

## **Our Research Report on Women's Cooperatives is Now Available Online**

**Our research on Women's Cooperatives, *Women's Cooperatives for Social and Economic Empowerment*, reveals that women cooperatives are essential organizations for participation in the public sphere and raising awareness for gender equality.**

This research was carried out by six researchers from different disciplinary backgrounds who are members of the Turkey Antenna of the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network. They reached out to 37 women's cooperatives in 7 regions and 14 provinces. In-depth interviews and focus group discussions were held with 70 cooperative members at various levels. The outcome of research, the report on the women's cooperatives also provides a comprehensive literature review on the issue.

According to this report, women's cooperatives not only provide economic freedom and employment for women but also function as a social network and space for solidarity. It shows that the gains, such as economic freedom, professional development, leaving the house and individualization, increasing the sense of unity and solidarity, development of digital literacy skills, creation of cultural transfer environments, and creation of a common culture, enrich the lives of women, and visibly support women's empowerment.

### **Sustainable Relationship with Local Government is Needed**

Another finding of the research is related to the relations of cooperatives with local governments. The report underlines the need for more sustainable relations between local governments and women's cooperatives with legislative regulations. Women's cooperatives are divided into two types: "*cooperatives established with the support of the municipality or governorship*" and "*independent cooperatives.*" This distinction plays a decisive role in the relations between the cooperatives and local governments. Those cooperatives founded by local governments or civil authorities in order to receive grants from the state or to increase the women's employment rate, increase the cooperatives quantitatively but weaken them in terms of quality and prevent their sustainability. Women cooperatives demand that such as the partnership between municipalities and cooperatives be banned, municipalities support all cooperatives without any discrimination, and such changes be mandatory by law.

### **Economic Crisis and Violence Against Women**

Besides the problems experienced by the members of the women's cooperatives in their own fields, the report also focuses on their opinions about the various problems in Turkey. Insufficient funds/inability to find financial support, ambiguous regulations and procedures governing women's cooperatives, and the intervention of political actors to the cooperatives are mentioned as the most critical problems in the field. Among the problems in Turkey, the economic crisis and violence against women are listed as priorities; and problems observed in education are also frequently mentioned.

In addition, the research provides recommendations on how women's cooperatives can be improved to become more effective. Of these recommendations, the most prominent ones include the following: the legislation on cooperatives should be centralized bureaucratically, all activities should be governed by a single center, and the procedure for establishing cooperatives should be eased.

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