

Policy Recommendations for Donors based on the “Areas of Capacity-Building for Women’s Organizations Needs Assessment Report”



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This policy brief is based on the Needs Assessment on Capacity-Building Areas for Women’s Organizations, a comprehensive study conducted by Women for Women’s Human Rights (WWHR) between September and December 2024 to identify the capacity-building needs and current landscape of rights-based women’s organizations in Türkiye. Building on WWHR’s more than 30 years of experience at the local, national, and international levels and aligned with its 2024–2028 Strategic Plan, the study aimed to provide an up-to-date overview of the women’s and feminist movements, identify area-specific organizational needs, and generate evidence to support grassroots organizing and advocacy efforts in a more systematic and sustainable way. The assessment combined quantitative and qualitative data collected from 57 women’s organizations across Türkiye, offering a comprehensive overview of their key challenges and priority needs. Drawing on these findings, this document presents policy recommendations to strengthen the capacities of women’s organizations and inform the work of public institutions, donors, international organizations, and civil society actors committed to advancing gender equality and women’s human rights.

Women’s organizations in Türkiye play a crucial role in areas of gender equality, combating violence against women, advocacy, solidarity networks, and local organizing. However, this needs assessment shows that a considerable section of these organizations faces sustainability challenges due to limited human resources, short-term and project-based funding, excessive dependence on voluntary labor, and a lack of organizational capacity.

The majority of the organizations which participated in the study are relatively new organizations established after 2011; while around a third of them were founded

after 2021. Although this picture reflects the dynamism of the women’s movement, it also underlines the importance of these new organizations’ need for resources – such as long-term core support, transfer of knowledge and experience, the ability to sustainably partake within the movement.

This policy recommendations document offers substantive suggestions to donors with the aim of strengthening the sustainability of women’s organizations, supporting the feminist movement’s capacity for organizing, solidarity, and advocacy, and boosting its long-term impact.

1. Long-term Funding

Study findings demonstrate that the majority of funding that women's organizations get is for a period of one year or less. The number of organizations receiving core funding is quite limited.

Short-term, output-focused funds

- * make it difficult for organizations to engage in long-term planning,
- * make hiring unsustainable,
- * keep organizations trapped in a constant project cycle.

Policy Recommendations

- Expand multi-year and foreseeable funding mechanisms and make funding flexible enough to respond to organizations' changing needs, crises, and emerging advocacy opportunities.
- Increase core/institutional funding in addition to project-based grants.
- Take into consideration the expenses on human resources, rent, digital infrastructure, coordination, supervision, and well-being under "eligible costs" even in project-based grants.
- Minimize bureaucratic requirements in funding mechanisms for small and newly established organizations.

2. Human Resources and Well-being

The study shows that the vast majority of organizations heavily rely on volunteer labor to carry out their activities. Organizations with full-time staff is quite low; 77% of organizations do now have a single full-time employee.

Administrative tasks, project applications, and even consultancy activities are often undertaken by board members. Along with poverty, which has deepened, particularly since the pandemic, and the shrinking economic opportunities for civil society, all these indicate that the risk of burnout for those involved in feminist activism is much higher compared to the past. The research showed that "support for ensuring the well-being of volunteers" is a burning need.

Policy Recommendations

- Increase the overall percentage allocated to human resources; at least 50% of the core funding should be allocated to human resources.
- Incorporate psychosocial support, supervision, and well-being activities in the scope of funding as part of organizational sustainability.
- Evaluate expenses related to human resources and well-being as fundamental components of organizational sustainability, rather than administrative costs.
- Create specific funding streams for volunteer coordination and organizational care mechanisms.
- Observe organizations' autonomy and independence within funding relationships.
- Support solidarity models that allow organizations to share human resources.

3. Capacity Building

Women's organizations need capacity-building support specifically in the following areas:

- project development,
- reporting,
- financial sustainability,
- use of digital tools,
- monitoring and evaluation,
- risk management.

63% of the organizations stated that they do not have the human resources to conduct monitoring and evaluation. Additionally, 94% of the organizations do not have disaster response plan.

Policy Recommendations

- Instead of single training sessions, design long-term mentoring programs in line with the organizations' priorities.
- Integrate capacity-building into funding programs to be able to address organizations' high-priority needs.
- Make sure that the support provided centers on a feminist approach in the areas of monitoring and evaluation, digital security, data management, and risk management while taking into account the varying levels of development among organizations.
- Offer local organizations free access to technical consultancy roster.

4. Local Organizations' Access to Funding

The study shows that a significant proportion of women's organizations are not able to adequately follow calls for funding. 79% of organizations stated that they cannot sufficiently keep track of funding sources and grant calls.

This particularly makes difficult the equal and fair access to funding for the organizations that are particularly

- operating in small cities,
- established recently,
- with limited command of English,
- and with limited or no professional staff.

Policy Recommendations

- Streamline application processes and expand opportunities to apply in Turkish.
- Reduce complex reporting requirements for small grants.
- Observe diverse needs and working conditions of local organizations while opening specific calls for proposals and designing support mechanisms.
- Diversify grants in accordance with organizations' capacities, size, and institutionalization level.
- Establish mechanisms for pre-application technical support and feedback.
- Design funding mechanism in order to minimize regional, linguistic, and institutional inequalities in access to resources.

5. Networks and Solidarity

A significant portion of women's organizations take part in national campaigns and are part of various networks. However, their experience with international advocacy is rather limited.

The sustainability of the women's movement depends not only on individual organizations but also on support for networks, platforms, and the collective production of feminist knowledge.

Policy Recommendations

- Establish long-term and flexible funding mechanisms to support networking, collective advocacy, and solidarity within the movement.
- Provide travel support to facilitate participation in international advocacy activities and translation and coordination support to overcome language barrier.
- Promote feminist knowledge production, research, and the sharing of local experiences over the long-term.
- Strengthen mechanisms for interorganizational learning and mentoring among regional organizations.

Conclusion

Women's organizations are not merely service providers; they are fundamental institutions that engage in advocacy, produce knowledge, build solidarity networks, drive political change within the political movements they are involved in, bolster the struggle for rights, and make social transformation possible. However, the existing funding models often fail to take into account these organizations' distinctiveness, autonomy, actual working conditions, volunteer labor capacity, advocacy activities, and needs for long-term sustainability.

To be able to build a more just, inclusive, and sustainable feminist movement, it is of critical importance to redesign funding mechanisms with an approach that is

- flexible,
- long-term,
- trust-based,
- care-centered,
- responsive to local needs.

These policy recommendations are based on the findings of the "Areas of Capacity-Building for Women's Organizations Needs Assessment Report".

* Women for Women's Human Rights (WWHR), *Areas of Capacity-Building for Women's Organizations Needs Assessment Report*, 2025. <https://kadininsanhaklari.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Kadin-Orgutleri-Kapasite-Gelisim-Alanlari-Ihtiyac-Analizi-Raporu.pdf>