institutions and local administrations. We have defined the benefits, needs, and problems of this job. Currently, only in Ankara, there are 12 food banks, 4 of which were established by local governments and 8 of them by civil society organizations (CSO). (...) **In order to develop the capacity of food banks, food banking should be seen as a social policy.** That is why we are trying to expand the food banking system in the work of municipalities and NGOs, and to create a structure in which they are also participants in such advocacy activities, which we bring to the public, and where we are included in decision-making mechanisms together.”

Berat İnci,
Food Rescue Association



“There are cases where children cannot even go to school. We follow up with the school principal, we go to the houses when necessary to understand why these children do not come. The parents say, ‘we can’t send them, we don’t have money’. They say, ‘They (children) asked for money, I can’t give it, I can’t send them.’ We don’t have an answer for this, that’s where the words fail. **Then we look to see if we can cover some of the child’s expenses, for example, if we can buy their stationery.** (...) Sometimes we try to meet the expenses of stationery and food by organizing our neighbors and our citizens who are well off.”

Evrım Bolat,
Kayalar Neighborhood Headman



“Our neighborhood is a slum area. I can say that 80 percent of them are families living on minimum wage. Those who have contact with the villages can obtain some food from there. But the lunchboxes that the students take to school are empty. **In order to be able to help these children together with the locals, we sometimes cooperate with businessmen and get support from them.** Sometimes we provide weekly food such as yogurt and milk from grocery chains, we provide food aid to children. But of course, it may be temporary.”

Yüksel Şen,
Anadolu Neighborhood Headman

Neighborhood Headmen

Since the neighborhood headmen are in direct contact with the individuals and can follow their needs closely, they both take on the role of intermediary in the access of the residents to social assistance and lead the way in providing various supports. So much so that the election of an effective headman in neighborhoods where poverty is experienced is considered as a chance by the neighborhood. Headmen undertake tasks such as identifying those who could not access social support, organizing neighborhood residents to meet various needs, ensuring the distribution of aid in cooperation with civil society organizations, and delivering food donations such as sacrifices and offerings to those in need. Diligent headmen are aware of everyone struggling with poverty in the neighborhood, and they can organize the collection of supplies and financial aid from acquaintances and local shopkeepers in case of need.

The neighborhood garden, which was brought to life by the headman of İlkyerleşim Neighborhood of Yenimahalle district, stands out as a support system where the residents of the neighborhood produce and consume their food together and distribute some of the production to the needy in the neighborhood. This urban garden set an example for Ankara in terms of being a local, solidarist and self-sufficient mechanism.

Initiatives at the Level of Individuals and Communities

There are also more local and small-scale aid mechanisms, where individuals come together and create with their own efforts. Examples include communities such as a group of teachers in a school providing regular meals for students with limited access to food by collecting money among themselves, or such as the disabled and refugees starting their own Whatsapp groups and social media accounts to support those struggling with poverty among their own community. Individuals who cannot remain indifferent to the deepening hunger and poverty, especially during the pandemic period, come together to seek donations and organize food distribution in the neighborhoods with these donations.





“We have an urban garden that we created in order to raise awareness about nutrition and to cooperate with the neighborhood. We wanted to draw attention to the disappearance of agriculture in the countryside on the one hand, and the industrial, unhealthy food production on the other. **We wanted to show that public spaces in the city can be considered as agricultural areas and natural farming can be done.** We share the products we produce here with those who work in the production and those in need. We distribute some of them to the neighborhood to raise awareness. We wanted to remind people the forgotten tastes of tomatoes and beans. **We shared our products with approximately 70 households.**”

We only use heirloom seeds in our orchard. We do not use any chemical pesticides against infestation and plant diseases. We did completely natural farming. Families who benefited from this said that the products they produced and ate had a very different taste and thanked us for doing this work. They told us, ‘Thanks to you, our children have consumed healthy food’. This was very valuable to us, that’s exactly what we wanted to do.

Since the poor cannot even buy the food in the markets or they just try to consume the lowest quality and cheapest products in the market, it is impossible for them to access foods that are produced with natural farming methods, because the price is even more expensive. We distributed our products completely free of charge. **Of course, this is a systemic problem, but I still find it very valuable that the local civil society and the people of the neighborhood come together and make an effort.** How much of a solution would that be? Of course, it is a very local, a very small example, but we hope that such areas in cities will be used for these practices and that these examples will become widespread.”

Fecire Yazan, İlköğretim Neighborhood Headman



“At lunchtime at a full-time primary school, children sit on the sidewalk eating. Parents bring food here every day. There are women who have small children and other jobs at home, but they have to come to school six times a day to bring their children, take them, bring their food. **The nutrition of children is not a nutritional problem in its own, but behind it there is an important dimension of women’s labor.** We are talking about women who do not have any other social activities and cannot even find time to sit and have some tea. There are no places where women who are waiting to feed their children in front of the school can take shelter in the cold of winter. (...) Once, one of the parents we met left her young child at home and brought food to her child at school. When she returned, she saw that the switches have blown in the house. There could be a fire in the house. While she brings food to one child, the other child could be cut off from life. Then some news channels could make news with the title of ‘unscrupulous mother’. However, you can see what kind of an obligation women are under. All this burden is on women. Women are discussing how to fill the lunch box, whether to put three or five olives, whether to add more from their own food, and this creates psychological pressure. The school meal is necessary not only to ensure that children have access to food, but also to remove this psychological burden on women.”

Elif Yetigin,
Kocaeli Bread and Rose
Women’s Solidarity Association

Women and Girls

Field observations revealed that possible solutions that can be developed to ensure children’s access to safe food should be designed in a way that reduce and not increase the double disadvantage of women and girls. Women are actors who make daily efforts to cope with poverty and the difficulties in feeding children. This situation increases their grievances by burdening them with reducing children’s feelings of deprivation, applying for benefits and following the official process, deciding how to divide the current income among rent, bills and other expenses, managing the daily economy around, and creating creative remedies in cases where food is insufficient.

- Poverty in some neighborhoods results in mothers working hard on the streets, and therefore girls at home taking on responsibilities at a young age such as cleaning, taking care of the elderly and younger siblings.
- While providing some food aid and other support only to the women of the households has positive results in practice, it also has the disadvantage of deepening gender inequality by placing the responsibility of coping with poverty on women.
- By ignoring poverty or the lack of an adequate aid mechanism, mothers can be held responsible for malnutrition of children, coming to school without breakfast or not cooking hot meals at home.

On the other hand, female headmen are critical actors in neighborhoods in terms of establishing direct relations with women who bear the responsibility of coping with poverty, closely following their current situation, facilitating their access to aid mechanisms, and producing new solutions when necessary.





BAŞKENTE HAREKET GELSİN

ANKARA
YAYGIN ETKİ KAMUSALLIK
DAYANIŞMA HESAP VEREBİLİRLİK
PAYLAŞIM BAĞIMSIZLIK SOSYALLİK ETKİLEŞİM STRATEJİK VİZYON SORUMLULUK ERİŞİLEBİLİRLİK
DEMOKRASİ
ORTAK AKIL BİRLİKTE YÖNETİM VERİMLİLİK
YENİLİKÇİLİK ÇÖZÜMDE ORTAK NİTELİLİK
TARAFSIZLIK ORTAK AMAÇ
ŞEFFAFLIK FARKINDALIK YARAR
İYİ YÖNETİŞİM AÇIKLIK SONUÇ ODAKLILIK
KATILIM MÜZAKARAVARLIK
EMELİYATLILIK

Thinking About the Solution

The Workshop on Access to Safe Food for Children Living in Ankara, held at the end of the project, provided the opportunity for everyone to come together and work in cooperation, as well as revealing the issue in a multi-faceted manner. Workshop participants explored ways to establish and implement solidarity mechanisms to ensure children's access to food; discussed the difficulties and obstacles and developed exemplary models and solutions. Working in groups, the participants discussed the existing and ideal social solidarity mechanisms, 'school meal' opportunities and solidarity networks that can be created with urban resources, giving a chance to traditional and innovative agricultural practices in accessing food. Before moving on to working groups session, Prof. Dr. İlhan Tekeli presented a guiding strategy on how to approach the problem of insufficient or malnutrition of children, and on which principles to develop solutions.



When the social system established by the state is not built on the basis of fair distribution, we face problems such as malnutrition of children. **The state establishes auxiliary mechanisms** to eliminate these problems. This solution is a modernist solution brought from the perspective of modernity. They are non-radical, corrective solutions to fix problems when an even, fair distribution cannot be achieved and therefore problems arise. **Modernist solutions must solve the problem for society as a whole. The modernist solution does not separate the poor from the rich, it distributes the same milk to all students.** Yes, one of the children is rich, but that child will benefit equally from the distribution of milk, which is an integral part of his education at that school. In the solution of modernity, we cannot differentiate according to the situation of the family.

In formulating a solution strategy, we should consider this: When faced with the problem of insufficient nutrition or malnutrition of children, what the opposition should do is clear. Our discourses today reflect this, and it seems right, but we have a shortcoming. Our solutions have a cost. In response to the question of how we will cover this cost, the opposition usually says, 'there is no resource problem, there is a priority problem, and I will give priority to solving this problem'. On the face of it, this is a solution, but in fact it is not, because **a solution achieved through political prioritization may cease to exist when something else becomes a priority. There cannot be a solution that guarantees continuity. This is only an apparent solution.**

When you meet a hungry child, you immediately find food from somewhere and try to feed him. This is also a solution. **The solution of the individual is not the solution of the mind, but the solution of the emotion. This is the post-modern solution.** It is a solution where you use possibilities, opportunities.

So, in the face of this problem, we have a hierarchy of actors, with the state at the top and individuals at the bottom. In between, there are local governments, civil society organizations, schools, neighborhoods. Here I will formulate a strategy for the solution: **The higher the level of the hierarchy of actors solving this problem, the better, because this is the most befitting of human dignity.** If we descended to the lowest echelon, it means the situation is bad. If we are a decent community as a society, if we have a dedication to ourselves and our society, we should have solved this problem at the highest levels as much as possible before it comes to individuals.

Let's see what can be done at each level. The understanding of municipalism of **local governments** is generally to perform the services that include 75 duties listed in the municipal law. This understanding ignores the integrity of the city, its identity, and the problem of forming a community. Today, municipalities that have public spaces and try to create a community in these areas are serious municipalities that do not create a democracy deficit. The services municipality, especially if it is central, inevitably creates a democracy deficit.

There are two strategies that the municipality can use to solve the problem of feeding children. The first of these are initiatives such as allocating resources from the budget and distributing a certain amount of food to children and sending them to schools. I don't think this is the best strategy. **The best strategy to be implemented by the municipality is one that activates the dedication of the society, where people and civil society can contribute to the solution of the problem.** Of course, municipalities will also use their own budgets, but they must run fundraising campaigns to implement this strategy. **If a community is not bothered by their children going to school hungry, that community is not a community.** Therefore, there is a need for a mechanism that opens the way for people to make sacrifices.

There are also neighborhood-level and school-level organizations under local governments. In these organizations, on the one hand, there are the weak, low-income, poor sections of society, on the other hand, there are good people who give money and solve their problems. **In my opinion, such a solution does not befit human dignity. The main solution is to establish mechanisms that will enable them to solve their own problems, instead of seeing those people as the downtrodden segments of the society, and to ensure that people who solve their own problems participate in society with dignity and upright stance.** Of course, we don't need to ignore the benefactors of our society, but there is one important thing here: **The benefactor should not have direct contact with the person they are helping.** They should provide assistance through institutions such as civil society organizations. It should be like that for human dignity. If you notice, I built the whole discussion on this. I think we need this a lot today.

Prof. Dr. İlhan Tekeli



An Ideal Solidarity Mechanism

In the first of the working groups, the current social solidarity mechanisms, which are carried out at the level of individuals, communities, or institutions, which enable children's access to safe food through the support of families, were discussed. While constructing an ideal solidarity mechanism, first of all, the concept of solidarity was emphasized. The working group participants defined ideal solidarity as a form of fundamentally organized commons-based relationship between equals.

By approaching the current social service system / aid mechanisms from a critical perspective, what kind of deficiencies and what needs to be changed in these systems, which are defined as 'solidarity', were discussed and the following conclusions have been reached:

- Our current systems are seen only as a service mechanism and include an approach that establishes a **giver-recipient hierarchy**; they cause the emergence of a **dependency relationship** in which individuals remain in the position of demanding.
- **It does not include an empowering and liberating approach** that allows individuals to stand on their own feet and develop their own models of solidarity by making use of social support mechanisms.
- **Mechanisms that are not transparent and accountable** do not provide clarity on how resources are used and whether justice is provided in distribution. This creates distrust.
- Field experiences show that some individuals/families who are obviously in need of support may stay out of the system due to not being aware of the support or for other reasons, thus the social service system is **not sufficiently accessible**. This system, for example, does not include special support for those who are unable to work at all. It is not accessible to everyone and everywhere.
- There are **legislative obstacles** in front of local governments, which are important actors in developing effective social support mechanisms.

In the working group, the characteristics that an ideal solidarity mechanism should have, were also discussed. Such a solidarity mechanism should;

- Move away from the helping approach and rely on the **relationship between equals**,
- **Enable the solidarity of groups** that want to solve their common problems by using their own power and resources,
- **Include everyone**, not just those who experience poverty,
- Be **implemented through a participatory process** where every step is designed together with groups and institutions that will be included in the solidarity network, where poverty is discussed together with those who experience poverty, and neighborhood-based participatory spaces are created,
- **Have flexibility** in the face of social and political change and transformation processes.



A solidarity model between equals: Neighborhood Kitchens

Neighborhood Kitchens are one of the most suitable models for the imagination of an ideal solidarity mechanism. This system, which became widespread in foreign countries under the name of “Community Kitchen”, in which foods are cooked and hot meals are prepared using the neighborhood’s own resources or through a cooperation, offers a participatory solidarity model where the locals themselves manage, produce, and consume.

Neighborhood Kitchens were considered a model of solidarity in each of the working groups in the workshop in terms of being an equal and self-sufficient system, being used in the preparation of school meals, and being positioned as the final link of urban food supply chains.

Participants expressed several suggestions for the realization of these kitchens:

- ⑥ Taking as an example a model such as Hayata Sarıl Lokantası (Embrace Life Restaurant), implemented in Istanbul, where paid food is served during the day and food support is provided to those in need in the evenings with the support of volunteers, including the neighborhood shopkeepers who operate restaurants in solidarity, thus preventing possible income losses of the shopkeepers.
- ⑥ Arranging them as places where everyone can come and eat, not just those who experience poverty.
- ⑥ Enabling retirees, mothers, unemployed or job-seeking young people living in the neighborhood to come and work voluntarily, thus contributing to the solidarity network.
- ⑥ Developing through cooperation with the private sector.
- ⑥ Giving the administration to the school administrations and designing them as places that serve hot meals to the students through the volunteer work of the parents.
- ⑥ Inclusion of the municipality in the Neighborhood Houses system.
- ⑥ Providing the necessary food for meal preparation from urban sources, benefiting from the budgets of the Ministry of National Education, Ministry of Agriculture and Turkish Grain Board.



'School Meal' to Reach Children at School

Reaching children in the school setting, where they spend a significant part of their time, is the most direct and effective way to ensure they have access to safe food, regardless of the conditions of the home they were born in. At the same time, food distribution in schools was one of the current topics of discussion, which was brought to the agenda through both the strong campaigns carried out by civil society organizations and the practices planned / implemented by many institutions during the period of the project. Therefore, 'School Feeding' was discussed in a separate group in the workshop.

It is obvious that in order to deal with this issue, first of all, it is necessary to **define the problem correctly, to internalize it with different perspectives, and then to develop solutions.** Presentations and discussions during the workshop showed that the actors agreed on the definition of the problem. In the working group, instead of focusing on constructing **an ideal solution**, a discussion was carried out on **what could be realized and how much could be implemented** with a realistic perspective. The participants, who assumed the roles of representatives of a fictitious civil society organization, parents and a business operating in the field of food, evaluated the issue from the perspective of these actors. As a result, certain principles, practices, and solution proposals were shared.

Principles

- A **rights-based** approach should be adopted in nutrition practices at school **in which no one is positioned as "I get help - I give help"**.
- The practices should be **sustainable, contribute to the culture of solidarity**, and should be **based on participation** in the design and implementation stages.
- While **struggling with poverty, multi-beneficiary** models with a perspective of providing employment and letting everyone win should be preferred.

Practice

- There is **consensus that nutrition should consist of a hot meal at school.** It is recommended that the hot meal be a nutritious and varied meal, including meat products, vegetables and fruits, cereals, and dairy products.
- There are obstacles arising from the physical conditions of the schools (the lack of eating areas in many schools, the need for cleaning and delivery personnel, etc.) before the implementation of the hot meal recommendation. While the group study participants put forward as a policy proposal to **make facilities available for hot meals in all schools**, they also propose a **transition process that aims to meet the urgent need.** In this process, the **distribution of snacks** consisting of sandwiches, fruits and healthy drinks to the students is offered as an option. It is also important that the contents of the groceries consist of foods with different nutritional qualities that take into account the diversity of nutrients.
- Again, it is recommended that the provision of school meals be **made at the cost of sales** during the transition phase, and **free of charge** in the long run.
- A consensus was reached that meal support should be **offered to all children in any school or class**, without making a distinction as poor / needy. Similarly, instead of supporting 20 children in 20 schools in a region, for example, it is considered important to **determine 5-6 schools and provide nutrition to all children there.**

- It is more advantageous to start the nutrition program at schools **that provide full-time education**, where children stay at school until 15:00 – 16:00. It is possible that the program to be implemented in these schools will increase school attendance and help keep children away from areas where they should not be.
- In the preparation of menus, it is important to get the ideas of parents, teachers, and children, consult dietitians and create a menu that will prevent waste.
- In the long term, it is important to **support the practices with incentives / to improve the existing incentives and to expand them at the national level.**

Collaborations / Solidarity network

- Children’s access to safe food is a **multi-component** problem, and in the solution of the problem, it is necessary to act with multiple components and to deal with the issue within the framework of a **solidarity network**. Therefore, the nutrition program at school should be developed with a wide range of actors including, public institutions such as especially the Ministry of National Education, District National Education Directorates and İŞKUR (for school personnel support), private sector, civil society organizations, chambers, unions, local governments, parent-teacher associations, suppliers, local businesses, canteens, social workers, school principals, teachers, parents, headmen, neighborhood residents and food cooperatives.
- In order to make the school nutrition program sustainable, it is necessary to **cooperate with local governments and local producers** and turn it into a program that will **contribute to local employment.**
- In order to prevent income losses in school canteens, it can be considered that **canteens be included in the solidarity network as suppliers**, and some of the contents of school meals can be supplied from canteens.
- Initiatives for **eliminating the capacity deficiencies** of schools in terms of physical and labor force should be implemented in order to expand the nutrition program at school.

In the long term, making protocols with public institutions and **transforming the program into a national policy** by ensuring that it is owned by the public sector and society in a way that will not be affected by political approaches should be put forward as a goal. It can thus become a regular part of the school, ensuring every student has access to safe food at school.

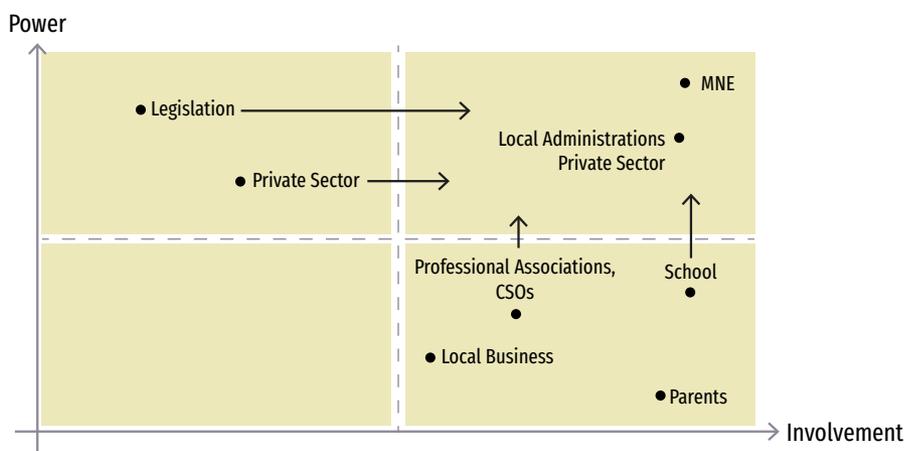
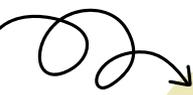


Figure 4: 'Nutrition at School' Working Group, Stakeholder Map

The working group, which deals with the issue of nutrition at school, created a stakeholder chart that identifies possible stakeholders in the implementation of the school meal and their positions on the issue. This graph, which includes the power of the stakeholders to influence the issue on the vertical axis and the level of their involvement on the horizontal axis, was evaluated by the participants as follows:

- Although the current legislation has a decisive role, it does not yet provide an appropriate framework for the implementation of the school meal. Legislation needs to be moved to the right of the graph, that is, renewed in a way that paves the way for the applicability of the school meal.
- Although private sector organizations have a significant influence, their level of interest in the issue is not high. It would be beneficial to move these stakeholders to the right of the graph and increase their relations with the issue.
- Professional Organizations / CSOs and School are stakeholders with high interest in the issue, but relatively low influence. It is important that these stakeholders gain power in a way that will affect both the MNE and Local Administrations, which have high power and interest, that is, they move upwards in the graph.
- At the same time, it is important for Professional Organizations / CSOs and School stakeholders to act in cooperation with Local Businesses and Parents, who have low influence but high interest in the issue.





Traditional / Innovative Food Networks ‘Sufficient for the City’

In another working group of the workshop, the possibilities of implementing traditional or innovative food production-consumption models that make use of the resources in the city and establishing alternative, solidaristic supply chains were investigated. Participants pondered how they could use their experience in this field to ensure children's access to safe food. The most important output of the working group was the proposals that gave agriculture a chance in the fight against poverty. Inspired by the speakers of the workshop, the participants developed a series of solution proposals aiming to strengthen all segments of the city, support local development in the city periphery and establish a self-sufficient community.

- Unused gardens and lands in and around the city can be used for the production of food that will be available to women and children in the neighborhoods, taking the models of **‘community supported agriculture’** or **‘urban garden’** as an example.
 - ☺ Innovative farming methods can be used to make these gardens and lands productive.
 - ☺ Methods such as permaculture and natural agriculture can be used to ensure safe food production.
 - ☺ Agricultural and food groups, which carry out similar activities at the city scale, can work on this issue by creating common platforms.
- A planned approach should be developed in order to establish **a connection between the agricultural areas in the periphery of the city and the segments facing poverty**. What can be done for this is as follows:
 - ☺ Establishing an inventory of the products grown in agricultural areas and their quantities and determining how much of the agricultural production can be directed to the needy by calculating the waste generated.
 - ☺ Carrying out studies to reclaim the lands that have lost biodiversity and to increase their capacity. Implementation of projects that will support the agricultural ecosystem.
 - ☺ Carrying out studies for the revitalization of the regions that have lost their population due to migration to the city. Contributing to reducing the unemployment of the educated and young labor force in the cities by reversing the migration from rural to urban areas. Developing employment policies that will invite these young people between the ages of 20-30 to be more effective in rural areas and encourage them to take part in processes such as production and marketing.
 - ☺ Increasing cooperatives in order to develop agricultural areas and support food producers.
 - ☺ Implementation of the traditional relationship between the city and the countryside with modern methods. Establishment of a system in which the citizens of the city support agricultural production by providing a working environment with modern shelters in the agricultural areas in the periphery of the city, in which they return home with their provisions.
- Models such as local purchasing can be developed that bring together the producers and those who experience poverty **without intermediaries**.
- **Food losses at every stage of food production can be recovered** and made accessible to those facing poverty. Ways of making use of the products that are left in the field or in the garden during the collection from the field, that turn into end-market waste during the sale phase, that are lost during the packaging process and that are approaching their expiration date in the markets, can be searched for the access of families and children.

- The efficiency of **municipal wholesale markets** can be increased as a way to implement this proposal. Local markets can be set up, managed by district municipalities, where the products that will remain in the hands of the producers and turn into waste are purchased at low cost and brought to the people who are facing poverty.
- Local governments can develop cooperation by contacting **smaller initiatives closer to children / families**, such as headmen's offices, civil society organizations, school-parents associations.
- In order to contribute to social solidarity, studies can be carried out to create **a volunteer approach and agricultural culture** in urban society. Practices such as forest schools, scouting, agricultural workshops, and hobby gardens can be expanded so that children can contact nature and agriculture and gain a sense of responsibility.
- By developing mechanisms that will motivate and meet the needs of each and every one of the segments such as unemployed youth, mothers, housewives, retirees, the disabled, and those who have just been released from penitentiary institutions, their voluntary participation can be provided in various stages of food access such as procurement, logistics, packaging, cooking and service.
- Similarly, **awareness activities** can be carried out so that the urban community realizes the level of poverty in the place where they live, and thus the **perception of being a community** that makes it possible to take collective steps can be strengthened.





Conclusion

The children's access to safe food project has revealed, first of all, that the social problem we are dealing with should be considered together with other major problems facing humanity. Combating poverty and child poverty, preventing the climate crisis, ensuring food security, reducing food waste / food losses, developing agricultural policies that will ensure safe food production, and designing initiatives in all these areas with a flexibility that takes into account global and unexpected developments such as the pandemic have direct and indirect connections with the problem area.

Children's access to safe food is also a multi-stakeholder issue where actors ranging from the international community to governments, local governments, civil society organizations, academia, headmen, individuals, and people who experience poverty have the potential to contribute to the problem and the solution at every stage. On the other hand, the decisive role of the authorities, which have the power to decide on the distribution of resources and the obligation to protect and fulfill basic human rights, in the solution of the issue is obvious.

The practices implemented without considering this multidimensional and multi-stakeholder structure fall short in terms of realism and sustainability. In the presence of complex social problems in the background, band-aid mechanisms are, of course, effective, and important in terms of producing urgent solutions to urgent problems and alleviating the pain of child malnutrition, but they cause another problem: These mechanisms strengthen the perspective of aid, which places children and adults who experience poverty at the bottom of social hierarchy and approaches them sometimes with pity and a sense of contempt, and as a result, hides the fact that access to food is a basic human right. With such an approach that makes one social group superior to the other, it does not seem possible to reach solutions befitting human dignity.

The participants contributing to the workshop share the idea that a solution worthy of human dignity, should be based on a rights-based, non-hierarchical, egalitarian, inclusive, participatory, solidaristic, sustainable, realistic / applicable, empowering, accessible, flexible, transparent, and accountable structure which allows communities to solve their own problems by acting collectively, which is based on local development and integrated food production models that all actors win. There is an urgent and absolute need to develop new ways of thinking based on these basic principles, to establish effective collaborations and to take realistic and concrete steps to ensure that all children have access to safe food.

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Appendices



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Social Media Accounts of the Project

You can follow the details of the workshop on @kentineyet accounts:

Twitter: @kentineyet

Instagram: @kentineyet

Linktree: @kentineyet

Workshop Program

ANKARA ÇOCUKLARININ GÜVENLİ GIDAYA ERİŞİMİ ÇALIŞTAYI

17 EKİM 2022

ACILIS KONUŞMALARİ	ANKARA KENT KONSEYİ KIRSAL KALKINMA ÇALIŞMA GRUBU SÖZCÜSÜ KENAN BAYDAR
10.00 - 10.15	KALKINMA ATÖLYESİ PROJE KOORDİNATÖRÜ AYŞE ÖZSOY
GÜNDEM KONUŞMALARİ	KALKINMA ATÖLYESİ GENEL SEKRETERİ ERTAN KARABİYİK
10.15 - 11.15	GEF-SGP TÜRKİYE KOORDİNATÖRÜ GÖKMEN ARGUN GIDA MÜHENDİSİ DR. BÜLENT ŞİK GIDA KURTARMA DERNEĞİ YK BŞK. BERAT İNCİ
11.15 - 11.30	KAHVE MOLASI
PANEL: MAHALLELERDE NELER OLUYOR?	İLK YERLEŞİM MAHALLESİ MUHTARI - FECİRE YAZAN KAYALAR MAHALLESİ MUHTARI - EVRİM BOLAT
MODERATÖR ERTAN KARABİYİK	ANADOLU MAHALLESİ MUHTARI - YÜKSEL ŞEN
11.30 - 12.30	KALE MAHALLESİ HAYAL EV - YÜCEL TUTAL KOCAELİ EKMEK VE GÜL DERNEĞİ - AV. ELİF YETİĞİN

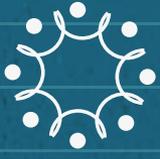


ANKARA ÇOCUKLARININ GÜVENLİ GIDAYA ERİŞİMİ ÇALIŞTAYI

17 EKİM 2022

12.30 - 13.30	ÖĞLE YEMEĞİ
PROTOKOL KONUŞMALARİ	ANKARA KENT KONSEYİ ADINA
13.30 - 14.00	ANKARA BÜYÜKŞEHİR BELEDİYESİ ADINA
ÇALIŞMA GRUPLARINA DAVET	PROF. DR. İLHAN TEKELİ
14.00 - 14.30	KALKINMA ATÖLYESİ PROJE UZMANI DEMET TAŞKAN
ÇALIŞMA GRUPLARI	YOKSULLUKLA MÜCADELEDE DAYANIŞMA MEKANİZMALARİ MODERASYON: DERİN YOKSULLUK AĞI
14.30 - 16.30	YOKSULLUKLA MÜCADELEDE OKULDA BESLENME MODERASYON: EĞİTİM ATÖLYESİ YOKSULLUKLA MÜCADELEDE KENTSEL GIDA AĞLARI MODERASYON: KALKINMA ATÖLYESİ
16.30 - 17.00	KAPANIŞ





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