

Field Study

Strengthening women's
participation in the north of Syria





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20/8/2019

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About LDO



**Local Development
Organization**
منظمة التنمية المحلية

LDO is a civil society non-governmental organization specialized in the support of local administrations, municipalities, and civil society organizations, in addition to, the provision of basic services and the issuance of studies and information. LDO was established at the beginning of 2015 and was registered in Turkey No. 270 - 19154 dated 14/4/2016 by a number of activists and specialists in the area of local administration and governance. The organization has strong relations with local communities and local councils in Syria and has a network of local and international experts in various fields such as administration, Law, economics, strategic planning, institutional development, reconstruction, and real estate rights. LDO works to implement governance programs, provide basic services, develop institutional and human capacities, provide solutions, monitoring and evaluation systems, prepare specialized studies and research, organize awareness campaigns and local dialogue events for local institutions and cadres and their communities, The principles of good governance and the promotion of social responsibility to achieve the development and stability of society.

About Indicators



INDICATORS is a company specialized in analytics, research, and consulting, established in 2017, in Turkey, Gaziantep, provides services that related to data, which is data collection, development of data collection tools, data quality management, building data coding and archiving systems, as well as data analysis for different types of research studies...

INDICATORS provides services in business, humanitarian, and research sectors, seeks to contribute in the development of the capabilities of the different types organizations in the field of data and analytics, through the provision of consultancy, training and scientific guides, in a way to increase the degree of the use of data and gives a clear vision of organization's situation and estimation of future changes that may occur, which will be reflected as decisions based on a good knowledge of their results.

Executive Summary

Based on the importance of the women's role in building society and believing in their ability to effectively and creatively participate in various aspects of economic, cultural, social and political life, and due to being marginalized and discriminated on various levels, this study is conducted in order to understand women's status in economic life; their opportunities to enter the labor market and explore whether the concerned parties have the interest to provide trainings that enrich women scientific and professional experience, capacity building, ability to participate in social activities, cultural awareness, and awareness of their rights, especially the right to education, as well as their ability to participate in political life and decision making. It aims as well at revealing the main challenges that prevent them from optimally playing their role in society and to propose solutions and measures that can contribute to women empowerment.

The study, conducted in May **2019**, covered the liberated regions of north Syria i.e. Aleppo and Idleb governates; Al-Atareb, Kafrnaha and Daret Azza in Aleppo, Ariha and Maara Al-Nu'man in Idleb. The study was conducted by interviewing ten key informants concerned in women's affairs (Two key informants in each of the previously mentioned regions), and by conducting an FGD (focus group discussion) in each region gathering a number of females and posing open-ended questions to obtain in-depth information about women status. Additionally, a questionnaire of closed-ended questions type, including questions related to each sex, was distributed to 300 females and 100 males to reach results that can be generalized on the studied communities.

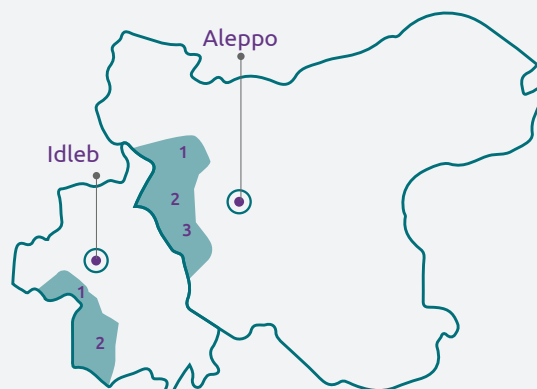
The study was conducted in May 2019 in the liberated north, covering the areas of.

Aleppo:

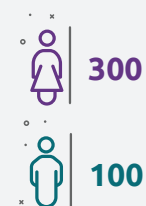
1. Al-Atareb
2. Kafrnaha
3. Daret Azza

Idleb:

1. Ariha
2. Maara Al-Nu'man



was distributed to:



The study showed that the percentage of female workers in the society is somehow low, despite the availability of many areas that are appropriate to the nature of women whether in the academic or profession fields. Some of these areas are significant opportunities for women as they can work at home such as sewing, hair dressing and online jobs. The main reason behind women inability to launch their own businesses is the lack of fund and experience in the field of work, especially when the majority of trainings provided by vocational training and capacity building programs are suitable for males not females such as, blacksmith, carpentry, sanitation and electricity installation.

On the cultural and educational level, the study indicates a considerable decline in women cultural awareness where the majority of women are ignorant of their rights due to the norms and traditions of the society and the absence of gender equality notion. Low level of education among females has also been noticed where **%13** of females are graduated and only **%2** continued their postgraduate study. This is due to the lack of women-targeted cultural and awareness-raising activities and the lack of the number of women bodies and unions concerned with defending women and raising their awareness. Let alone the lack of serious interest of international donors to fund awareness-raising activities, the absence of any significant role of the women in political life as they do not occupy decision-making positions due to community beliefs as well as extreme ideology of some armed groups rejecting of women's participation.



In addition to the previously-mentioned, there is a variety of general factors that hinder women participation such as security status i.e. the increase in kidnapping cases, theft and harassment, as what happened in Ariha City where two female students have been kidnapped, and especially in the absence of public transportation, and fear of bombings and systematized bombardment by Al-Assad regime, that targets Infrastructure and vital facilities such as hospitals, schools, governmental institutions and places of civilians, as well as women inability to play any active role in society due to being busy with fulfilling family requirements and caring for their children, where childcare centers are unavailable.

Consequently, it is recommended in the study that awareness campaign be carried out at various levels, targeting both society and women to raise awareness of the significance of women's role and their ability to influence and participate in society development. Women issues advocacy campaigns should be launched intensively. It is also important to increase the funding of civic bodies and groups concerned with defending women's rights and to seek employment opportunities for women through financing small-scale support programs. Vocational training and capacity-building programs for women should be increased as well. Working on launching a magazine that covers various topics of interest to women so that their capacity to participate in community development gets better.

Findings



At the economic and working level:

- There is a variety of jobs that are suitable for the nature of women in the Syrian current situation. Handcrafts such as sewing, embroidery, hair dressing, and food storing are jobs that can be done at home. Whereas on the academic level, women can find an appropriate opportunity within the educational, health sectors, as well as office work.
- Working online is a great opportunity that enables women to work, taking advantage of the many benefits it provides; such as high financial return, working at home so that one can choose suitable working hours. It is considered as a golden opportunity for graduated women or those experienced in online services.
- The majority of females (%75) possess one or more skills in one working area that are suitable for women, but KIs believe that these skills are not enough to enter the labor market and need further development.
- Society acceptance of women's work is significantly increasing, as confirmed by both males and females, due to the deterioration of economic conditions, low per capita income and the inability of men to cover household expenses.
- The average income of the working woman is 80 thousand Syrian pounds, which is sufficient for the basic needs of the family.
- Low percentage of working women in the community. According to KIs, it is not more than %30.
- Most women wishing to work suffer from the lack of fund to start their own businesses.
- The lack in females' practical and education experiences are considered the main obstacles that prevent them from getting an appropriate job opportunity.
- The state of insecurity and the lack of protection due to shelling, bombing, kidnapping, theft, and harassment are the main reasons behind women refusal to work outside their home.
- When looking for a job, women face gender-based discrimination where employers prefer to employ males due to their lack of confidence in women potentials and their ability to withstand work pressure.
- Women responsibilities and obligations towards the husband and children limit their ability to work, especially in the absence of childcare centers or kindergartens where care is provided for children.



At the level of social activities:

- More than two-third of the participants expressed their acceptance to participate in social activities held within their place of residence.
- KIs point that the social activities are not sufficient in terms of quantity.
- %41 of the males totally agree with female participation in social activities including both sexes if social controls are considered. And %43 of them agree to some extent, whereas only %16 disagree on women participation.
- Acceptance of males for women's participation in women social activities that is higher, as it reaches %78 yes and %19 agreed to some extent.
- %72 of females mentioned that, in their areas of residence, there are social activities in which women can participate, like the students award ceremonies, the plays that conduct in the schools, and the cleaning campaigns.
- More than half of the women participated in social activities.
- Only %26 of women participate in the preparation, presentation, and implementation of social activities. This is due to women poor experience in preparing such activities, or they are imposed by the donors as pre-prepared templates without involving the participants.
- %28 of the participants attribute their absence of social activities to their family obligations, and %19 attribute it to the need to take care of children.
- Women suffer from gender-based discrimination in social activities, with %11 of respondents mentioning that social activities are held just for men.
- KIs point to weak efforts and funding provided by international donors for social events for women.



At the cultural and educational level:

- Little number of women's unions and associations concerned with defending women's rights and enhancing their intellectual and educational level.
- Educational activities aiming at raising women's awareness are too little due to lack of funding provided by donors to civic bodies and groups concerned with defending women's rights.
- Two-third of female participants did not attend any awareness-raising activities about women's rights. The long distance between homes and women's centers, the lack of public transportation and the state of insecurity in streets.
- The educational level of females is

significantly lower than males. The percentage of higher education among females is %15 whereas the percentage of intermediate institutes is %20, while the secondary and lower education levels are %47 and %18, respectively.

- The high cost of post-secondary education in the liberated areas, which range between \$ 200 to \$ 400 (the annual enrollment rate), deprives many females of pursuing their education, especially under the deteriorating economic conditions of Syrian families.
- Closing universities at the liberated regions by the Syrian regime and the fear of parents

to send their daughters to the areas under the control of Syrian regime as they might be arrested is one of the main reasons behind female students being deprived to pursue educational achievement, especially with too low opportunities for university education in liberated areas.

- The spread of the early marriage phenomenon deprives many females of pursuing their educational achievement.
- Female disconnection from education as a result of recurrent displacement is one of the main obstacles to the ability to pursue educational attainment.



In terms of vocational training and capacity-building programs:

- KIs indicate that the number of training centers and institutions within the liberated areas is not enough for the numbers of all those in need of vocational training courses.
- Vocational trainings for females are limited to some professions such as sewing, embroidery, food storing and household products. There is a lack in many important trainings needed by females to develop their businesses such as small business management courses, accounting, CV writing skills, applying for a job, communication skills, persuasion, and self-marketing.
- There is a severe lack of support and funding for vocational training and capacity-building programs that are appropriate for women.
- Poor economic conditions of most females prevent them from attending vocational training and capacity-building programs, since the cost of most of the training program is considered high, especially the ones that about PMD, M&E, financial accounting, questionnaire writing, and electronic questionnaire development.
- Weak advertisement of vocational training and capacity-building programs, where the announcement of the training sessions is carried out a short time before the starting date of training and even on a small scale, which has a significant negative impact on the participation of women as they don't know of such trainings being provided.



On the level of participation in political life:

- Men dominate various leadership and decision-making positions, while women's participation in political life is almost non-existent.
- Some radical armed groups reject any participation of women in political life or occupying leadership positions.
- Women suffer from gender-based discrimination and male refusal to accept women's authority over men or considering women as incapable of shouldering responsibility and taking fateful decisions.
- Females suffer from the absence of women's groups or bodies that represent them and claim their rights to the civil or military authorities who are controlling the land.

Recommendations



At the economic level and work:

- Working to provide training that enables women to acquire professional or academic skills in appropriate areas to women's work.
- The need to empower women who can work and start their own projects through financing small business programs and offering loans.
- Working on developing the capacities of women in the administrative fields by providing trainings for small projects management, strategic planning, self-marketing, accounting, communication skills and persuasion.
- International donors should support and adopt the idea of working online and work on empowering females through providing trainings in the appropriate work fields for online working, or training in dealing with work platforms and English language courses, or providing the necessary equipment, especially personal computers, and supporting operational expenses during the initial stages of work.
- Providing free of charge or at nominal prices kindergartens during the period of women's work and directing humanitarian organizations to do so in their centers.
- Launching awareness campaigns for raising the awareness of society about the importance of women's role and their ability to work, shoulder responsibilities, and for pacifying the impact of prevailing norms and traditions that prevent women from leaving their homes and working with men.



At the social activities level:

- Increase the financial support allocated for the establishment of a variety in quantity and quality of women-related social activities.
- Women should be consulted about the social events they wish to attend.
- Increasing the efficiency and ability of females to participate in the preparation, implementation and delivery of social activities.
- Eliminating the obstacles faced by females that prevent them from participating by providing transportation to and from the centers of community events in addition to opening a kindergarten within the community center implementing the activities.



At the cultural and educational level:

- The need to increase the support and fund women's organizations and organizations concerned with defending women's rights.
- Working towards the issuance of a cultural magazine for women to raise their awareness.
- Shedding the light on the phenomenon of early marriage and defining its negative effects and the danger of depriving women of pursuing their educational achievements.
- Raising awareness campaigns targeting the community and parents about the importance of women's pursuing of their educational achievement.
- Providing financial grants to females who wish to pursue their educational achievements such as, the daughters of martyrs, detainees, displaced people and the most vulnerable groups.
- Providing make-up courses for displaced women who left their schools. This should be carried out during summertime.



In terms of vocational training and capacity-building programs:

- Working on supporting vocational training and capacity-building programs aimed at raising the efficiency of females
- Working to train specialized women staff (trainers) in various fields, especially that related in project management, the establishing of small businesses, accounting, and M&E.
- Working to launch an electronic advertising platform for women, which can be used to publishing all the training announcements before the date of the training.
- Targeting different segments through vocational training and capacity-building programs by facilitating the conditions of beneficiaries' acceptance.



On the level of participation in political life:

- Working to create and support of civic bodies and groups that represent women within society and defend their rights.
- Enhancing women's ability to occupy leadership positions and play pivotal roles through leadership courses, governance, and general administration.
- Promoting women's self-confidence and their ability to participate in decision-making through awareness sessions and psychosocial support, with concentrating on women's success stories in the society and politics.

Methodology of the study

Objectives of the study

The study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. The percentage of women's participation in the labor market, the most suitable areas to work, the extent to which they possess the necessary expertise and skills to participate in economic activities, and identifying the most prominent difficulties faced by women when looking for a job.
2. The availability of social activities, and the role of women in those activities.
3. The degree to which women are aware of their rights and their obligations and the extent of their participation in cultural activities.
4. The educational status of women.
5. The degree to which women possess the professional and academic skills and expertise that qualify them to participate in the building of society.
6. The ability of women to participate in political life and to occupy public posts and decision-making positions.

Data sources

1. KIs concerned with women's affairs, such as employees of women's associations and organizations, etc.
2. Syrian females: Data collection was conducted using two main tools:
 - Focus group discussion: For in-depth information on the study's aspects.
 - Closed-ended questionnaire to obtain results that can be generalized on the study community.
3. Syrian males.
4. Secondary data.

Scope of study

- The study, conducted in May **2019**, covered the liberated regions of north Syria i.e. Aleppo and Idleb governates; Al-Atareb, Kafrnaha and Daret Azza in Aleppo, Ariha and Maara Al-Nu'man in Idleb.
- The study was conducted by selecting a random sample of the residents in the target areas, where **300** females participated in the questionnaire (**60** females in each region). A random sample of **100** males were also chosen (**20** in each area). The questionnaire distributed was closed-ended questions type, including questions related to each sex. Five focus group discussions were also conducted with the females (one focus group discussion in each region) using a focus discussion guide with open-ended questions, in addition to **10** interviews with KIs (**2** interviews in each region) using an interview guide that includes a number of open-ended and closed-ended questions. The characteristics of the target group of females in terms of social status, educational attainment and age have been taken into consideration. In terms of age, the study included different age groups for females. The minimum age for participants is **12** years and the maximum age is **70** years, while the average age of participants is **32** years.

Limitation of the study

There were several kinds difficulties and challenges during the data collection stage, which were as follows:

1. Poor security status.
2. Some of the females refused to participate in data collection process.
3. The study didn't include Aleppo and Idleb Cities because of the security situation.



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