



**Güneydoğu Anadolu Bölgesi'nde
Yoksulluğun Etkisini Hafifletme
Uygulamaları: Bir Değerlendirme**

TÜRK SOSYAL BİLİMLER DERNEĞİ
TARAFINDAN
BİRLEŞMİŞ MİLLETLER KALKINMA PROGRAMI
İÇİN HAZIRLANAN PROJE RAPORU

**An Evaluation of Poverty Alleviation
Programmes in Southeast
Anatolia Region**

REPORT PREPARED BY
THE TURKISH SOCIAL SCIENCES ASSOCIATION
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FOREWORD and ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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“An Evaluation of Poverty Alleviation Programmes in Southeast Anatolia Region”

I. Introduction

Poverty and widening socio-economic inequalities have emerged as major issues in Turkey within the context of a prolonged process of structural adjustment for more than two decades. This, in turn, brought into light the need for institutions and/or policies so as to mitigate the social and political impact of this process, while the country has been saddled between periodic financial crises and successive rounds of structural reforms. As noted by a World Bank study prior to the financial crises of 2000/2001,

“the country has not yet achieved the momentum needed to bring the great majority of its poor and economically vulnerable population into economic mainstream. Progress in reducing poverty and vulnerability, while significant, has been uneven and painfully slow.” (World Bank 1999, p.i)

Not surprisingly, poverty alleviation seems to have become a major preoccupation for a variety of institutions, whilst the notion of charity has been encouraged by the state. While the number of institutions dealing with poverty related issues has been on the rise, the need for institutional restructuring of the public agencies dealing with poverty related issues is intermittently echoed in different quarters. At the same time, a review of pro-poor policy making has been deemed necessary so as to have a better understanding of the difficulties encountered in practice, that might, at least in part, be stemming from a lack of coordination among the agencies concerned. In fact, as there has been an increasing interest in poverty and poverty related issues in Turkey during the last decade, the study of

the agencies and instruments of poverty alleviation has been relatively neglected. Thus, an inquiry into the specific features of poverty alleviation efforts undertaken by several agencies will be timely in shedding some light on the potential problems of institutional fragmentation in this domain. Furthermore, an institutional assessment will need to be complemented by taking into account the experiences of actual and potential beneficiaries so that efforts to reach the needy could be improved. Incorporating a gender dimension into such an assessment will also be invaluable since the lack of such a dimension has been identified as a weakness of poverty reduction programmes in general.

This study is a limited attempt in this direction, as it aims to evaluate poverty alleviation measures as implemented by several agencies in four selected provinces of south-eastern Turkey on the basis of a field survey undertaken in six different locations. While the preliminary studies had been undertaken from late 2002 onwards, the field research was carried out in June 2003 due to the uncertainties in the region during the spring of 2003 because of the war in Iraq.

II. Methodology and the Objectives of the Study

A brief review of the socio-economic development and poverty rankings of the four selected provinces, namely, **Batman, Diyarbakır, Mardin** and **Şanlıurfa**, will be apposite in order to highlight the reasons for their selection. All four of the selected provinces are among the least

developed provinces according to the Socio-Economic Development Indexes prepared by State Institute of Statistics (SIS) and State Planning Organisation (SPO) at different intervals. The relative positions of these provinces in these rankings remain unchanged over a period of more than 15 years despite the fact that the number of provinces increased from 67 to 81, Batman itself being one of those new provinces. It is also to be noted that the variables used in determining the indexes concerned are those which are also used to identify levels of poverty. Furthermore, the rankings of these provinces in series of UNDP Human Development Indexes are strikingly similar to their positions in the Socio-Economic Development Indexes.

Position of the Four Provinces in the Socio-Economic Development Index of the Provinces of Turkey

| | SPO 1985 ¹ | SIS 1995 ² | SPO 1996 ³ | SIS 1998 ⁴ |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Batman ⁵ | - | 58 | 65 | 66 |
| Diyarbakır | 49 | 45 | 57 | 58 |
| Mardin | 57 | 63 | 66 | 68 |
| Şanlıurfa | 55 | 56 | 59 | 63 |

1/ 67 provinces; 2/ 73 provinces; 3/ 76 provinces; 4/ 79 provinces; 5/ It has become a province in 1990.

Source: DIE 2001.

Position of the Four Provinces in the Human Development Index of the Provinces of Turkey (1997)

| | HDI ¹ | G-HDI ² | GEM ³ | HPI ⁴ |
|------------|------------------|--------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Batman | 70 | 70 | 72 ⁵ | 69 ⁶ |
| Diyarbakır | 65 | 63 | 39 | 72 |
| Mardin | 71 | 71 | 65 | 76 |
| Şanlıurfa | 72 | 72 | 63 | 74 |

1/ Human Development Index; 2/ Gender-related HDI; 3/ Gender Empowerment Index; 4/ Human Poverty Index; 5/ 73 provinces; 6/ 78 provinces

Source: UNDP 2001.

The above socio-economic development rankings are also consistent with the data on per capita incomes. Indeed, GDP per capita with current prices in 2001 for the four selected provinces were much lower than the average GDP per capita for the country as a whole. The respective figures were USD 1,313 for Diyarbakır, USD 1,216 for Batman, USD1,008 for Şanlıurfa and USD 983 for Mardin in declining order, whilst for the country as a whole, it was USD 2,146 (DIE 2003).

In all four provinces, population growth rates have been phenomenally high. For instance, the population of Diyarbakır, the largest city of southeastern Turkey, has increased from 305.000 in 1985 to 1997 in 501.000. This population increase is not attributed to fertility alone. During the same period, there was an exodus from rural areas to centres such as Diyarbakır, Batman and Kızıltepe/Mardin in the region which contributed significantly to the swelling of the numbers of their inhabitants. This influx which has stemmed from the deterioration of living conditions due to the lack of

security for the inhabitants of rural areas, in turn, has increased the pressure on both the central and local administrations to provide the social and physical infrastructure essential for the provision of a minimal standard of living of the poor people concentrating in such cities. In particular, health and education would be of primary concern as the high rate of population growth would be reflected in the lowering of the average age of the population. For the ratios of 0-14 and 15-64 age groups in the total population of the selected provinces show striking variations compared to the respective averages for the country as a whole. For instance, the first ratio for the province of Batman is 45 percent, whereas the second ratio is 50 percent. The respective ratios for the population of Turkey, on the other hand, are 29.9 and 64.5.

In fact, in the original project proposal, the reasons for selecting these two provinces have been put forward as follows:

“In this regard, the cities of Diyarbakır and Batman emerge as centres to evaluate both urban and rural poverty alleviation programmes as they display significant concentration of displaced people coming from the villages of several provinces of the region.”

As for the target areas in the four selected provinces of the Southeastern region, the study is confined to the administrative centres of Batman, Diyarbakır, Mardin, and Şanlıurfa provinces plus two districts, Kızıltepe/Mardin and Suruç/Şanlıurfa. That is, there will be altogether **six target areas in four provinces**. Kızıltepe/Mardin and Suruç/Şanlıurfa have been selected for different reasons which highlight the importance of the conditions – socioeconomic and political as well as environmental – that contribute to the deterioration

of the living conditions for the inhabitants of these locations. Kızıltepe/Mardin, like the cities of Batman and Diyarbakır, appeared to be an ever expanding centre of attraction for those who are in search of a place to settle for a variety of reasons, economic as well as political. Suruç/Şanlıurfa, on the other hand, demonstrates that location can be an important determinant of poverty since it directly influences assets, productivity or working conditions.

Among the problems which have been besetting the region, it is also necessary to underline the role of capital flight. On the one hand, better-off individuals/families of the area opt to settle in major cities of the western or southern regions of the country. On the other hand, there is a high degree of absentee landlordism in the region. Either way, those who have the means to invest in the region, refrain from doing so. Given the combination of capital flight and the relatively young average age of the population, it is hardly surprising that unemployment is rampant in the region as a whole, in the four selected provinces in particular.

Another factor in aggravating the conditions for the inhabitants of the region has no doubt been the prolonged crisis of the recent years which has engulfed the Turkish economy. In the southeastern provinces, the crisis has led to the further deterioration of the living standards and diminished the prospects for productive employment. To give an example from Mardin, there were 65 enterprises in the industrial estate - established just outside the town mainly thanks to the incentives provided by the state - creating jobs for up to 2800 people before the crisis. Whereas in the wake of the crisis, it has been found out during the field research that only a handful of these enterprises are still in operation, albeit working with very low capacities and employing no more than 200 people at the most. Furthermore, the intermittent closure of the trade

routes with Iraq since the Gulf War, as it has once more been the case during the last couple of years, deprived many inhabitants of the region from a vital source of income and employment, thereby further intensifying poverty.

Overall, the inhabitants of the six target areas seem to be not only affected by the deterioration of economic conditions in the country at large or natural environmental factors such as drought and lack of arable and/or irrigated land, but also prone to the ups and downs of the political and security considerations in their immediate environment, as well as those of the transit trade to the neighbouring countries.

The agents and instruments of poverty alleviation that have been the focus of this study have been determined on the basis of a desk study and the preliminary in-depth interviews that the project team conducted at the outset of this study. The first round of interviews were held in Ankara and can be differentiated as those held with the experts/representatives of the international organizations such as the World Bank, and the UNDP, on the one hand, and those of the national bodies such as the State Planning Organisation, State Institute of Statistics, Southeastern Anatolia Project Regional Development Administration, Social Assistance and Solidarity Fund, and its Project Coordination Unit of the Social Risk Mitigation Project, on the other.

A key strategic decision was consequently made in regards to the choice of both the range of the policies and the implementing agencies concerned. Basically, it has been decided to opt for those agencies of the central administration – in addition to the poverty alleviation measures provided by the local municipalities and the NGOs - which can be

considered as directly involved in the formulation and implementation of poverty alleviation measures, as distinct from the agencies of the central administration whose activities could be considered as indirectly making an impact on poverty and/or being conducive to poverty alleviation.

In the light of this strategic decision, the following agencies and/or instruments of poverty alleviation have been identified upon which the study will focus:

i) Social Assistance and Solidarity Fund (SASF) and its related Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundations (SSFs)

ii) Green Card as a major instrument of poverty alleviation

iii) The World Bank's "*Social Risk Mitigation Project*" (SRMP) that is being pursued by the Fund through its Project Coordination Unit

iv) Multi-Purpose Community Centres (ÇATOM) of Southeastern Anatolia Regional Development Administration (GAP-RDA) in selected target areas

v) Policies and activities of municipal administrations as agents of poverty reduction in selected target areas

vi) Policies and activities of selected non-governmental organisations (NGOs) active in the region as agents of poverty reduction.

Field research has been comprised of the following components: in-depth interviews with the representatives of the institutions which implement poverty reduction programmes which can be incorporated in one of the above; face-to-face interviews as well as focus-group discussions (FGDs) with the beneficiaries and/or potential beneficiaries of these programmes, which included separate FGDs with women and youth in the poor neighbourhoods of the six target areas. In addition,

visits to households and semi-structured interviews have been made when and if necessary, including on occasions interviews with *muhtars* of such neighbourhoods. Yet, all of the latter will generally be referred as FGDs and their participants in this study for the sake of brevity.

In all six target areas, workshops/meetings were organized, attended by the representatives of the central administration and/or municipal administration so as to obtain detailed information about their activities and inform them about the objectives of the study. The list of the participants of each is provided in the Appendix. These workshops have been especially useful in finding about not only the specific features of the implementing agencies, but also the problems as perceived by the participants and their attitudes towards the particularities of their locations. They were also helpful in identifying the poor neighbourhoods and the choice of potential locations of the FGDs to be held.

An important dimension of the study has been an assessment of the poverty alleviation strategies as they have been experienced by their (potential) beneficiaries. The latter are comprised of i) those who benefit from the activities of the agencies and/or instruments and/or projects, and ii) those who for a variety of reasons fail to benefit. This is deemed necessary to enhance the capacity of the study to assess the poverty alleviation institutions and/or measures by taking into account the viewpoints of those who have been recipients as well as those who might have been, but could not.

It has also been considered that incorporating a gender dimension will be invaluable since the lack of such a dimension has been identified as a weakness of poverty reduction programmes in

general by the relevant literature reviewed below. However, even if there had been no such decision made, women would have emerged as an independent target group. For they turn out to be natural (potential) beneficiaries, being the most vulnerable segment of the poor and/or having the highest potential to be exposed to poverty. Moreover, they were the keenest participants of the FGDs held to the point of feeling disgruntled if and when the sheer number of them in specific locations would not allow the inclusion of all present as participants.

As for the methods employed in conducting the FGDs and/or interviews with the beneficiaries and/or potential beneficiaries of the poverty alleviation programmes of several agencies, it is necessary to point out that the idea was not to undertake a survey which might produce statistically significant data about the characteristics of the poor households of the target areas concerned. Rather, the aim was to obtain a range of viewpoints about the poverty alleviation programmes on the basis of the experiences of the inhabitants of poor neighbourhoods. The characteristic features and viewpoints of the participants of the FGDs will be touched in several sections of this study as and when they become relevant to illuminate the issues concerned. The methods used also differed in different target areas shaped to a certain extent by the exigencies. While more often than not FGDs were held in the courtyards of the houses of hospitable individuals and/or in open spaces within such neighbourhoods with the help and guidance of *muhtars*, other methods were also used such as interviewing the applicants in front of the SSF offices. And in one occasion, in Batman, it proved possible to visit poor households by joining on the spot inquiry teams of the SSFs. Moreover, visits were made to the premises of various workshops organised by different agencies and on a number of

occasions FGDs and/or interviews were conducted with the participants/employees of such employment and income generating initiatives. Visits were also made to other locations of significance in terms of poverty alleviation activities such as soup-kitchens run by SSFs and/or other agencies.

Thus it became possible to find out about the experiences and learn the viewpoints about the poverty alleviation programmes, or lack of them, of more than 200 people in six different target areas. However, the distribution of participants were rather uneven, as about two thirds were interviewed in three target areas, namely, Diyarbakır, Mardin and Şanlıurfa, while the remaining one third in the other three, namely, Batman, Kızıltepe/Mardin and Suruç/Şanlıurfa. The maximum number of participants per each target area was 70 and the minimum was 15. As for the details of the participants of the FGDs, it is striking that the gender distribution of the participants was extremely uneven mainly for two reasons. Firstly, as already alluded, women were more forthcoming themselves and/or encouraged by their men folk to take part in their stead. Secondly, the participants of the workshops visited were mainly women and young girls. So the overall ratio was roughly three to one, that is, for each male participant of an FGD, there were three female participants. The age distribution was, however, more even as there were people from all age groups between 18 and 65 among the participants.

The fieldwork was undertaken by two separate teams of researchers. One team conducted the fieldwork in Batman and Diyarbakır, while the other did the same in Mardin, Kızıltepe/Mardin, Şanlıurfa and Suruç/Şanlıurfa. Both teams carried out the fieldwork during June 2003.

III. Literature Review: Poverty Reduction Strategies in a Historical Perspective

The literature review has taken into consideration studies on poverty and related themes undertaken by, or on behalf of, international agencies such as the World Bank and the UNDP, on the one hand, and the increasing number of discreet studies undertaken in Turkey which evaluate the impact of poverty alleviation policies, on the other. While the former is briefly reviewed in this section, the latter is considered in the section dealing with the main poverty alleviation agency, namely, SASF and SSFs.

To put the poverty-reduction policies into a perspective, it will be apt to focus on the evolution of the thinking of the World Bank in this regard. As noted elsewhere, 'Turkey does not have a well-established tradition of devising policies against poverty' (*Summary of Poverty Experts' Roundtable*, December 4, 2001, UNDP, Ankara). Not surprisingly, the current poverty alleviation policies in the country are shaped to a great extent by the spirit, if not the letter, of the conceptual categories developed by the international agencies. The World Bank, poverty reduction being one of its age-old concerns, occupies a prominent place among them.

Notwithstanding the changes in the means to deal with the problem concerned, the end remained the same for the World Bank. For the latter has defined poverty as the denial of opportunities to the people to live a tolerable life, commensurate with the decency of human beings (World Bank 1999, p.31). Yet, the strategies developed to reduce poverty have shown considerable variety over the last few decades, as already been acknowledged by the World Bank itself (World Bank 1990, p.131;

World Bank 1993, Preface). In fact, the 1990 World Development Report itself signifies a radical shift in the Bank's approach to poverty (Senses 2002, p.41). For the basic tendency from 1960s to 1980 had been characterised by an emphasis on "targeted interventions explicitly designed to benefit the poor in both rural and urban areas" through "integrated" projects which involve activities by a variety of agencies within the countries concerned and by the Bank (World Bank 1990, p.131). This may be considered as the World Bank's response to the earlier tendency which claimed that economic growth necessarily had to precede income redistribution. For what came to be known as "redistribution with growth" strategy, by contrast, no trade-off was necessary between the goals of output growth and social equality. Moreover, there was an emphasis on "human development" to accompany growth so as to reduce absolute levels of poverty (World Bank 1980, p.97).

The 1990s saw a renewed emphasis on poverty reduction. The World Bank itself took note of the fact that the 1980s has been a "lost decade" for many developing countries (World Bank 1990, p.1). This has, at least partly, reflected an acknowledgement of the initial neglect of the possible adverse impact of the structural adjustment programmes - augmented by the Bretton Woods institutions throughout the 1980s – on the poor (Ribe & Carvalho 1990). Thereby, the tendency in the 1990s was to "place greater emphasis on institutional development" (ibid., p.131) and "targeting the poor" so as to reduce "the social cost of reducing poverty" (World Bank, Development Brief, No.9, February 1993). Whereas the Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF) proposed by the World Bank in early 1999 attempted to respond to the intensifying criticisms of the previous two decades that adjustment-with-growth strategy has failed to produce the expected outcomes with severe

repercussions in terms of poverty reduction. For the CDF has been promoted "as a means by which countries can manage knowledge and resources to design and implement effective strategies for economic development and poverty reduction" (*The Comprehensive Development Framework and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers*, Joint Note by James D. Wolfensohn and Stanley Fischer, April 5, 2000). By the same token, the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) to be based on CDF principles and prepared by national governments with the participation of domestic and external partners, are meant to integrate poverty reducing policies into a coherent, growth oriented macroeconomic framework for low income countries, and for countries seeking to obtain debt relief.

As recent analyses conducted in the context of Latin American countries have underlined there is, at least, a correlation, if not a cause-effect relationship, between the implementation of structural adjustment policies and the incidence of rising poverty. In this context, far-reaching transformations in the structure of production that have been accompanying the opening of economies in the region to the forces of globalization might also be seen as reviving the old controversy between economic growth and social equality. For the implementation of market reforms have aggravated the existing inequalities by providing higher returns to those who have access to basic social and physical infrastructure. More specifically, the employment opportunities generated by market reforms have favoured skilled and educated at the expense of those unskilled and less educated, thereby increasing insecurity for the latter (ECLAC 1998; IADB 1996; IADB 1998).

It is therefore no coincidence that the World Development Report 2000/2001 would note that "global developments exert a potent influence on processes of change at national and local levels –

and that global action is central to poverty reduction" (World Bank 2000, p.vi). Basing itself on the CDF, it would identify three areas to initiate action so as to tackle poverty : i) Promoting Opportunity, which means "[e]xpanding economic opportunity for poor people by stimulating overall growth and by building up their assets (such as land and education) and increasing the returns on these assets, through a combination of market and nonmarket actions". ii) Facilitating empowerment, which means "[m]aking state institutions more accountable and responsive to poor people, strengthening the participation of poor people in political process and local decision making, and removing the social barriers that result from distinctions of gender, ethnicity, race, religion and social status". iii) Enhancing Security, which means "[r]educing poor people's vulnerability to ill health, economic shocks, crop failure, policy-induced dislocations, natural disasters and violence, as well as helping them cope with adverse shocks when they occur" (ibid. p.vi).

These aims are certainly in accordance with those echoed by the United Nations *Millennium Declaration and UNDP Poverty Report 2000, Overcoming Poverty*. They also find their reflection in the United Nations publications that advocate inter alia the following: Stronger voices for the poor, economic stability and growth that favours the poor, basic social services for all, open markets for trade and technology, and enough development resources, used well. This is also reflected in the calls for the design and implementation of equitable development policies that will prevent the emergence of poverty (*Summary of Poverty Experts' Roundtable*, December 4, 2001, UNDP, Ankara).

Whether or not the measures that could be initiated in all these areas would be effective in removing the apparent tensions between structural

adjustment and poverty reduction, it seems that the World Bank is aware of the risks involved. In *Attacking Poverty*, the World Bank identified "risk management" as an important issue to be dealt with. It further differentiated between "risk reduction" and "risk mitigation", the former aiming at reducing the probability of a shock or negative fluctuation, while the latter aiming at reducing the impact of shocks. It also underlines the need for "coping strategies" so as to relieve the impact of a shock after it occurs (World Bank 2000, pp.141-145). While the natural disasters and the like are also mentioned as possible causes of such shocks, it is more than obvious that the liberalization of markets (commodity, labour, money) is considered as the main instigator of economic shocks, as they expose populations to the vagaries of the market forces, thereby increasing their vulnerability. The emphasis on "risk management", thus, puts social policy, or lack of it, on the agenda of policy reforms. However, this does not necessarily imply that it paves the ground for the formulation of policies that would take into account the concerns of poor. Rather, the incorporation of social policy into the reform agenda underlines the perceived need for active social policy so as to minimise the political and social costs of structural adjustment (cf. Moore 2000, p.25; World Bank 2001, p.115).

It is noteworthy that *Attacking Poverty* which has apparently caused controversy within the World Bank itself (*World Bank Policy and Research Bulletin* Vol.11, No.4 / Vol.12, No.1, Oct.-Dec. 2000/Jan.-March 2001) puts emphasis on the need for redistribution, though not in the same sense this term was used in the 1970s. For it explicitly underlines the need to use "the power of state to redistribute resources" especially in services that are conducive to what it calls building up of assets, such as education, health, and infrastructure (World Bank 2000, p.79). While there is the usual emphasis on

institutional reforms, one could observe a line of continuity with the 1990 World Development Report since the latter had already stressed the importance of having access to services provided by the public sector as a key determinant of the fight against poverty (World Bank 1990, p.26). It is equally interesting to note that the emphasis on empowerment is linked with that on redistribution and economic development so as to create support for “pro-poor” actions on the part of the “non-poor”. In other words, it would be important not only engage “poor households and poor communities in decisions on the choice, operation, monitoring and evaluation of services and programs” (World Bank 2000, p.79), but also make the redistributive measures beneficial for the “non-poor” by highlighting the East Asian experience that the creation of a skilled, healthy workforce was crucial for successful economic development (World Bank 2000, p.108).

The approach to poverty reduction as reflected in studies such as UNDP Poverty Report 2000, *Overcoming Poverty and UN's Capacity-Building for Poverty Eradication* (Maconick 2002), is also worth mentioning, as they represent further attempts to go beyond the parameters of poverty reduction policies as have been enunciated during the 1990s. The former study underlines the need for “national poverty eradication plans” echoing the 1995 UN Social Summit’s call to address “structural causes of poverty” (UNDP 2000, p.32). In particular, it would take issue with the predominant tendency of the last couple of decades and underline the need for a plan on the grounds that “markets do not promote social justice” (p.32). This is striking since even the United Nations Millennium Declaration has pinned its hopes on the market as the basic mechanism of resource allocation to achieve its declared aims. Moreover, if there is urgency for an explicit allocation of resources to the task of poverty

eradication, it argues, then, there is also a need to build a constituency for change – echoing the World Bank’s *Attacking Poverty*’s call for the building of pro-poor policy coalitions. With its emphasis to tackle inequality as an impediment to reducing poverty, it draws attention to the perception based on the experience of many countries in the 1990s that economic growth on its own is no longer sufficient to reduce poverty (UNDP 2000, p.42). However, it tends to differ from the World Bank’s above-mentioned earlier tendency to use “targeted interventions”, as this is found a conception that is “too narrow”, on the grounds that the impact of macroeconomic policies on poverty is equally crucial, if not more. The critique of this “narrow conception” has entailed, in particular, a refusal to confine poverty reduction to the establishment of “social safety nets” as experienced by many countries in the wake structural adjustment programmes and financial crises. Instead, the need for a “new generation of poverty programmes” that will promote “pro-poor growth” strategies and overcoming of existing socio-economic inequalities, has been underlined (p.33).

Capacity-Building for Poverty Eradication, on the other hand, while concurring with the need for “poverty eradication”, draws attention to the fact that “the idea of what poverty was, and what it meant to eradicate it, changed” (Maconick 2002, p.5). Special mention is made, in this regard, of the UNDP’s efforts to promote the concept of “human development” and the introduction of indicators to assess the latter throughout the 1990s. For these function “as proxies for access to capacities and services within society designed to increase the capabilities and opportunities of the peoples concerned” (p.5). Hence, the renewed emphasis on “the concept of capacity building” as the building block of poverty eradication strategies to be pursued both by the national and international agencies.

Once again, as in *UNDP Poverty Report 2000 and the World Development Report 2000/2001*, the emphasis is on the “extra-market coordination” to use a rather old World Bank terminology. In terms of the trendy terminology of the 1990s, this would be expressed as the missing link of either “effective governance” (UNDP 2000, p.11) or “capable states” (Maconick 2002, p.46). While capable states would be defined as those which can manage participation of the stakeholders and be responsive to them (ibid., p.46), the task of poverty eradication would be conceived as a function of capacity building for the state as well as for the civil society (Maconick 2002, p.58). Moreover, poverty reduction is envisaged as being closely linked with economic development in line with the World Bank’s CDF (Maconick 2002, p.10). Having perceived “a close relationship between capacity building and national ownership of operational activities for development, both at the conceptual/planning and implementation stages”, the emphasis will be on “the appropriate involvement of national organizations, including local beneficiaries and government authorities, in planning and implementing operational activities, as well as in evaluating their effectiveness”, so as to make a significant impact on poverty (Maconick 2002, p.10).

In Turkey, it is difficult to say whether such a perception has started to make inroads in the context of poverty alleviation. For while poverty, and the policy measures to tackle it, have increasingly emerged as a key policy concern for the international bodies such as the World Bank and the UNDP in regards to Turkey as well, it is difficult to say that there has been an acknowledgement of the phenomena of poverty as a major policy concern in the country itself until very recently. Significantly, 8th Five Year Development Plan, in contrast to all previous seven Plans, acknowledges the need for poverty alleviation. No less significantly, for the first

time, a special commission (*Sekizinci Beş Yıllık Kalkınma Planı, “Gelir Dağılımının İyileştirilmesi ve Yoksullukla Mücadele”, Özel İhtisas Komisyonu*) was formed to study the issue and develop a strategy of poverty alleviation for the 8th Plan. Reflecting the approaches developed by several international bodies reviewed above, the latter states the following:

“The main principle will be to implement economic and social policies in harmony, which are aimed at increasing economic growth, eliminating absolute poverty, alleviating relative poverty and approximating the income of the poor segments to an average welfare level (p. 111, par. 911). ... The transfer system will be restructured with a view to ensuring a more effective redistribution of income to the poor or those who are at the poverty line” (p. 111, par. 912).

As income inequalities have increasingly become sharpened in the Turkish society, poverty and the ways and means of dealing with it seem to attract the attention of organizations which represent socio-economic groups with distinct interests as well as other NGOs. For instance, Turkish Industrialists and Businessmen Association (TÜSİAD) published a report entitled *Per Capita Income Distribution and Poverty in Turkey* (in Turkish) prepared by Seyfettin Gürsel et al. in the year 2000, although poverty reduction was not its primary focus. Among the publications and activities of NGOs in this respect, Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TESEV) deserves special mention. In particular, its Human Development Reports prepared for the UNDP have no doubt contributed to a better understanding of poverty in the country.

It is of interest in this regard that there has been an emphasis on poverty eradication as an important issue in Turkey’s development agenda as well as an

emphasis on promoting national strategies and participatory non-traditional approaches to fight poverty by the international agencies (UNDP 2001, p.1). The latter emphasis will, in turn, lead to a call for a better coordinated multi-actor partnership between central and local authorities, between public and private sectors, and between these and multilateral representatives of the international community in the fight against poverty (UNDP 2001, p.3).

IV. Agencies and/or Instruments of Poverty Alleviation

i) Social Assistance and Solidarity Fund and its related Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundations

Any social and institutional assessment of pro-poor policies to be conducted in Turkey will have to focus upon the activities of the **Social Assistance and Solidarity Fund** (SASF/the Fund) (1986, Law No 3294). For this institution has increasingly gained the status of a major player in terms of the poverty alleviation policies implemented in the country, even though its establishment would not necessarily signify the identification of poverty as a major policy concern at the time. In the words of the official board of auditors, the Fund has come to assume ‘all the social responsibilities on behalf of the state in regards to the needy and the destitute who are deprived of any social security provisions’ (YDK 2001, p.1). Put differently, the increasing priority attributed to the Fund as a tool of social policy in the course of the thorough restructuring process which the Turkish economy has been experiencing during the last two decades, could be seen as indicating a shift in the basic approach

adopted in dealing with the issues of social justice and inequality. That is, it entails a shift from an approach that aims to eradicate the sources of poverty by promoting growth-oriented economic policies to another which aims to contribute by means of welfare transfers to the improvement of the living conditions of the people who are unable to attain a minimum standard of living (cf. Buğra & Keyder 2003; Şenses 1999, 2003).

This, in turn, no doubt reflects a parallel shift in the ways in which poverty reduction strategies have been contemplated in the course of the 1990s by the international organisations concerned with this issue as reviewed briefly above. In particular, the acknowledgement of the fact that ‘market reforms’ can be a ‘source of dislocation’ and that ‘in the absence of effective domestic institutions [they] can fail to deliver growth and poverty reduction’ is pertinent (World Bank 2000, p.32). Thus while the importance of economic growth for poverty reduction has not been negated, the emphasis is increasingly placed on issues of ‘governance’ on the one hand, and ‘risk mitigation’ on the other. Even more pertinent is the attempt to compensate for the ‘adverse effects of reforms on poor people’ through establishing ‘safety nets’, i.e. welfare transfer mechanisms (World Bank 2000, p.39). Indeed, institutional strengthening of the social safety net has been among the structural reform priorities of the World Bank in the wake of the 2001 financial crisis in Turkey (World Bank 2003), as it will be elaborated below, while discussing the SRMP. It is noteworthy that the Fund has been identified as the main agency in this regard not only by a recent State Planning Organization study (SPO 2001a, p.173), but also by the World Bank in preference to any new agency that might have been established so as to direct the allocation of resources for poverty alleviation purposes (World Bank 2001).

Yet it is also noteworthy that the activities of the Fund have not been the subject of much research academic or otherwise, until recently. In particular, as already pointed out by Şenses (1999, p.447), there exists very little accumulated knowledge and data about the activities of the Foundations. Two recent studies reflecting the findings of field research conducted during the last couple of years deserve some attention in this respect. One based on the results of questionnaires and in-depth interviews with beneficiaries in 15 provinces which do not include any of the four selected provinces of this study, attempts to evaluate the degree of satisfaction of the beneficiaries of the Fund on the basis of four types of support provided by the Fund (Özcan & Ayata 2002). The other is an attempt to put the changing parameters of Turkey's 'welfare regime' into a theoretical framework on the basis of the field research conducted in one single province, albeit the metropolitan centre of Istanbul (Buğra & Keyder 2003). As these most recent studies on the subject reveal, there is an ongoing controversy about the pros and cons of the ways in which the SASF could make an impact on the alleviation of poverty.

While there is an appreciation of the activities of the Fund especially in recent years in combating the deterioration of the living conditions of increasing numbers of people in both urban and rural areas (Buğra & Keyder 2003; Özcan & Ayata 2002; Şenses 2003), there is also an apprehension that there could be 'moral hazard' problems involved, and more significantly, that they may yet prove inadequate in overcoming the perceived problem of social and economic 'exclusion' of the needy (cf. Buğra & Keyder 2003; Şenses 2003). There is a further disagreement among those who are concerned with the repercussions of this 'exclusion' about the ways in which it could be mitigated. On the one hand, there has been an emphasis on the need to acknowledge 'welfare transfers' to the needy as a 'social right' rather than as a charity so that the

recipients could identify themselves as an integral part of the society in which they live (Buğra & Keyder 2003). The very entrenchment of such a conception, by contrast, would be perceived as contributing to the state of exclusion, as it would feed into a 'culture of dependency' by ending the hopes of the beneficiaries that they could ever be incorporated into the society by reaping the rewards of their own labour (Şenses 2003, pp.331-332).

This is a debate which finds its reflection in the studies focusing on the issue of social exclusion in other contexts. For instance, it has been observed in regards to Latin American societies that the processes of growing social isolation of the urban poor from the mainstream of society becomes a serious obstacle to the accumulation of assets needed in order to cease to be poor (Kaztman 2001). What is implicit in this debate, however, is a rather critical issue, namely, whether or not it is plausible to introduce a 'guaranteed social wage' for the ever increasing number of people for whom 'work' seems to have been losing its saliency as a means of obtaining the necessary resources for material participation.

If there is a divergence of opinion about the impact of the SASF funded activities on the needy, there has been no less a divergence of opinion in regards to the ways in which the SSFs tended to operate in their respective localities. Questions about transparency and accountability, or lack of them, in the functioning of the SSFs have been raised, thereby suggesting that there is a certain degree of arbitrariness in the evaluation of the applications as well as in the distribution of the existing resources (Buğra & Keyder 2003; World Bank 1999, p.57). Even those who have praised 'the transparency and accountability observed in the SSF support system', would note that some SSF personnel 'took the liberty of distributing the support the ways

they deem proper for their specific locations.’ (Özcan & Ayata 2002, p.82, p.76). While the motive of those involved might even be considered praiseworthy, such as making the supports available for greater number of poor families, it has been argued that there is still ‘the danger of giving so little to each that the expected improvement in life styles does not come out and causes dissatisfaction on the part of the recipients.’ (Özcan & Ayata 2002, p.77).

For the advocates of the conception of welfare transfers as a ‘social right’, on the other hand, the provision of a regular source of income for the needy, albeit much less than the official minimum wage, is imperative not only to minimize the possible source of arbitrariness, but much more fundamentally, to secure and/or re-establish the trust between the state and the deprived individuals (Buğra & Keyder 2003). While there is much to commend in this desire to relieve the deprived from a feeling of insecurity, and support them in their endeavour to achieve a moment of security and stability for themselves and their families, it clearly represents a departure from the once prevalent conception of the welfare regimes of the Western capitalist countries that social security ought to aim to prevent poverty rather than to relieve it (cf. Alcock 1997, p.211). In this regard, it can be seen as in line with the World Bank’s emphasis on facilitating empowerment, by making the state institutions more accountable and responsive to poor people. Yet, it is also necessary to draw attention to its possible implications for the SASF and SSFs. Either in addition to an attribution of a political function to the activities of the SSFs, this advocacy entails a proposition to initiate a radical change in the provisioning of the funds, or it implies an alternative organisation to the SASF. For the Fund’s general objective has been, and still is, to try to meet

¹ See below the section entitled ‘Types of Support’ for a partial amendment made in 1997 in this regard.

immediate and urgent needs of those individuals who can not, by definition, include beneficiaries of the official social security systems,¹ rather than providing continuous or regular support.

In other words, the resources allocated through the SSFs still remain as originally envisaged as a charity when SASF has been established as an innovative mechanism as part of a drive to avoid the budgetary constraints whilst increasing public expenditures in politically expedient ways (cf. Oyan & Aydın 1987, p.131; Sallan-Gül 2002). In this sense, it is difficult to concur with the contention that the SSFs have, in practice, turned out to be the vehicles to deliver on the constitutional principle of a ‘social state’ as envisaged in both 1961 and 1982 constitutions of the Republic of Turkey (cf. YDK 2001, p.i; SASF 2003, p.2).

It is no less problematic, however, to think that the SASF could be transformed so as to allow the SSFs to function as a mechanism of a welfare regime which would conceive the provision of welfare as a social right. What has increasingly been clear, however, is the need felt, to quote the 8. Plan again, to restructure “the transfer system ... with a view to ensuring a more effective redistribution of income to the poor or those who are at the poverty line”. In this regard, on the one hand, there have been calls for the reorganization of the Fund and the Institution for Social Services and Children Protection (SHÇEK)² so as to enhance their institutional capacities in fighting poverty (SPO 2001a, p.173). On the other hand, there have been demands for a thorough restructuring of the whole institutional structure in

² (SHÇEK, Law No 2828, 1983) is another public institution, which provides services to vulnerable children, youngsters, the handicapped, elderly people and families in need of protection and support due to social and economic deprivation. SHÇEK, through its nationwide Youth Centres, Child Care Centres, Rehabilitation Centres, Community Centres, Guest Houses for Women, and Solidarity Centres, provides 24h service to more than 50,000 individuals from the above-mentioned “target groups”.

order “to plan, coordinate and integrate the social assistance services”, thereby aiming at an integration of the disparate poverty alleviation measures provided by various bodies within the same institutional framework (SPO 2001b, p.69). Yet, while the last official review of the activities of the Fund noted the need to enact a new law to reorganise the SASF in accordance with the increased workload bestowed upon it over the last few years (YDK 2001, p.5), it was not possible to pass the necessary legislation in the lifetime of the last parliament before the general elections held in November 2002.

Nor the advocacy of welfare transfers as a social right is necessarily in line with the recommendation that household incomes should be raised by increasing productive capacities and employment, not through welfare transfers.³ Indeed, it scarcely pays attention to the possibilities of making them productive again, given its underlying assumption/contention that ‘new forms of poverty’ are a permanent feature of the changing conditions of the global economy, thus cannot be dealt with the advocacy of growth-oriented economic policies (Buğra & Keyder 2003). Whereas the accumulating evidence from the Latin American cases indicate the saliency of what is referred to as ‘pro-poor growth strategies’ which aim for the promotion of growth in ways that can directly benefit the poor. By the same token, the most effective poverty-reduction programmes are considered those which have attempted to incorporate the poor into the economic mainstream rather than rely on income transfers, thereby contributing to the creation of an enabling environment that promotes their employment and real incomes and enhancement of their basic human capabilities through provision of such basic social

services as primary health care, primary education, and nutrition (McKinley 2001). This, in turn, may provide a basis to assess the activities funded by the SASF in general, the promotion of income and employment generating activities by the SSFs in particular.

Working Conditions of the SSFs

In practice, the Fund is allocating its resources through the **Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundations** (the SSFs/Foundations) established at every province and managed by government officials. According to the latest data, there are 931 foundations comprising those established in 81 provincial centres and in 850 sub-provinces (YDK 2001; SASF 2003). At the provincial level, governor, at the district level, “kaymakam” (district governor) is the chairman of the Foundation. The Board of Trustees of the SSFs is mainly composed of the officials of several government departments at the local level such as education, health, social services, and the police, plus the *mufti*. In addition, the mayors and three members of the public to be appointed by the governors do function as trustees of the boards which have weekly meetings so as to consider the applications, according to the information obtained during the field research of the study. Hence, it is not possible to describe these Foundations as NGOs although they have been established as non-profit organisations in accordance with the Turkish Civil Law. Therefore, it will not be wrong to consider them as the implementing agencies of the poverty alleviation policies administered by the central government. Indeed, their activities are subject to the administrative scrutiny of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and to the auditing of the General Directorate of Foundations (Vakıflar Genel Müdürlüğü), whereas the Supreme Audit Board (Yüksek Denetleme Kurulu) of the Prime Ministry functions

³ See McKinley (2001); see also The Least Developed Countries Report 2002: Escaping the Poverty Trap, UNCTAD, Geneva, as reported in Financial Times, 18 June 2002.

as the auditor of the SASF (YDK 2001, p.4; SASF 2003, p.6).

In the six target areas, it has been found out that many SSFs have to work with a very limited number of personnel whilst trying to accomplish their objectives of poverty alleviation. In certain instances, there is a manager (Vakıf Müdürü) responsible for the activities of SSF as in Batman, Diyarbakır, Kızıltepe/Mardin, Şanlıurfa, in other instances such a post does not exist. Whether or not such a post does exist, the actual responsibility rests with the highest ranking civil servant of the administrative centre in question, that is, either a deputy governor assuming that responsibility on behalf of the governor or kaymakam for the city/town concerned as well as its surrounding villages. Almost all those in charge of SSFs' activities stressed that their workload increased tremendously over the last few years, so much so that, in the words of one Kaymakam, poverty alleviation has become their main activity, consuming most of their office time.

In practice, there were some innovative ways of 'employing people' ranging from assigning the book-keeping duties to a school teacher on a part-time basis as in Suruç/Şanlıurfa, to putting someone in charge of the soup-kitchen in Mardin who is formally an employee of the environment department. While there were social policy experts working for SSFs as in Batman or Şanlıurfa, others such as Mardin or Suruç/Şanlıurfa would fail to find applicants with the relevant qualifications. And it is to be noted that in the case of Batman, the social policy experts working for the SSF are not on its payroll. Recently, SSFs have been oriented to employ personnel with computer skills as part of the capacity building attempts with the introduction of SRMP.

Nonetheless, it is possible to agree with the general observation made in regards to the operations of the SSFs that there is a need to develop more standard procedures so as to maintain uniformity in practice as well as to assess their effectiveness in terms of the resources used and the objectives accomplished (cf. Şenses 2003, p.347; World Bank 1999, p.58; YDK 2001, p.33). This would, in turn, necessitate the availability of more reliable and accessible data both about the resources utilised and the beneficiaries.

Application to the SSFs and the Criteria for Eligibility

The evaluation of the applications to the SSFs entails a routine procedure which can be characterised as an attempt to answer the question **'who are the needy?'** as convincingly as possible so that the scarce resources could be most effectively utilised. Indeed, selecting the right people to help and making sure that the poorest receive the support are among the most important objectives of the SSFs. No less significantly, it is deemed essential to make sure that SSFs are known to the poor so that they could apply for support (Özcan & Ayata 2002, p.66). Put differently, reaching to the needy becomes an integral aspect of efforts to identify the needy. In this regard the attitudes of potential beneficiaries gain saliency as much as those of the officials who oversee procedures and evaluate the applications.

On the one hand, what has already been emphasised in recent studies conducted in other parts of Turkey (cf. Buğra & Keyder 2003; Özcan & Ayata 2002), would be reiterated by the FGDs held in six target areas. That is, there is a widespread tendency to refrain from applying to the SSFs because that would not be considered as a very dignified behaviour on the part of the individuals

concerned, especially common among men as compared to women. On the other hand, many officials assert that there is another side to this story. As they put it, ‘people have already lost that feeling of being ashamed because of poverty’, or ‘hunger destroys morality’; the implication being that if there are many who would be ashamed of publicly admitting their deprivation, there are also many who would not refrain from attempting to obtain as much benefit as possible, if necessary without being scrupulous. Hence the importance of the procedural aspects of the activities of the SSFs in reaching those who are really in need.

While there exists apparently an arduous process for the potential beneficiaries to be considered eligible, *muhtars* of poor neighborhoods emerge as key agents in terms of both identifying the poor and reaching the needy. As succinctly put, ‘*muhtars act as intermediaries*’ between the poor who do not have access to information about poverty alleviation measures that they could apply for and the SSFs which cannot reach every poor family in their districts (Özcan & Ayata 2002, p.77). In fact, some SSFs, as in Suruç/Şanlıurfa, regularly organise meetings with muhtars in every few months so as to obtain a more up to date information about the situation of the poor households. It has also been acknowledged that they may introduce a certain degree of ‘favouritism’ to the procedures. Indeed, many participants of the FGDs would either praise *muhtars* for enabling them to benefit from the SSFs activities or hold them responsible for the rejection of their applications. While other studies noted that some *muhtars* would subsequently inform the authorities about the actual conditions of the applicants, having first signed the documents confirming them as needy (Buğra & Keyder 2003), *muhtars* interviewed during the field work would deny playing any negative role in the processing of the applications.

The first step in the application process is to fill an application form the relevant sections of which needs to be answered by a range of different public bodies. In other words, the applicant has to obtain official confirmation that s/he has no property and/or does not own vehicles and is not a beneficiary of one of the existing social security systems in Turkey. However, as it will be discussed below while reviewing the procedures for the Green Card, there are apparently many loopholes waiting to be exploited by the less scrupulous. While there seems to be standard procedures to be applied in processing the applications, it also appears that there are certain variations between SSFs in different target areas in the ways in which they would put them into effect. For instance, to have a better knowledge about the living conditions of the applicants, on the spot inquiries are conducted in certain target areas by the officials of the SSFs themselves whereas in certain others by the security forces. While in Suruç/Şanlıurfa, the trustees of the boards regularly take part in these inquiries, more generally, the authorities themselves would be occasionally making home visits to find about the circumstances of the applicants. In fact, some SSF officials like those in Batman take pride from the fact that security forces are not employed in the investigation process and the application procedures have been eased as some of its aspects have been undertaken by SSF officials thus facilitating a much more rapid process. Others like those in Kızıltepe/Mardin note that the applicants need not spend days going around trying to complete the procedures since most of the offices have been brought together in the same building, thereby reducing the time spent to reach a decision about a particular application.

Recently, it seems that there is an intensification of efforts both to enhance the capabilities of SSFs to reach a target population identified the most needy

and to develop criteria to differentiate between different categories of the needy. For instance, SSF in Mardin would attempt to distinguish between the most needy who should benefit from all types of support to be provided by SSF; those who would be supported to the extent that there are resources available; and finally those who would be only paid for their medical prescriptions, albeit partially. According to information obtained in Şanlıurfa, one third of the households registered at the local SSF belong to the first category. Of these 4000 households, 1000 of them are identified as those without any source of income. Similarly, in Kızıltepe/Mardin, a survey of households in poor neighborhoods with the help of security forces in civilian clothing has been undertaken in order to identify those households where the elderly living on their own, spouses left by their husbands, and those without a regular source of income. While these groups constitute the most needy category, the officials acknowledge that there are still difficulties encountered in giving priority to them in distribution of benefits. A similar study conducted earlier this year in Batman, on the other hand, has focused especially on the youth. It is quite likely that these recent attempts on the part of the SSFs in the target areas to identify the most needy would be tempted, if not directly instigated, by the government's directive at the very end of 2002 to produce data about the most needy households and individuals as part of that government's 'Urgent Action Plan' to accelerate the provision of support for the most needy. Indeed, 912 SSFs out a total of 931 have reportedly provided the data as requested by the end of February 2003 (cf.SASF 2003, p.17).

As for the criteria attempted to be developed to differentiate between different categories of the poor, it seems that they are bound to be, to a certain extent, of an ad hoc nature. On the basis of such ad hoc criteria, however, some applications would be

rejected on the grounds there are others 'who deserve to be given priority since their abject level of poverty would cause distress among the public at large'. What has come out during the discussions in Şanlıurfa and Mardin workshops illustrates this quite clearly, and could thus be generalised to a certain extent to all six target areas. While there was a tendency until recently to disqualify those households with fridges, TV sets or telephones as being ineligible for the support mechanisms to be provided by the SSFs, it appears that they would not be taken as an indication of the standard of living anymore, since many poor households would have at least some of them, albeit second-hand. Yet, many participants of the FGDs said that their applications would be turned down or the support they would be getting would be discontinued simply because they had a TV set or a fridge. Others said that the appliances that they have are either of no use because they are so old or they had to sell them since their conditions of living further deteriorated. Interestingly, one criterion of absolute poverty highlighted during the workshops by the officials is to see if there are any stocks of basic food stuffs such as wheat, flour, cracked wheat, etc. in the applicants' kitchens.

On the other hand, a regular source of income such as an old age pension is normally considered a good enough reason to deny any support to an applicant. However, old age pensioners might apply for and get the support they might be requesting provided that the board of trustees of the SSF concerned think that their conditions justify such a support. Similarly, to be an owner occupant of somewhere to live might still be considered a differentiating criterion between the categories of the needy, however shabby the premises concerned might be. Moreover, the lack of title deeds on the part of most of the owner occupants is a well known feature of poor neighborhoods. There were also

many participants of the FGDs who said that they live in premises which belong to their in-laws, otherwise they would not be able to afford paying any rents. It has also been pointed out in more than one occasion during the field research in Mardin and Kızıltepe/Mardin that many lorry owners had been without jobs for months, if not longer, because of the closure of the trade routes with Iraq. Yet, they could not qualify as the needy for the simple reason that they own a lorry even though the vehicle is left idle waiting to be sent to a scrapyard and there are no other means of earning a living for themselves and their families. In short, having somewhere to live or even owning a lorry would not prevent them from living in conditions of abject poverty, while precluding them from qualifying for support by the SSFs.

Another important aspect of the application and evaluation process is related to gender dimension of poverty alleviation policies. As it emerged from the discussions with the authorities in several target areas as well as reflected to a certain extent in the FGDs, the process in question is to some extent gender-biased, because it acknowledges the husband as the head of the family and/or the household. The SSFs have started to require the applications to be made by the head of the household so as to prevent overlapping ensuing from applications made by both parties. SSF authorities believed that this would also help them to improve the quality of their records. Whereas the several cases encountered during the FGDs would indicate that not only women have been carrying the brunt of poverty more than anyone else but they have increasingly been emerging as the head of their households whether consciously or by default. Not only has the traditional practice of having more than one spouse continued to be experienced among the poor neighborhoods of the target areas, but increasingly, it seems women are now more

inclined to sever their relationships with their husbands if they feel that the partnership has no future. This, in turn, puts the status of marriage into doubt for many poor families. On the one hand, there are efforts to organise even collective civil marriage ceremonies - as it will be touched upon below while discussing ÇATOMs – so as to strengthen the legal status of the women. On the other hand, many poor women question the value of civil marriage if that institution would prevent them from benefiting from SSF support on the grounds, for example, that the husband who has left the family to live with someone else, has already applied for it.

Financial Sources of the SSFs

While the main source of income for the SSFs is the funds provided by SASF, it is not possible to say that the revenues accruing at the SASF from different sources are allocated for poverty alleviation purposes per se. Ironically, the SASF established as an extra-budgetary fund so as to allow flexibility to the policymakers in directing funds towards certain purposes, turns out to be a main source of budget revenues. Moreover, there would be allocations made by the political authority to other extra-budgetary funds from the SASF resources since the decisions in this regard require the approval of the Prime Minister (YDK 2001, p.4). According to one estimate, the amounts allocated for the SSFs would always comprise less than fifty percent of the total resources distributed by the SASF during the period of 1987-2001, falling to less than thirty percent during 1993-1997 (Sallan-Gül 2002, p.118). However, according to the same study, there has been a significant improvement in the ways in which the Fund's resources have been utilised since 1997, that is, more in line with the purposes of poverty alleviation. As this would be reflected in the amounts allocated for such purposes, the proportion

of the funds allocated for SSFs would continue to be less than that of transferred to the general budget with the exception of the years 1999 and 2000 (cf.YDK 2001). While there has been a tendency to transfer about forty percent of the SASF revenues to the general budget, this practice has reportedly been terminated from September 2002 onwards as a result of the increasing demand for poverty alleviation related expenditures. Nonetheless, nearly one third of its total revenues have been transferred to the general budget for the year 2002 (SASF 2003, p.4). The closure of most of the other extra-budgetary funds under the IMF-guided stabilisation programme of 2001 was also critical in depriving the SASF from a basic source of funds. For these constituted the second major source for it in the years 2000 and 2001 coming only after the funds allocated from the income and corporate tax revenues which comprised more than 55 percent of total revenues (YDK 2001, p.8, and Annex 7). More generally, it seems that there has been a pincer movement on the funds allocated for the SASF. Not only significant portions of its revenues would be used for other purposes at the discretion of the political authority, but one of the major difficulties confronted by the SASF has been described as a chronic inability to obtain the funds from the sources as prescribed by Law No 3294 at its inception (YDK 2001, p.v). Either way, it would be deprived of substantial amounts that could be allocated for poverty reduction.

As for the resources actually allocated for poverty alleviation purposes, one needs to distinguish between those spent through SSFs and others allocated for similar objectives via other institutional mechanisms. Among the latter the provision of funds allocated to the Ministry of Health - for the expenditures of Green Card holders as outpatients as well as for the expenditures of those who are not eligible to obtain Green Card but

cannot afford to pay for the amounts concerned - and the scholarships for university students from poor backgrounds have shown a significant increase over the last few years especially since 1998 (YDK 2001, p.3). However, it needs to be pointed out that health expenditures do constitute a significant percentage of the amounts allocated through SSFs, too, as it will be elaborated below. In addition to health expenditures, the following items will be differentiated in terms of the funds allocated for poverty alleviation purposes through the SSFs: periodic payments, education, income and employment generating activities, social expenditures which include food and heating support, and others including contributions for the victims of natural disasters. In addition, there will be allocations to the SSFs so as to allow them to undertake the necessary investments for the construction of buildings such as soup-kitchens, dormitories for students and homes for the elderly. What is meant by 'periodic payments', however, is the allocations made to individual SSFs on the basis of their respective locations in the social and economic development index. The coefficients thus calculated are used to determine the amounts to be allocated to the SSFs. It is also noteworthy that the shares of the SSFs in the Eastern and Southeastern regions of the country have been increased since July 2001 since their coefficients have started to be calculated with an additional multiplier of 1.5 (YDK 2001, p.22).

In all six target areas, it has been found out that the funds provided by SASF are the predominant source of revenue for the SSFs. In the case of Mardin, for instance, such funds have comprised no less than 73 percent of the total sources made available to the SSF for the budget year of 2002, the other relatively significant source being the contributions received as a result of the activities of the Social Services department of the central

administration. Whereas in Kızıltepe/Mardin and Suruç/Şanlıurfa, the SSFs are said to have no other source of funds but SASF. This state of affairs not only underlines the inability of the SSFs to create resources on their own through local initiatives, but it can also be seen as an indication of the failure of efforts to create support for “pro-poor” actions on the part of the “non-poor”. At the very least, this would be interpreted by many of our interviewees as a sign of not preferring to use SSFs as a means of channelling charity. For the wealthy individuals who may be living in the vicinity or outside the target areas are said to be using other more private channels in providing contributions in kind to the needy of their chosen neighbourhoods. In addition to individual initiatives, there is said to be a tendency to use other ‘foundations’ as a channel for charity, as it will be indicated below while discussing the role of the NGOs as poverty alleviation agencies. While as observed in the case of Şanlıurfa, they could be preferred because of certain religious affiliations, other traditional affiliations might also come into play. For instance, it has been pointed out in Mardin that the wealthy individuals who are originally from the province but now living in İstanbul would prefer to channel their donations in kind or otherwise through a private foundation which they had established in that city.

On the other hand, according to the authorities interviewed, the distinctive feature of their main source of funds is its inadequacy in the face of the ever increasing demands for a variety of poverty alleviation measures. Often, they would argue, the amounts sent by the SASF are far from sufficient to cover the expenditures incurred, thus causing the SSF in question to go into red for the remainder of the budget year. Furthermore they would be expressing their frustration at the relative decline in the amounts allocated in real terms, thus causing a great deal of uncertainty in terms of their capacity to

plan the financing of their poverty alleviation activities. In short, the sources of the SSFs would be characterised by their inadequacy as well as unreliability in the context of a prolonged economic crisis which has been experienced in the country for the last few years and the radical expenditures cuts introduced as part of the stabilisation programme to establish macroeconomic stability.

It also becomes clear from the examination of the financial statements provided by the authorities during the field research as well as from the interviews conducted that the way they itemize their expenditures differs from the way the SASF itemises its allocations to the SSFs. Most significantly, there is no reporting line entitled as ‘periodic payments’ in the financial statements of the SSFs. Many local officials seemed to reckon that the distribution of the funds provided by the SASF is at the discretion of the SSF in question in accordance with the particularities of the locality. Yet, they also note that they would have no such discretion when it comes to the funds provided under the SRMP. As it will be discussed below, such funds have already started to make an impact in enhancing the financial capabilities of the SSFs but come with ‘strings’ attached.

Types of Support

The information gathered below under different headings is not meant to be exhaustive in terms of the supports provided by the SSFs. Nor the intention has been to provide an inventory. For instance, it has not been considered practical to follow the categories adopted by SASF in itemising the funds channeled to the SSFs. Rather, the emphasis has been to relate the information gathered during the field research with material obtained during the desk study phase so that one could have a basis for evaluation of these support programmes.

Health Support

While there are different types of support ranging from education, health, food, heating to cash benefits, it appears that increasingly the lion's share, so to speak, is being allocated over the last few years to health expenditures by the SSFs in the six target areas. On the one hand, the rising costs of health services and the rising prices of the medicines, on the other hand, the deterioration of living and working conditions of the poor no doubt have been playing a part in leading the SSFs to face seemingly insurmountable difficulties to deal with the rising demand for the provision of health support. In fact, a striking feature of the participants of the FGDs has been the very high ratio of those who either themselves had a major health problem and/or physical disability or did some members of their households. More often than not this would be an indication of endemic health problems experienced by the members of poor households such as malnutrition, and disabilities resulting from poor working conditions. Yet, as it will also be underlined below while discussing the Green Card, one major source of complaint on the part of the FGDs participants was their inability to obtain the necessary support from the SSFs for the payments of their prescriptions. This is significant because the rising health expenditures reflected in the annual financial statements of the SSFs are accompanied by soaring debts largely due to unpaid prescription charges to the pharmacies. In other words, the rising costs of health expenditures increase the debt burden for the SSFs, while failing to satisfy the beneficiaries.

There is a need to clarify the sorts of health expenditures undertaken by the SSFs as observed in six target areas. First of all, as has already been implied, the prescription charges of the Green Card holders as outpatients constitute a major item of

health expenditures by the SSFs as well as for the expenditures of those who are not eligible to obtain Green Card but cannot afford to pay for the amounts concerned. To give an idea about the scale of such expenditures, it may be illuminating to quote the figures for the country as a whole as noted by the Supreme Audit Board. In 2001, 13.2 trillion TL out of a total of 16.9 trillion TL allocated by the SASF to the SSFs for health expenditures would be spent by the latter to pay for the prescription charges (YDK 2001, p.25). In other words, 78 percent of the total health expenditures by the SSFs have been spent for medication. However, it is also necessary to put this in a broader perspective in order to evaluate the significance of health expenditures as part of poverty alleviation measures. As already highlighted above, a significant portion of resources was allocated by the SASF to the Ministry of Health. It constituted 11 percent of total allocations made by SASF in 2001 (YDK 2001, p.20). In fact, it becomes clear that the health expenditures undertaken by the SSFs constitute only a small portion of the total health expenditures by the SASF. In 2001, the relevant figures were 16.9 trillion TL as opposed to 91.4 trillion TL allocated to the Ministry of Health. What is even more striking, if not rather confusing, is the fact that the allocations made through the SSFs earmarked for health expenditures as well as those made through the Ministry of Health are made in reference to the same articles of Laws 3294 and 3816, that is, for the expenditures of Green Card holders as outpatients as well as for the expenditures of those who are not eligible to obtain Green Card but cannot afford to pay for the amounts concerned (YDK 2001, p.25, p.30). Indeed, the SASF sources would not differentiate between the two by lumping them together to quote the total health support provided by SASF (SASF 2003, p.7; Buğra & Keyder 2003, Table 2). On the other hand, almost all the SSFs of the six target areas prioritise health related expenditures as reflected in their financial statements under a number of different headings.

Thus it can be inferred that they would be allocating a significant portion of the so-called periodic payments for health related expenditures in addition to the amounts earmarked for health by SASF for each SSF. Nevertheless, the SSFs turn out to be playing a secondary role in providing health support for the needy in terms of the funds provided by SASF for such purposes although their own health expenditures tend to increase in recent years.

On the other hand, the category of those who are not eligible to obtain Green Card but cannot afford to pay for the amounts concerned are circumscribed as pertaining only to those who are disabled (YDK 2001, p.25-26), thereby bringing further limitations for expanding the scope of such poverty alleviation programmes. In practice, the local SSF authorities apparently use their discretion to provide some health support for the limited number of applicants given their limited resources even though they are not Green Card holders and/or disabled themselves. For instance, Mardin SSF pays a portion of prescription fees of those needy who do not hold a Green Card, but requesting them to apply for it subsequently. However, it appears there had been other exceptions to the rule. Indeed, these exceptional practices which were of a much more generalised nature were duly criticised by the Supreme Audit Board. The SASF, in response, issued a directive in 2001 for the SSFs to continue covering the health expenditures of those outpatients who might have some form of social security, but could not benefit from their own system since they had arrears (YDK 2001, p.19). In other words, SSFs were tasked to cover the expenditures of yet another category of the needy: people who are not eligible to obtain Green Card but cannot afford to pay for their health expenditures as outpatients at state hospitals. However, the SSFs in six target areas did not specify whether they have been covering such health expenditures.

As for the holders of Green Card, the tendency is, similarly, to pay for a portion and/or amount of the prescription fees because of lack of sources to cover the whole amount. However, this amount would show variation from one target area to another. For instance, the SSF in Mardin would be paying only a fixed amount of 20 million TL per prescription irrespective of the total fee as confirmed by the participants of the FGDs, whereas in Şanlıurfa, this would rise to 35 million TL. In other instances such as Kızıltepe/Mardin, the SSF would pay for the prescription fees provided that they have resources to do so. Otherwise, it would not be accepting to pay for prescription fees for the last two years so as to avoid getting indebted to the pharmacies. For, the latter had previously been refusing to supply the medicine as long as the debts of the SSF remained outstanding. More generally, the SSFs would also make payments as part of health support expenditures to the holders of the Green Card who are referred to hospitals elsewhere as far as Ankara to cover their costs of transportation and/or accommodation as well as those of their escorts.

In addition to paying for medicine when needed, there would be payments for those who are prescribed medicine as well as treatment on a continuing basis by the relevant medical authorities. Yet, the scarcity of funds would force the SSFs to be selective in this respect thereby the usual practice would be to pay only for the treatment of those who are critically ill such as cancer patients or those with kidney problems that require constant treatment. In many cases, the local SSFs would request extra-funds from the SASF to be able to pay for the rather expensive treatment of such patients. Another significant component of the health expenditures is the provision of medical equipment to the needy, to the disabled in particular such as hearing aids, wheelchairs and artificial limbs. Overall, however, the proportion of the amounts which could be

allocated for such purposes would be significantly less than that of those allocated for the payment of prescription fees in terms of the total health expenditures of the individual SSFs.

Education Support

Education support takes a variety of forms ranging from free meals for the pupils transported on a daily basis free of charge from the villages to the towns like in Batman, Diyarbakır and Suruç/Şanlıurfa, and to the provision of free milk to the pupils in Diyarbakır, to the provision of uniforms, shoes, books and stationery in several target areas, to the building and running a hall of residence for secondary school students, as in the case of Suruç/Şanlıurfa. While some of these supports in kind could be considered as a particular form of food support, all were classified as education support in terms of the allocations made by the SASF to the SSFs (YDK 2001, p.28). The scope of such support varied from one target area to another. For instance, only 86 pupils received free meals in Batman, whereas 1500 were provided food packages in Suruç/Şanlıurfa. On the other hand, 200ml. milk per pupil was supplied to more than 75.000 pupils in Diyarbakır during the period of December 2002 – May 2003 at the cost of 2.4 trillion TL. The latter was in the context of a pilot project initiated by the government in 2001 to provide free milk for one million pupils every day during the school year (YDK 2001, p.19). It began implementation in early 2002 in four major urban centres, Ankara, İstanbul, İzmir and Diyarbakır.

The purpose of education support is to enable the poor families to send their children to the school especially for the age group of 6 to 14 which has become compulsory with the education reform enacted in 1997. In this context, SRMP, too, puts

emphasis on developing ‘incentives to the poor’ to keep their children in school by ‘covering the out-of-pocket expenses’ such as books, uniforms, etc. although, as it will be detailed below, this is in cash rather in kind (World Bank 2001, p.25). However, several officials interviewed, as in Batman for instance, indicate that such incentives might not be sufficient for many poor parents to keep their children at school. For they would force their children to quit school in search of supplementary sources of income for their families as their economic conditions deteriorated in the context of the prolonged crisis of the last few years. Indeed, there were many such examples among the participants of the FGDs in all six target areas. As vividly exemplified by a male participant of an FGD in Şanlıurfa who was a casual worker, and a father of the four children all at school age, but only one has been attending school. Yet, he reckoned that he had to take that one out of the school as well, since he cannot afford it anymore. On the other hand, many participants of the FGDs complained about either the late delivery of school material or the low quality of clothing and shoes. There have been cases encountered during the field study when the beneficiaries complained that they were not able to send their children to the school since, say, the shoes provided by the SSFs had been worn out pretty rapidly. Others complained that their children would be denied such support even though the family has been a beneficiary of some other sort of support provided by the SSFs. More generally, the school children themselves voiced dissatisfaction with the inability of their parents to afford the necessary expenditures for their education and the lack of adequate support in that respect. As expressed by a number of SSF officials, the sheer number of the poor families with children at the school age is bound to cause complaints since the resources can not match the demand for education support. In the view of one official interviewed in Batman, 90 percent of the pupils would be in need

of some kind of support since their families which struggle to survive under a presumed poverty line do constitute a substantial majority in terms of the total population of the target area concerned.

Food Support and Soup-kitchens

There are essentially two kinds of food support, both of which are in kind. Firstly, there are food packages comprised of basic staples to be distributed by the SSFs in all six target areas on occasions such as the month of Ramadan and/or the three holy months period including Ramadan. Food packages contain staples such as rice, pasta, cooking oil, sugar, tea of varying quantities. The number of people benefiting from such food support is in the range of a few thousand households for each of the SSFs. As for the satisfaction of the beneficiaries, it appears that the main source of complaint reflected in the FGDs concerned its unreliability rather than the quality of the food support. Many of those who had received food support at one time or another would complain that they would be denied by the SSFs further support of the kind on the grounds that their circumstances were not bad enough to justify it.

Soup-kitchens are another important form of support in kind, as observed in five of the six target areas. While SSFs in target areas do on occasion distribute food to the poor households, the main form of food support appears to be these daily provision of hot meals generally once a day at lunch times. The number of people benefiting vary significantly, however, from about 300 per day/meal in Mardin to around 2000 in Suruç/Şanlıurfa, 2400 in Batman, 4000 in Şanlıurfa and 6200 in Diyarbakır. In the cases of Batman and Diyarbakır, the meals are distributed at more than one location in the city, that is, at the neighborhoods where the needy are

believed to be concentrated. While there was no soup kitchen in Kızıltepe/Mardin at the time of the field research, the authorities have stated that they have been considering the possibility of starting to provide daily meals for the needy through a private sector catering firm.

It is to be noted, however, that the allocations for the soup-kitchens are not included in the food support category by the SASF but are instead recorded under 'other social support' (SASF 2003, p.11). Indeed, in many instances, the supply of necessary goods and/or equipment is provided more often than not by other sources such as the meat provided by the slaughtering of the sheep for religious reasons. In the particular instance of Mardin, however, the soup-kitchen is effectively dependent upon food stuff provided by the regional directorate of Foundations (Vakıflar Bölge Müdürlüğü) in Diyarbakır as the latter sends the basic staples such as meat (20 kg per day), rice, pasta, cooking oil, etc. The local SSF pays for the wages of two employees working at the kitchen and meets the other costs involved such as heating and the provision of some additional food stuff and bread. The local official in charge indicated that there is a high demand for the meals provided by the soup-kitchen but their request to increase their capacity to 500 meals per day has been turned down by the SASF. Similarly, the local authorities in Suruç/Şanlıurfa note that there is a demand for the meals provided far extending their capacity.

Another issue which has been raised by the authorities in a number of instances is related to the attitudes of some of the beneficiaries of the soup-kitchens. That is, some beneficiaries reflect that they would prefer food packages the contents of which they could use for cooking themselves or, as has also been indicated by the recent studies (cf. Buğra & Keyder 2003) they would like to get the equivalent

in cash, so that they could avoid the shame of queuing in front of the soup-kitchen for hours. Overall, it is possible to say that the reactions to this particular issue were rather mixed. While some of the beneficiaries of the soup-kitchens who were among the participants of the FGDs such as those in Mardin did not voice any particular complaints about the quality of food provided, there were others such as those participants in Diyarbakır who said that they would prefer alternative means of support such as cash so that they could fetch for themselves. But the more frequently raised complaint came from those participants of the FGDs who were denied such support when they applied or having benefitted from it for a certain period of time, were denied access to hot meals subsequently. The latter were especially perplexed about the reasons for this change of affairs since their conditions, in their view, remained the same, if not deteriorated.

The local SSFs' responses were also mixed. While there were those officials as in Batman and Diyarbakır who acknowledged the poor quality of the meals provided and speculate that the resources thus allocated might have otherwise been better utilised, there were also others such as in Şanlıurfa who acknowledged that the limited resources would only allow them to provide one sort of dish per meal. Whereas other officials, as in the case of Suruç/Şanlıurfa, argue that while the conditions for the provision of food through the soup-kitchens are far from being ideal, they do nonetheless fulfill a very important function which would otherwise mean the lack of such an opportunity for the beneficiaries concerned. For, in their view, those who are given food support in the form of such meals would not have the capacity to cook for themselves either because of their age or lack of facilities in their houses such as a gas cooker. Moreover, in their reckoning, only the really needy

apply for the soup-kitchens, whereas food packages or cash benefits also appeal to others who might not necessarily be included into that category. Such considerations thus lead them to try to provide meals for upto 2000 people even though their actual capacity is no more than 1500.

Housing and Heating Support

These two forms of support are among those comprising the social expenditures from the point of view of SASF. In certain cases such as Şanlıurfa, there had been an attempt in the past to develop a housing project on a plot of land donated by a charitable individual for poor people, albeit unsuccessfully, since most of the houses (34 in total) built remain empty as people who were settled there, would subsequently move out on the grounds that there is lack of transport since the site is too far from the town centre despite the fact the SSF contributed to the payment of electricity and water bills. Of the six target areas, this turns out to be an exception since the SSFs' basic support in the form of a housing benefit is a partial contribution to the payment of the rents for a limited number of applicants. For instance, as in the case of Şanlıurfa again there will be a fixed amount paid for a period of six months or a year. Such expenditures are covered by funds provided by SASF as 'periodic payments'. While in other instances such as Batman, there are contributions in kind such as providing building material for a limited number of beneficiaries so as to help them in repairing their houses.

There is also heating support in kind or in cash provided on occasions to a limited number of families by several SSFs in the target areas. The relevant figures obtained by the local SSFs indicate the sheer inadequacy of this support since the

number of beneficiaries who have received heating support in kind do not exceed 1100 in Mardin or 2000 in Diyarbakır for the winter of 2002/2003, whereas in Şanlıurfa the number of beneficiaries had come down drastically from 3000 in 2002 to 1000 in 2003 because of the decline in funds that had been made available to the local SSF. And in the case of Batman, only 58 people were given heating support in cash during the calendar year of 2002.

In both housing benefit and heating support, certain priorities have been developed by the local SSFs even though they admit that there exists no standard procedure for the implementation of such poverty alleviation measures. Among the groups that were given priority, the families of conscript soldiers have been noted by several SSFs as well as the elderly, the disabled and single mothers. However, there were also claims that the coal distributed as heating support was sold by the beneficiaries so as to use the income derived for the other needs of the poor households.

Cash Benefits

Apart from cash payments to those poor families to relieve them from the burden of paying rents, at least partly, there were other instances of cash benefits provided by SSFs. For instance, in Mardin, very small amounts (30 million TL per household) were paid to a limited number of families in every three months. In Şanlıurfa, payments were made to the spouses or parents of the conscript soldiers for the duration of their conscription. While in Diyarbakır, cash payments were made both on specific occasions such as religious holidays as it had been the case for about 3500 people in February 2003 and regular payments to about 7000 people at every two months during the course of 2002. Generally, the SSFs refrained from using their scarce

resources in the form of cash payments, at least partly to minimise the criticisms of arbitrary action on the part of the local officials. As expressed by one official in Batman, the SSFs could exercise more discretion in dispensing cash benefits as the board of trustees could judge the particularities of the situation at hand. Indeed, some SSFs were creating ways in which they could be making cash payments to the needy as exemplified by Kızıltepe/Mardin where some poor people are paid for undertaking certain kinds of manual work such as cleaning of school buildings at the weekends.

Among the recipients of cash benefits of one kind or another, there were also some complaints as reflected in the FGDs that they had difficulty in getting even these highly inadequate sums of money. That is, either the SSFs would not be paying them in time or the recipients would be having some problems in cashing them from the banks. More fundamentally, cash benefits do not emerge as poverty alleviation measures which can be characterised as the implementation of certain principles as they depend upon the personal judgements of the SSF officials more than any other form of support thus provided.

Income and Employment Generating Activities

As for the income and employment generation activities supported by SSFs, it can be said that there has been a wide range of activities supported at different times in several target areas. Provision of carpet-loom, green-housing facilities for the production of fresh vegetables, apiculture, poultry farming, and sheep farming are among the often attempted practices. However, most of the SSFs are not too eager to claim that many of these projects have been successful, though some no doubt were.

Yet, when asked to evaluate their own activities in general, the common prevailing tendency has been an eagerness to prioritize such activities. In fact, many SSF officials expressed this tendency as a perceived need ‘to teach the beneficiaries how to catch a fish’ rather than simply make provisions for certain expenditures of poor families. Coupled with an implicit assumption that the support provided whether in kind or in cash may create some form of dependency on the part of the beneficiaries, as reflected by a number of officials involved in the running of the SSFs, this often repeated cliché is, in fact, no more than a covert admission of the inadequacy of poverty alleviation measures currently being implemented in the form of welfare transfers. Yet, this can not be taken as a reiteration of a belief that there is a need for ‘pro-poor growth strategies’. Rather, it indicates the unease and/or desperation of the officials concerned with the first hand knowledge of the dire circumstances of the poor and the insufficiency of the limited resources available that can be used as a means of poverty alleviation.

Hence, the efforts to encourage income generating activities even though there is clearly lack of personnel with the necessary skills and knowledge not only to initiate them, but also to ensure their sustainability. Nor, therefore, is there much of a basis to evaluate these attempts and their outcomes given the lack of accumulated knowledge and technical data in this regard, apart from the expenditures included generally in the ‘others’ category of the financial statements of the SSFs in the six target areas. It is also noteworthy that the expenditures for such activities in terms of the itemised allocations by SASF to the local SSFs in general constitute no more than 2 percent of the total allocations made for the years 2000 and 2001 (cf.YDK 2001, p.22). A similar pattern could be observed for the allocations made to the SSFs in the

four selected provinces (cf.YDK 2001, Annex 8). Thus, it may be possible to infer that SASF itself has not been able to prioritise such activities.

To give some examples from the six target areas may help to illustrate the predicaments faced by the local SSFs in this regard. In Suruç/Şanlıurfa, for example, the green-house projects were first initiated in 1999 at the instigation of Kaymakam of the time to produce fresh vegetables on small plots of 1000 square meters per establishment by selected individuals. Of the 10 such establishments initiated during the 1999-2000 period, seven were said to be still in operation even though the local SSF officials were reluctant to show them in contrast, for instance, to the school dormitory mentioned above which was obviously a showcase from their point of view. While an approach was made to further 10 households to start new green-house projects in 2002, the response was not forthcoming, partly because of the further deterioration in the availability of underground waters, a vital factor of production in the target area. There had also been a series of failed and/or discontinued projects such as the cultivation of mushrooms or carpet-weaving workshops. According to Kaymakam, the SSF has been, at the time of the field survey, in the process of bringing a set of new looms, to start a carpet-weaving project once again.

By contrast, the green-house projects to produce fresh vegetables in Batman benefiting 47 households which were given plots of 200 square meters each in 2002 and provided with the necessary equipment such as the transparent plastic sheets were considered a success at least for the time being. It has been pointed out during the interviews held that the construction of a number of dams in the area has proved to be conducive for the initiation of such projects since there has been a change in climate which increased the number of

households inclined to be engaged in such productive activities. Similarly, apiculture projects which were discontinued mainly because it was not compatible with the pesticides used in adjacent fields in places such as Mardin or Diyarbakır were considered successful by the authorities in Batman. However, the numbers involved in the latter case were rather modest (30 households in 7 villages) to reach any definitive conclusions.

Another type of income generating project which has been much more widely initiated in all six target areas is the provision of sheep to households particularly so as to create a mechanism that would facilitate the return of those who had to leave their villages in the tense atmosphere which had prevailed in the region in the early 1990s. The usual practice has been to give 10 sheep and 1 ram per household as a kind of loan which is expected to be repaid in kind in due course in the form of healthy lambs. While funding for such projects was made available from other sources as well, the SSFs also played a part. Indeed, even the SSF in Kızıltepe/Mardin which seemed not to give much emphasis to income generating activities in terms of poverty alleviation measures, was allocating some resources for such projects. However, the SSFs were not forthcoming in evaluating these initiatives not only because the numbers involved were rather limited, but also because there were apparently some disappointing episodes.

There were also more encouraging experiences as many SSFs in the target areas have been involved in the organisation of activities which entailed a practice that could be described as 'positive discrimination'. In particular the handicraft workshops - so as to produce silverware ornaments in Batman and Mardin or shoes, slippers and galosh in Diyarbakır - were established with the deliberate intention of getting the disabled involved in income

generating activities. The SSF in Mardin was planning to expand such activities as part of the drive to enhance the tourism potential of this historic city. In the case of Diyarbakır, jobs have thus been created for 50 poor people including 40 disabled with the cooperation of GAP-RDA, the GAP GIDEM (Entrepreneur Support Centres) and the NGOs such as the Southeastern Industrialists and Businessmen Association and the Association of Disabled, under a UNDP supported project. The goods produced are being marketed in a shop in Diyarbakır city centre.

In certain instances, the SSFs were involved in the organisation of an income generating activity by reaching an agreement with a commercial firm which would provide the necessary inputs, pay the wages of the trainees producing the goods and undertake the marketing of the products. This happened to be the case for carpet-weaving workshops in Şanlıurfa since 1997 which have initially been providing employment for up to 250 young girls from the very poor neighbourhoods. However, the payment of sweat-shops wages which is apparently the usual practice for such workshops and the long-working hours plus the fact that most trainees taking part would be joining their families as seasonal labour have led to a considerable drop in the number of young girls attending the workshops. A similar but much larger and seemingly more successful project has been put into effect in Diyarbakır since 1997 by the SSF in cooperation with adult education department and a commercial firm. In 25 workshops, nearly 3000 women and young girls work at 1480 looms, reportedly earning a monthly income between 80 and 150 million TL. While this was a project initiated for the province of Diyarbakır as a whole, 20 of the workshops have been opened by the Diyarbakır SSF itself. In another project initiated by the same SSF in 1997, machinery had been purchased to start a ready-wear clothing

workshop. It was subsequently taken over by a private firm in 2000. According to the five year protocol made with the firm, the workshop has to provide employment to no less than 50 workers. The SSF would also be earning an income for the machinery rented. The goods produced are being sold at a shop which is located in the courtyard of the local SSF building.

More often than not the training courses organised by the social services and/or adult education departments of the central administration come into play in encouraging the youth especially female youth of the poor neighborhoods - who would/could not usually attend school beyond the fifth grade of the primary school - to learn certain skills such as carpet weaving, knitting, hair-dressing, etc. which could help them to find employment or start their own businesses. Some SSFs contribute in kind to the attendants of such training courses such as meals from the soup-kitchen as noted in the case of Şanlıurfa, but others such as the one in Mardin could not because of lack of resources. Assisting the attendants in obtaining Green Cards was another form of contribution in kind. Among the participants of an FGD in Suruç/Şanlıurfa, on the other hand, there were some young girls who would aspire to start a hair-dresser shop of their own, if only they had the means to do so. Such support has reportedly been provided for a couple of trainees in the past by the local SSF. More generally, the skills learned such as embroidery and knitting were somehow belittled by others including some of the participants of the FGDs as only allowing the young girls to contribute to their own dowries. These would, in turn, raise questions about the rationale of such training courses, if the trainees would hardly have any opportunity to make use of the skills thus acquired to improve their livelihoods.

ii) Green Card as a major instrument of poverty alleviation

Another key instrument of poverty alleviation is the so-called “green card” which has been started in 1992 (Law No. 3816) so as to enable the people without any other form of social security and with an income of less than one third of the official minimum wage to benefit from the public health services. This stipulation itself could give an idea about the levels of poverty in the country, although the ways in which the “green card” have been allocated in practice, have always been subject to controversy as reflected in the intermittent reports in the Turkish press about the allegedly corrupt practices involved and noted also by a recent study (Buğra & Keyder 2003).

Green Card has originally been contemplated as a substitute for a general health insurance scheme in the context of 1991 general elections. At the time, the lack of adequate provision of social welfare was an important political consideration in the light of socio-economic inequalities which have been exacerbated as a result of the implementation of structural adjustment policies during the 1980s. However, once it became established after the elections, it appeared to be an indispensable means of financing the health expenditures of the poor. Put differently, an *ad hoc* scheme turned out to be the main instrument to pay for the health expenditures of the needy in the absence of a national health system that would serve all the citizens according to their needs. It would thus be characterised as a major instrument of poverty alleviation in the context of a fragmented welfare regime (Atalay 2002). Yet, there were major deficiencies in the functioning of this *ad hoc* system, essentially stemming from its own fragmented character that would cause disenchantment among its beneficiaries as well as its implementing agencies.

In particular, while the Green Card was, and still is, financed as part of the allocations made to the Ministry of Health in the national budget, the sources thus allocated were not sufficient to pay all the health expenditures of the Green Card holders. Therefore, as it has already been indicated above, there had to be supplementary, more precisely extra-budgetary, mechanisms such as SASF that came into play to cover the additional costs that would be incurred, albeit partially.

In the provinces, the Green Card system is implemented by the local officials of the Ministry of Health on behalf of the governors. But the actual decisions in regards to who should possess a Green Card and/or whose cards should be renewed or not on an annual basis are made by the Provincial Administrative Council which meets on a weekly basis under the chairmanship of one deputy governor or kaymakam depending upon the administrative status of the provincial centre. While most of the members of these councils also function as trustees of the boards of SSFs, it has been repeatedly stressed by the authorities in several target areas that the decisions about issuing Green Cards are taken independently of those regarding the SSFs' allocation of funds. In fact, it has been found out that in the provincial centres, the governors do not assign duties regarding the Green Cards and the SSFs to the same deputy governor. Hence, the deputy governor chairing the board of trustees of the SSF is different from the deputy governor chairing the Provincial Administrative Council, whereas in towns such as Kızıltepe and Suruç, it would be Kaymakam who chairs both. Nonetheless, the files for the applicants and holders of the Green Cards and the recipients of the SSFs' disbursements in cash or in kind are kept separately. However, many officials interviewed seemed to believe that it would make much more sense if the SSF and the Green Card are reorganised, i.e. unified,

so that they could function more effectively as they target more or less the same category of people.

As it is the case with the SSFs' criteria for eligibility of their disbursements, the decisions about the possession of Green Cards are essentially centred on developing criteria to differentiate the needy from the other poor who are considered relatively better off. Conversely, the questions can be posed whether the possession of green card should be perceived as a reliable indicator of poverty, and whether it should be considered as an effective means of poverty alleviation. The first question was debated during the workshops and interviews by several officials involved in the decisions concerned. They conceded that there may be individuals who do possess the Green Card without necessarily being eligible according to the criteria used to issue them. Similarly, the participants of the FGDs expressed their concerns that there would always be many among their acquaintances who undeservedly, in their view, got hold of the Green Card, while the applications of many who are really in need of it were refused. This is not a matter stemming from the arbitrariness of the decision-making process, the authorities would retort. Rather, the alternative reasoning goes, the arduous process of investigation that is undertaken prior to the decision to issue the Green Card would not always produce reliable information about the economic conditions of the applicants. The lack of a computerised system of monitoring would be cited as an important factor in this respect. At the time of writing, intentions to systematize electronic recording of the Green Card system have become topical.

The data obtained in regards to some of the target areas might give an idea about the magnitude of the numbers and the difficulties involved. While the total number of Green Card holders was

quoted as 48.193 for Mardin, and 49.260 for Kızıltepe/Mardin for the 1992-2003(April) period, the total number of applications were 38.444 and 36.995 respectively. That is, the number of card holders was higher than the number of applications, whereas the number of rejected applications and the cancelled Green Cards were few and far between. It was especially striking that there had been neither rejections nor cancellations during the 1992-1997 period in either of the target areas. One might possibly infer that the evaluation procedures have since then improved, nonetheless the peculiarity of the data provides additional reasons to be cautious about using the Green Card as a reliable indicator of poverty at least in quantitative terms. Just to indicate their workload, officials in Kızıltepe/Mardin noted that there were 100 new applications per week. Along with the applications for the renewal the total number to be dealt with would reach nearly 300 per week. Similarly, the officials in Şanlıurfa noted that they were issuing 3000 Green Cards every month for the target area concerned, indicating that the rate of growth of Green Card holders was higher than the rate of growth of population in the area. In fact, the province of Şanlıurfa is said to have the highest ratio of Green Card holders compared to its population in the country as a whole.

The applications for the Green Card, just like the SSF support, entail a routine procedure which starts with the confirmation by the *Muhtar* of the neighborhood where the applicant resides that s/he is a 'needy' person. The investigation which also covers the parents or even newly born siblings of the applicants is then undertaken by the security forces who make on the spot inquiries about the living conditions of the applicants. In this respect, there seems to be no difference between the six target areas, in contrast to the evaluation of the SSF applications. As indicated above, SSFs in places like

Batman or Şanlıurfa have been using their own personnel to undertake on the spot inquiries, but the Green Card applications even in these target areas entailed investigation by the security forces.

Although the applicants are required to prove that they do not own any property, there seem to be loopholes that may be manipulated. For instance, the registrar office in responding to the inquiry, could merely state that no property exists registered for the applicant. But this would be far from proving that the applicant has no property since s/he may own unregistered property or property registered outside the province where the investigation is pursued. By the same token, vehicle ownership would be frequently cited as a characteristic of many holders of the Green Card. While there may not be any vehicle registered to the applicant's name, the authorities agreed that this would not necessarily mean that the applicant is not in possession of a vehicle. While the personal declaration of the applicant is supposed to be taken for granted, the system is said to be characterised by 'a mutual lack of trust' between the applicants and the authorities. This would, in turn, lead to criticisms that it is the state itself which should try its best to gain the trust of its citizens with its impeccable practice, in this particular case, measures of poverty alleviation in general, issuing of Green Card in particular (cf. Buğra & Keyder 2003). By contrast, many authorities retort, as already mentioned while discussing the SSFs above, that the deprivation experienced by many living in the target areas of the study, would force these individuals to deceitful behaviour.

If there were manipulations on the part of those who should not be entitled to a Green Card, there would also be those who may not be issued a Green Card although they have no property or no social security whatsoever. This seems to stem from a

criterion used to differentiate between different categories of the poor by the officials concerned. Basically, those who are reckoned to earn a monthly average income above a certain level would not be granted a Green Card. This level is for some reason stipulated as one third of the official minimum wage by law (Law No. 3816). That is to say, only those who are not covered by a social security scheme, who has no proven registered property or vehicle ownership and whose monthly income and/or his/her share of the household's total income is 1/3 of the net minimum wage or less, will be entitled to benefit from the Green Card.

Yet, in practice, it is difficult to say that such a calculation is a straightforward one especially for those applicants who have no regular source of income. For instance, when the issue was raised during the workshop in Şanlıurfa, some of the participants argued that a rough estimate is made as a monthly wage for seasonal workers who only find work for a few months, but have to maintain themselves and their families with the earnings thus made for the rest of the year. Such a calculation becomes doubly problematic, given the unreliability of the income that could be earned by working as seasonal labour. On the other hand, in Suruç/Şanlıurfa it has been stated that the recently introduced system of direct income support for agricultural producers is taken into account as well as the nature of land cultivated whether it is irrigated or not, given the acute lack of irrigation water in the region. Such considerations, in turn, seem to indicate that factors other than ownership of land may be a criterion in issuing Green Cards. For location, as in Suruç/Şanlıurfa, can be an important determinant of poverty since it directly influences endowments, productivity and/or working conditions.

Moreover, the cumbersome process of evaluation has to be repeated in every twelve months with the possible exception of the investigation by the security forces, since the Green Card is issued for such a period, and it is obligatory to renew it when it expires, referred to as 'visa' in the jargon of the authorities involved in the process. The visa means that the conditions for benefiting from the Green Card are still valid. There were also complaints that the process takes such a long time that by the time a positive decision is taken to issue it, the date of expiry would be only a few months away. This situation may no longer exist, for apparently a decision has been made after the field work for this study has been completed, to take the date of issue rather than the date of application as the starting date of the twelve month period.

As for the benefits that could be gained from the entitlement of a Green Card, the primary benefit is to get free treatment as in-patients in state hospitals as confirmed by a substantial majority of the participants of the FGDs. The most common forms of treatment were surgeries and caesarean section operations. The in-patients could also get some prescribed medicines free provided that they are among those made available free of charge in the state hospitals. However the Green Card holders as out-patients would not be entitled to get their prescriptions free of charge in general. They could claim it from the SSFs provided that they are considered eligible. Within the target areas, however, it was possible to observe variations from one SSF to another in this regard, as already explained above.

Overall, it can be said that if there are doubts being raised about the possession of green card being a reliable indicator of poverty, then there are no less important considerations which tend to undermine its effectiveness as a means of poverty

alleviation. In many target areas, quite a significant number of the participants of the FGDs had Green Cards, so did members of their respective households, yet there were invariably the standard complaints about its uselessness when it comes to pay for the prescription charges. For as they would not be able to pay the difference between the total prescription fee and what they could obtain from the SSFs, they would not be able to purchase all the medicine they were prescribed. In other words, the Green Card, in such instances, only intensified their feeling of helplessness to cope with the circumstances in which they have to maintain their livelihood.

iii) The World Bank financed “The Social Risk Mitigation Project” of the SASF

As stated in the relevant report by the World Bank, the development objective of Social Risk Mitigation Project/Loan is to mitigate the impact of the economic crisis on poor households (social risk mitigation) and to improve their capacity with similar risks in the future (social risk management). (World Bank 2001, p.2). While it has been devised in the Turkish case in the aftermath of the capital account crisis of February 2001, SRMP is no doubt reflecting the general inclination adopted by the World Bank (World Bank 2000) in response to such crises which have been experienced with an increasing frequency in different parts of the developing world from Latin America to East Asia during the last decade. Since the devastating impact of these crises has been most acutely felt by the poor households, it has apparently presented the World Bank with the task of conceptualising poverty reduction as an integral part of structural adjustment. Hence the ‘hybrid’ nature of the SRMP, since it comprises both an adjustment and an investment dimension with a dual emphasis on ‘capacity building’ of the institutions providing basic

social services and social assistance to the poor and increasing the income generating and employment opportunities for them. The maintenance of social cohesion is perceived as no less a salient objective than the achievement of macroeconomic stability (World Bank 2001, p.3). Accordingly, a key goal of the SRMP has been identified as to strengthen the social assistance system so as to make it more cost effective, whilst at the same time, developing a system which not only mitigates social risk, but also helps to prevent and manage it (ibid. p.2). In addition, there is also a provision for introducing new targeted social assistance programmes for groups affected by the crisis. In short, two ways of alleviating poverty have been specified as the provision of safety-nets for the poor and vulnerable and expanding opportunities for the poor to escape from poverty (ibid. p.20). This, in turn, can be seen, at least, as a partial response to the criticisms that the best way of combating poverty is through increasing productive capacities and employment opportunities, and not through welfare transfers *per se*.

It is noteworthy that SASF has been chosen as the institutional placement of the SRMP in preference to the creation of a new institution such as an extra-governmental Social Development Fund that has been the practice of the World Bank in several poor countries throughout the 1990s. This was characterised as a ‘strategic choice’ opted on the grounds that there was urgency in putting SRMP into effect. The ‘strong track record’ of SASF has also been mentioned in affecting this choice (World Bank 2001, p.21). Nonetheless as part of the efforts characterised as building the capacity of the institutions which provide social assistance, there has been amounts allocated for enhancing the policy research, monitoring and evaluation capacities which would include the provision of training, computer and other equipment to support

the Project Coordination Unit within the SASF (ibid., p.23; YDK 2001, p.19).

It apparently took longer than anticipated to put the SRMP into effect, as the first disbursements have begun in the course of 2002/2003 academic year, while the Turkish government has signed a Letter of Sector Policy on August 15, 2001 (World Bank 2001, p.23). Therefore, it was too early to make an assessment of the impact of the SRMP as part of the poverty alleviation programmes implemented in Turkey, at the time of the field survey. However, as it has been observed during the field work, the provision of school supplies to poor children supported under the quick disbursing component of the SRMP has already become a significant source of income for the SSFs at the local level. These were in cash rather than in kind to be distributed to the parents of the limited number of poor children by the respective school authorities and/or to be paid to their bank accounts. The selection of the needy pupils is said to have been realised by organising committees comprised of the headteacher, councillor-teacher, and muhtar. In principle, the aim was to provide such support for the needy pupils up to 8% of the total number of pupils in each primary school in poor neighbourhoods. In the case of Şanlıurfa, for example, there have been payments of fifty million TL per household for fifteen thousand pupils. In the jargon of the SRMP, this would be, apparently, under the complementary categories of 'adjustment portion' and 'conditional cash transfers' (CCT) – together comprising \$360 million of the \$500 million loan – the latter being conceived as an incentive for poor families to keep their children in school, since the deterioration of their living conditions as a result of the economic crisis would quite frequently force them to pull their children out of school (World Bank 2001, p.25). Hence the proviso that the CCT as a 'highly targeted social assistance transfer' would finance the introduction

of an 'expanded social safety-net targeted to the poorest 6% of families linked to certain positive behavioural changes' (ibid., p.24).

Several SSF officials such as those in Mardin or Suruç/Şanlıurfa, on the other hand, have stated that the SRMP disbursements have given them the opportunity to reallocate their scarce resources to other purposes, as they could reduce the amount that they would have otherwise allocated for education support. Others, as in Şanlıurfa, for instance, noted that while thanks to these disbursements, they have been able to pay for the health expenditures of critically ill patients it was not possible to reorient amounts already allocated for health expenditures to other purposes. All of them have made clear that SRMP allocations have strict conditionalities attached – as the term 'conditional cash transfers' imply - in the sense that they could not be used for purposes other than those which have been stipulated, whereas the local SSFs have the discretion to allocate their standard budget allocations between different types of support they provide according to the evolving circumstances in their locality. In other words, an amount stipulated to be used for education by the SRMP allocated to a particular SSF could not be subsequently used, say, for the payments of health equipment or medicine. Thus, the local SSFs would include SRMP disbursements under the respective types of support in their accounts.

While the amounts provided under the SRMP are yet to emerge in the respective accounts of the local SSFs as separate items, they have certainly made an initial positive impact as additional source for the budgets of the SSFs which have severely been curtailed as part of the drastic cut that has been carried out in the public expenditures in 2002 as well as the closure of the several extra-budgetary funds which were among the source of revenues for

the SASF. In that sense, it may be possible to say that SRMP has to a certain extent fulfilled an adjustment function in a much more general sense. However, it is difficult to say to what extent they have succeeded in accomplishing the specific adjustment (social risk mitigation) objective, since the amounts provided would, at best, be covering no more than 8% of the needy pupils per school as mentioned above, notwithstanding the usual complaints -encountered in certain schools and/or neighbourhoods visited during the field research - that the committees involved in the distribution of the disbursements were using their discretionary powers in selecting the pupils who would benefit from these disbursements.

iv) Multi-Purpose Community Centres (ÇATOMs) of Southeastern Anatolia Regional Development Administration (GAP-RDA)

In order to obtain a more gendered perspective in this study, ÇATOMs have been included into its scope as a significant component of poverty alleviation activities in the region. Several in-depth interviews were held with the officials of ÇATOMs as well as with representatives of GAP-RDA. In addition, FGDs have been held in several ÇATOM premises with the trainees learning certain skills.

ÇATOMs are the community centres in which women can get together and be aware of, share, and identify their problems; organise common activities; acquire basic knowledge that facilitates their daily lives; and develop skills to generate income, though to a limited extent, and learn how to make an effective use of it. At the time of the field survey, there were 26 ÇATOM centres in 9 provinces which include the four selected provinces of this study. To be more precise, 7 of these centres are located in four of the six target areas, 3 in Mardin, 2 in Batman,

1 in Diyarbakır and 1 in Şanlıurfa, while there are no ÇATOMs in Kızıltepe/Mardin and Suruç/Şanlıurfa. They are all in poor neighbourhoods of their respective cities.

The original idea can be traced back to the early 1990s when the GAP-RDA which had been established by the government to administer a multi-level project for the development of water and land resources in the southeastern provinces, started to get involved with the social issues of the region covering a vast area. It was thus transformed into a multi-sector and integrated regional development effort, the ultimate objective of which is perceived as improving the quality of life for the people living in the region. On the basis of the initial surveys of the social problems of the region undertaken by its experts, it was felt necessary to elaborate and implement a project specific to women's problems and demands in a region beset by feudal traditions.

With the initial support of UNICEF which continued for two years, a pilot project started in 1995 with the establishment of the first two ÇATOMs in Şanlıurfa province, one in a village, the other in Yakubiye neighbourhood of the administrative centre. From late 1996 onwards, the ÇATOM Project was expanded in cooperation with relevant Governorships and the Development Foundation of Turkey (TKV). In this context, most ÇATOM buildings were provided by governors concerned. While the number of women reached was quoted as only 422 in the first two years, it would rise to 25.000 by the end of 1999 and 75.000 by the end of 2002. However, the project is increasingly urban based since its pursuit was not be feasible in rural areas because of overlaps, costs and delays in service provision, according to the GAP-RDA officials interviewed during the field research.

The stated objectives of ÇATOMs clearly reflect some of the declared objectives of the poverty alleviation strategies developed by international agencies concerned during the last decade as reviewed above. In particular, the empowerment of women by strengthening their participation in decision-making about matters concerning themselves, and removing the social barriers that result from distinctions of gender have been given priority. By the same token, the concepts of capacity building and promoting opportunity are implicit in the efforts designed to increase the capabilities and opportunities of the women participating in activities organised by ÇATOMs. Indeed, these have also found their reflection in the revised and updated GAP Master Plan prepared by GAP-RDA, with UNDP support in 2002. While prioritizing concepts such as environment and sustainability as well as participation, the Master Plan has defined its general objective as to increase the quality of life for all the people in the region and to guarantee its sustainability on the basis of their participation (GAP-RDA 2002, p.20). Among the objectives of the GAP's new plan, the enhancement of the organisational capacities, participation to decisions, access to resources and opportunities to benefit from social services of the social strata in general, the disadvantaged groups and areas in particular, have also been underlined.

Starting from the premise that women are in a disadvantaged position in the region, ÇATOMs have been devised 'to improve the status of women'. In this context, several objectives are defined such as helping them overcome the difficulties they face in getting access to education and training, promoting their awareness about health related issues and child care, enabling them to better express themselves thus enhancing their self-confidence, devising ways in which they could learn and/or develop income generating skills as well as skills of cooperative

work, and be aware of the problems of their community; hence, the concept of Multi-Purpose Community Centres. To the extent these objectives are accomplished, it is believed that women's participation in public life would be enhanced.

ÇATOMs are organised in line with the principles of local capacity building and participatory development as committees comprised of five members, including elected members of the local community, instructors and the field manager. Young women selected locally and trained through a range of programs are assigned as field managers on a contract basis to run ÇATOM's programmes by Southeastern Anatolia Regional Development Administration and the Development Foundation of Turkey. The latter would refrain from adopting an interventionist stance according to GAP-RDA official interviewed at its regional headquarters in Şanlıurfa. It is stressed that ÇATOMs should be perceived as autonomous bodies so as to accomplish their objectives.

In a sense, there is an awareness of the kind of criticisms that are commonly directed to a variety of activities aiming to teach women certain skills, as already pointed out above while discussing the income and employment generating activities of the SSFs. For a distinction seems to be made by ÇATOMs between social empowerment and economic empowerment, while the former is to be achieved through acquiring knowledge and information (literacy, health, nutrition, childcare, etc.) and enhancing self-confidence, the activities contemplated for the achievement of the latter are differentiated in terms of income generating activities and savings in expenditures (home production of cloths, linens and other house requirements, repairs etc.). The emphasis is, however, on income generating activities since they are considered more strategic for women in making

an impact on their status. In fact, as observed in the case of Mardin where there exists a shop in the town centre where kilims produced by ÇATOM workshops are displayed and sold, the women are said to have started to perceive the material rewards of their participation. Indeed, the local ÇATOM representative interviewed stated that the participants of the workshop would prefer to work independently rather than getting involved in some kind of 'putting out' system. Thus, having initially provided the looms and raw materials, ÇATOMs would be instrumental in arranging a fund where a certain percentage of sales revenues (10%) would be accumulated to be used for the purchase of inputs needed for the production process. There was also a textile workshop organised in Mardin where 9 women have been employed producing textile products such as trainer suits for the gendarmerie. In this instance, ÇATOM has made an arrangement with a private entrepreneur who has been running the enterprise on its behalf. Of the 25 machines, 5 belonged to ÇATOM and the workshop was located at the top floor of ÇATOM's premises.

Yet, it is acknowledged that ÇATOMs' income generating activities are largely in the informal segment of the economy. For neither the organisation of production nor the size and quality of production is appropriate for competing in the market. This would, in turn, feed into criticisms that - as were echoed during the discussions in the meeting held at Governor's office in Batman - ÇATOMs' income generating activities are no different from their counterparts organised by adult education and/or social services departments of the central administration in conjunction with the SSFs as briefly considered above. That is, they are not really providing the participants with the necessary skills that will enable them to find employment and/or start their own businesses. The counterargument would be rather two fold. On the

one hand, there have been small businesses started by women who have taken part in ÇATOM workshops with the technical support provided by ÇATOMs. On the other hand, the social and gender dimensions are emphasized once again and it is pointed out that the ÇATOMs should not be expected to be run as a business enterprise per se. In particular, it is contended that ÇATOM is functional in providing a socially acceptable setting appropriate for empowerment of women precisely because the poor communities perceive ÇATOM as an opportunity for creating income to women, and/or extra income for the family. That is, community approval is obtained through income generated by ÇATOM. This, in turn, seems to imply that the unbearable conditions of poverty have been functional in creating a window of opportunity to enhance the status of women in a predominantly patriarchal social environment.

Nonetheless, it is important to underline the fact that ÇATOMs wherever they exist have been significant mechanisms not only in reaching the needy but also contributing to shed light on the gender dimension of poverty alleviation with its seemingly acceptable programmes and projects of positive discrimination. This has also been highlighted by the participants of the FGDs held in ÇATOMs in Mardin and Şanlıurfa. In particular, literacy courses have been appreciated. But there were also participants who would be expecting the institution to function as an employment agency. At the very least, ÇATOMs could be considered as functional in creating an atmosphere in which gender problems in poor neighborhoods are more openly discussed. Participation of the community members is said to be encouraged through home visits which are made without prior notice during which the information about ÇATOMs is disseminated, and women are invited to participate in its activities. A two-way communication channel

is attempted to be built through face-to-face relations with the community members so that the latter would acknowledge ÇATOM as part of the community which could be of some help to them in a variety of ways. For instance, ÇATOMs have been organising pre-school education facilities where priority would be given to the children of the mothers taking part in the courses and workshops organised by ÇATOMs. They will also be involved in organising collective wedding and circumcision ceremonies.

Furthermore, they have been instrumental in helping the poorest of the poor in getting access to the SSFs' support programmes. As elaborated by the ÇATOM representatives in Batman and Mardin, some poor families who had not been registered at the local SSF have benefited from supports in kind such as food and clothing. In such instances, the potential beneficiaries would be identified by ÇATOM in accordance with the criteria used by SSF, while the needy would receive the supports provided by the SSF directly from ÇATOM. By the same token, in Batman, they have been instrumental in getting Green Cards for 7800 poor people during 1998-2001. In addition, there have been attempts to organise facilities, on a temporary basis, by bringing health teams from Diyarbakır so that poor people could have check-ups. Yet, the participants of the FGDs held at Yakubiye ÇATOM in Şanlıurfa, for instance, were sharing the grievances observed in all target areas in terms of lack of adequate support that could be obtained through the SSF or the failings of the Green Card elaborated above.

ÇATOMs are said to be functioning as a bridge between the needy and the charitable in another sense as well. They have been providing assistance to several NGOs - based outside the target areas - or charitable individuals which are seeking to reach to the children of poor families so as to provide

education support for them in kind and/or in cash. In the case of some NGOs, where ÇATOMs have not been directly involved in the selection of children, priority has been given to those families who do not have any social security, but not exclusively. In other words, among those selected there will also be children of the poor families who might have some social security. The performance of pupils in class and their willingness to continue with their education is an important criterion for selection. In such instances, ÇATOMs fulfill some auxiliary functions such as the organisation of cultural activities and supplementary classes for the pupils concerned. In other instances, ÇATOMs identify the really needy children who are provided educational support in cash on a monthly basis. However, as noted in the case of Mardin, ÇATOMs could not actually ensure that the funds thus provided to the parents would be used for the prescribed purposes for there were no mechanisms to supervise this process.

It has also been pointed out during the interviews that since the GAP-RDA's budget for ÇATOMs is rather limited, there is a need to activate alternative sources of finance to initiate new ÇATOM projects. Indeed, the recent tendency has been to induce private sector firms, including the local affiliates of major multinational corporations as sponsors of such projects.

v) Policies and activities of municipal administrations as agents of poverty reduction

Among the six target areas, Diyarbakır city has a rather unique system of local administration which it shares with only a limited number of other cities in the country as it has been granted the status of a metropolitan administration, even though the city has not been administratively sub-divided into sub-provinces unlike most of the other cities which have the same status. Only seven cities out of the fifteen which have this status are divided into mayorships - officially referred to as metropolitan sub-level municipal administrations. There are, currently, three such mayorships - namely, Sur, Bağlar and Yenışehir, within the boundaries of the Diyarbakır metropolitan administration. This means that there are nine municipal administrations in total in the six target areas.

The municipal administrations in the target areas generally suffer from a lack of resources, some obviously more so than the others. According to some of the mayors interviewed such as that of Mardin, their task becomes more difficult than it might appear from the outset since there is a huge difference in terms of the number of people that the municipal services to be provided between the day-time and night-time. The population census of Mardin city, for instance, is said to reflect those who live in the target area, whereas the actual number of people who are to be catered for during the day are no less than 100.000. The same problem, though at much more magnified proportions, confronts Sur sub-level municipal administration in Diyarbakır, where the number of people to be catered for during the day is said to reach 500.000, an increase of five fold compared to night-time. More significantly, the actual number of inhabitants seems to deviate from the number of people officially

registered in the population census. For, there are many people living in a location different from the location where they have been registered at the census times. This is said to inflate the actual population of target areas such as Mardin or Şanlıurfa. However, this reflects a situation which is exactly the opposite of Suruç/Şanlıurfa where the actual number of people living in the town show significant fluctuations in the course of the calendar year because of the mobility of residents as seasonal labour.

As reflected by the mayor of Şanlıurfa during the interview held, everyday 20-30 poor people on average would come to the city hall asking for jobs because of the soaring unemployment in the city. Similarly, the officials of the Diyarbakır metropolitan administration have estimated the number of people striving to survive under what is described as 'starvation line' as more than 50 percent of the total inhabitants. However, when interviewed, mayors would complain that they face enormous difficulties in paying the wage bills of their own employees and/or in finding resources for their essential expenditures, even though most of them have been forced to cause significant redundancies among their employees. Therefore, it is hardly possible for them to allocate resources for poverty alleviation purposes, at least as much as it is deemed necessary. Not only the amounts allocated to them from the Bank of Provinces (İller Bankası) have been severely curtailed because of their arrears, but their capacities to collect taxes such as property tax are said to be in decline, thus contributing to the deterioration of their financial situation. The municipal administration of Suruç/Şanlıurfa seems to be the worst-off in this respect, as it has not paid any wages to its employees for nearly 18 months and its telephones had been cut off for the same reason, at the time of the field survey. While they seem rather helpless in dealing with the seemingly

insurmountable problems such as the provision of clean domestic water or the rehabilitation of sewerage systems, the financial assistance obtained from the European Union have been significant in undertaking major infrastructural projects which would contribute to the resolving of such problems for the municipalities of Diyarbakır and Şanlıurfa. Yet, they remain as major problems for the municipal administrations of other target areas, not to mention their detrimental impact on the health of the residents. In both Mardin and Kızıltepe/Mardin, the existing infrastructural capacities far exceed the demand for clean water and proper sanitation, while in Suruç/Şanlıurfa, clean water is brought by tankers to be distributed to the households. Similarly, the continuing influx of migration would result in the increasing number of households without electricity in Kızıltepe/Mardin.

As put by the mayor of Mardin during the interview, the municipal administrations cannot be expected to contribute to the fight against poverty since they are in need of financial assistance themselves. Yet, since their representatives are members of the boards of trustees of SSFs, they might be expected, at least in theory, to be involved in the decision-making processes of the poverty alleviation activities. It turns out to be that, in practice, this would very much depend upon a number of factors including the nature of the personal accord between the mayors in question and governors or Kaymakams, not to mention the complexities of the local politics.

Although quite a few of the municipal administrations of the six target areas do not appear to be in a position to implement any poverty alleviation measures because of their severe financial difficulties, some of them seem, nonetheless, to have been trying to provide some support for the poor inhabitants of their

municipalities. Yet, there seems to be a lack of coordination between the SSFs and the municipal administrations in this regard. For it has been pointed out in both Batman and Diyarbakır that there might be some overlapping between their support programmes and those of the SSFs. That is, some households might have been beneficiaries of both programmes whilst many others would not be benefiting from either.

Diyarbakır metropolitan administration has established a 'social fund' to help the poor both in kind and in cash. In the provision of various kinds of support, women are said to be given priority especially the widows and those whose husbands are in prison or working away from home as seasonal labour of one kind or another. By the same token, Bağlar sub-level municipal administration has been attempting to devise its own methods of reaching the needy. For it has been pointed out that announcements were made in advance through muhtars who would, in turn, make a list of applicants, whenever the municipal administration is in a position to provide some support. In such instances, ad hoc committees comprised of the officials of the administration are established so as to examine the conditions of applicants on the spot and distribute the support accordingly.

Among the types of support are provisions of food packages containing staples and/or free bread by several municipal administrations such as Batman, Şanlıurfa, Diyarbakır metropolitan and sub-level municipal administrations. In the case of Şanlıurfa, free bread is distributed directly and/or through some foundations for up to 12.000 households during the three holy month period including Ramadan, according to the mayor. Yet, he seemed to be sharing the view that it is an insult to human dignity to make people queue for hours just to obtain a loaf of bread. In his view, such practices

have been damaging the trust between the citizens and the state, thereby indicating the potential difficulties that the state might face in maintaining the social cohesion. According to the information obtained from the Diyarbakır metropolitan administration, they could only provide food packages for about 5000 families every year although there are at least 15000 families who would need such food support. Such food packages are said to contain provisions which could last for two to three months. In the case of Yenışehir sub-level municipal administration, on the other hand, there has been a drastic reduction in the number of food packages distributed from 1250 in 2001 to 200 in 2002 because of the financial distress that the administration has been engulfed in.

Apart from food support, some municipal administrations are attempting to help the poor inhabitants of their areas by a variety of other means, although they admit that these measures are far from being adequate given the sheer number of poor households in each. Nonetheless, health centres have been established by Batman municipal and Diyarbakır metropolitan administrations to provide healthcare for the poor free of charge as outpatients including the free provision of medicine. In contrast to these cases where there seems to be somewhat more facilities with a number of specialists employed, the municipal administration in Kızıltepe/Mardin has a health centre where there is only a single general practitioner working part-time to look after poor outpatients who have to pay a small fee. Similarly, Bağlar sub-level municipal administration has a health centre specifically to provide health care for women with small children. Whereas that of Yenışehir has attempted to start an initiative to tackle the psychological problems women living in poor neighborhoods have been experiencing due to the displacement of families and domestic violence. While it is said to be in the

process of establishing teams comprised of sociologists and psychologists which will screen the neighbourhoods to identify the women needing rehabilitation, there have apparently been problems encountered in terms of finding qualified personnel speaking Kurdish.

There was also some education support in kind provided by some municipalities such as Batman and Bağlar sub-level municipal administration, and in cash such as Yenışehir sub-level municipal administration for a limited number of pupils. Whereas in the case of Şanlıurfa, according to the mayor, the financial difficulties have forced the municipal administration to discontinue the scholarships for the last three years which they had provided to nearly 1500 pupils for the previous six years.

vi) Policies and activities of the NGOs active in the region as agents of poverty reduction

It is apposite to start this section with a brief discussion of what is meant by NGOs in the Turkish context before an evaluation of the poverty alleviation activities in the six target areas undertaken by certain institutions which can be categorised as NGOs. From a legalistic point of view, it is possible to differentiate between, at least, five different type of organisations which would be rather loosely lumped together as NGOs or as they have been increasingly referred to in Turkish as 'civil society organisations' so as to keep up appearances. These are i) associations, ii) foundations, iii) cooperatives, iv) trade unions, v) professional associations. This rather confusing situation results from the absence of an exact equivalent of the term non-governmental organisation in Turkish. For quite a few of the organisations that are included in one or the other of the above categories are not, strictly

speaking, NGOs. There are among them those not only, legally speaking, business enterprises poised as NGOs, but also professional associations the membership of which would be compulsory for the practitioners of certain activities. More fundamentally, if the key distinctive criterion used by international bodies such as the EU Commission to define NGOs - that is, whether or not an organisation is 'independent of the state as regards decision-making, budgetary control and the appointment of staff, including members of its controlling body'- were to be adopted, then, many of the 'civil society organisations' in Turkey would not have qualified. In short, while it is disputable to consider many organisations grouped under the five categories mentioned above as NGOs, there will be others adopting the legal status of a commercial firm whilst effectively functioning as an NGO as exemplified below.

While most of these 'civil society organisations' are concentrated in the major metropolitan centres of Turkey, there are nonetheless many such entities operating in the southeastern provinces including the four selected provinces. However, several of them operating in the region have been established as foundations so as to assist the public sector organisations in accomplishing their objectives while their budgets are funded by the state and/or by the extra-budgetary funds. Therefore, it would not be quite appropriate to consider them as NGOs (GAP-RDA 2002, p.109). According to another recent study, Şanlıurfa among the four selected provinces takes the lead with 193 such 'civil society organisations', followed by Diyarbakır with 126, Batman 65 and Mardin 60 (Agah 2001). However, when those funded and/or directed by the public agencies including the SSFs are excluded, it appears that only a handful of them could be considered as NGOs which are directly or indirectly involved in the poverty alleviation activities. As it will be

highlighted below, many initiatives have been taken by entities which could not be, strictly speaking, called NGOs. Among the six target areas, Batman, Mardin, Kızıltepe/Mardin and Suruç/Şanlıurfa seemed especially lacking in terms of NGO type activities directed to poverty alleviation. However, it should also be noted there was a flurry of activity in some of the target areas at the time of the field survey of this study to establish "city councils" as part of the Local Agenda 21 initiative, a local governance program supported by the UNDP in Turkey. However, poverty alleviation is yet to enter the agenda of those already established such as the Local Agenda 21 City Council in Mardin since it has not been an explicit target for this initiative.

Although there are more 'civil society organisations' in Şanlıurfa according to the information available, Diyarbakır appears to be more conducive for the NGOs to prove their capacity in improving the quality of life for the inhabitants of its overpopulated, poor neighborhoods. Indeed, there are many NGOs active in such neighborhoods ranging from Human Rights Association to the Women's Centre (KA-MER) involved in the promotion of human rights in general and those of women in particular. On the other hand, quite a few participants of the FGDs held in the targeted neighborhoods have identified these NGOs as organisations that they would trust more than any other institution. Given the inadequacy of the services provided by the central and local authorities due to factors such as budget constraints, there is a considerable degree of eagerness on the part of the local people of the targeted areas to take part in projects that would improve the local living conditions, as has already been noted in the case of ÇATOMs.

Apart from the political overtones of some of their activities, such NGO like entities also seem to

be eager in initiating projects that would improve the living conditions and living standards of the inhabitants of these neighborhoods. Many initiatives encountered during the fieldwork have been directed to the improvement of the living conditions of the poor women in particular. As exemplified by KA-MER which has been founded in 1997 as a limited liability company, to promote human rights of women in general, and to fight against domestic violence in particular, the promotion of income and employment generating activities has increasingly been an integral part of their agenda. Initially, the activities were intended for Diyarbakır and its immediate hinterland. However, the activities would be expanded in response to the calls by women living in other provinces of the region. Echoing the motto of ÇATOMs highlighted above, they would acknowledge the need for economic empowerment of women so as to help them to improve their status in their social environment and put emphasis on participatory development. Having consulted with women from poor neighbourhoods about the possible types of income generating activities that could be supported, KA-MER has been instrumental in initiating the collaboration of local businessmen, municipal administrations as well as the local representatives of central government to start the following projects: decorative box-making in Diyarbakır, women's stalls in the market place of Bağlar district of Diyarbakır, restaurants in Batman and Kızıltepe/Mardin. It is noteworthy that the machinery for the box-making Project and the oven for the restaurant in Kızıltepe/Mardin have been sponsored by the central administration, while the UNDP supported GAP-GİDEM project (funded by the European Commission) has been instrumental in providing training courses in entrepreneurship for women who have been involved in those projects. While the number of women involved in these projects without making any financial contribution themselves vary between 8 and 15 per project, the women's stalls in the market place are said to

market the goods produced by women living in poor neighbourhoods thus generating income for up to 100 women.

Moreover, a certain portion (15 percent) of the revenues generated by these projects would be allocated to conduct awareness raising activities for women to be held in the establishments concerned, as it has been the case with Hünnerli Eller restaurant in Batman. While established as a limited liability company operating since the autumn of 2002, it actually functions as a 'women centre' where women's groups are organised that meet on a weekly basis to discuss various issues such as domestic violence and child care. With the emphasis on empowerment, the participants would be encouraged to develop ideas about the ways in which they could initiate income and employment generating activities.

Similar initiatives have also been encountered in other target areas while some of them remained as individual initiatives, yet to be organised formally as a commercial enterprise or otherwise, and lacking the support mechanisms which KA-MER seemed to have accomplished. One such initiative was the carpet-weaving workshop in Kızıltepe/Mardin where an FGD was conducted. The workshop has been maintained despite the fact that the attempt to establish it as ÇATOM workshop has been turned down, whereas another one, Selis Women Counseling Centre in Diyarbakır has been organised as a limited liability company since 2001. It, too, seemed to be sharing similar aims in terms of empowering women both economically and preventing domestic violence. The counseling services which entailed legal advice as well as psychological therapies were free of charge. During the interview, it was stressed that it is necessary to provide counseling not only for women who have been subjected to domestic violence but also for

men so as to improve the status of women. Among the income generating activities organised by Selis, there were carpet-weaving and knitting workshops. The former which has been started by the partners of Selis to provide employment for five to six women has ceased operating at the time of the fieldwork because of lack of resources. While the latter had three female employees with social security, earning wages similar to those paid in SSF workshops mentioned above, it is said to be still in business thanks to orders made occasionally by individuals and/or institutions.

There is yet another initiative directed to the empowerment of women, but one which shows striking differences in terms of its institutional structure. KEDV (Kadın Emegini Değerlendirme Vakfı/Foundation for Valuing Women's Labour) is in fact actually organised as a foundation which may be more accurately referred to as an NGO. However, it is an NGO established in İstanbul which conducts its activities on a project basis in two of the target areas, Mardin and Diyarbakır. While originally founded in 1986, the stimulus for starting projects in the Southeastern Anatolia has been provided by the "Support for Women Entrepreneurship in Local Development Project", sponsored by the European Commission on a two-year basis in 2001, to start day-care centres for pre-school age children in the poor neighbourhoods such as Fatih and Huzurevi in Diyarbakır, Evren and Saraçoğlu in Mardin. The day-care centres ask for small contributions by the families on a monthly basis, even though there would be many families which fail to contribute as they could not afford to do so. The underlying idea is to enable women to have free-time to undertake income generating activities which, in turn, would be considered as vital for their empowerment. First and foremost, the Project is said to have made an impact in freeing the women of such poor neighborhoods from the social

constraints which have hitherto precluded them from getting out of their homes. More significantly, the participants would learn the ways in which they could reach collective decisions about themselves, thereby emphasising the importance of participatory development. The local representative of KEDV Project interviewed in Mardin has noted that the Project has been more successful in one neighborhood than in another mainly because the women were not prepared to act in accordance with the decisions reached collectively in the latter case. As she put it, it proved difficult to overcome 'free rider' problems in Evren neighborhood which was not as poor as Saraçoğlu. Most of the women were also said to be pleased with the fact that their children have been granted the opportunity to learn Turkish, as there were pre-school education sessions run by qualified instructors.

While the salaries of instructors working at the centres and workshops have been paid by the funds of the Project, the need for external sources of finance was inevitable. As in other similar initiatives reviewed above, the sustainability of KEDV projects would also largely depend on various forms of support provided by local businessmen as well as by the central and municipal administrations. By the same token, standard income generating activities such as knitting workshops in both Diyarbakır and Mardin, and candle-making workshop in Diyarbakır which have been organised with the material support provided by the local SSFs, face problems of sustainability. In fact, the candle-making workshop has ceased its operations at the time of the field research. Hence the intention of converting them into producers' cooperatives as the specified time of the Project was about to expire. Among the participants of an FGD in Diyarbakır, there were a few women who took part in the activities such as learning how to make candles or working as child-minders at the day-care centres.

About the NGOs which have been based outside the six target areas, but undertaking activities in the areas concerned, information has also been gathered to the extent that it was possible to find their local representatives. There are two such NGOs in Şanlıurfa both sponsored by international bodies. One of them is the Foundation for Occupational Training and SME Development (MEKSA) sponsored by the Agency for Development and Cooperation of the Federal Government of Switzerland (SDC) organising vocational training courses for the youth as well as for secretarial training courses for the young women aged between 18 and 30 with primary school diplomas. It has been active for the last ten years, while the women training programme has been continuing for the last six years. However, it has been noted that the prolonged economic crisis on the one hand, the prevalent conservative social attitudes which are against the idea of women working outside home, would result in only 20 percent of trainees being employed currently. The second such NGO operating in Şanlıurfa is Willows Foundation, formerly Pathfinder International, established in İstanbul in 1998. Sponsored by UN supported “Topluma Dayalı Kadın Sağlığı Eğitim ve Danışmanlık Hizmetleri Projesi”, they have been engaged in educating women about contraception in poor neighborhoods such as Eyyübiye, Yakubiye and Dedeosman for the last two years. They have also been creating jobs for a limited number of the inhabitants of these neighbourhoods as they have been using the local people as instructors after having provided a basic training for them.

The activities of NGOs and the like so far reviewed could be considered as either indirectly contributing to poverty alleviation or making a limited impact in this sense as in the case of income generating activities, but nonetheless significant to the extent that they contributed in more ways than

one to the empowerment of the poor, women in particular.

However, there were other initiatives encountered during the field research which could be described as directly aiming at poverty alleviation in terms of material support provided to poor households. One such NGO organised in the traditional sense of a religious charity was “Türkiye Gönüllü Teşekkülleri Vakfı” operating in Şanlıurfa since 1993. It is in fact organised in a way what can be described as a consortium of several religious foundations, comprising 23 such entities. In a sense, this particular NGO has been running a parallel poverty alleviation programme to that of SSF in Şanlıurfa, no doubt better funded, if not better organised. For it has been not only providing hot meals during the three holy months period including Ramadan for up to 10.000 people through its own soup-kitchen, but also providing food packages which included fresh meat to 400 families throughout the year, clothing – albeit second hand, health support in the form of free medicine and treatment for outpatients provided by the doctors and pharmacies sympathetic to the idea, education support in the form of books, stationery and school uniforms and direct cash payments in small amounts especially during the three holy months period.

Known as “Aziz Hoca” foundation among the community, it has also developed its own system of files about the beneficiaries as well as its own procedures of evaluating the applications including on the spot inquiries by visits to the poor neighborhoods. They would be very careful in avoiding possible overlapping with the supports provided by SSF, as there seems to be close cooperation between the two on an informal basis. However, there were participants of the FGDs who claimed that they would be getting food packages from the SSF, while having hot meals from the soup-

kitchen of this NGO at one time or another. Like the SSF, this NGO is said to be seeking to reach to the most needy who do not have any form of social security. Yet, it has been channeling the donations made by the charitable individuals who would often prefer to remain anonymous. Free bread would also be supplied by the municipal administration during the three months period. The NGO has had large refrigerating capacity to keep donated carcasses of the animals slaughtered for religious reasons as well as stocks of staple food products. According to the imam interviewed who was running the day to day affairs of this NGO, there were plans to enhance the capacity of the soup-kitchen to 15.000 and extend the period of its operation from three to six months. The impression one could get from some of the participants of the FGDs held in Şanlıurfa was that the quality of food provided was much better compared to that of SSF. Yet, there were also complaints that they would be discriminated on the grounds that they were not widows. Indeed as confirmed by the imam interviewed widows, disabled, families of those in prison were among their priorities.

During the fieldwork, a number of other NGOs were identified. They mainly provide scholarships to the poor university students in their respective provinces such as ŞURKAV (Şanlıurfa İli Kültür, Eğitim, Sanat ve Araştırma Vakfı) foundation and MAREV (Mardinliler Eğitim ve Dayanışma Vakfı). The former is said to have been established with the close cooperation of the governor and the local notables. In fact, its premises were next to that of the SSF in Şanlıurfa. More strikingly, quite a few participants of the FGDs seemed to be making no distinction between the two, possibly because of their location, as they spelled the acronym of ŞURKAV whenever they referred to the SSF. MAREV, on the other hand, is headquartered in İstanbul. It also provides donations in kind to the poor. MAREV

is said to prefer to channel its donations on the basis of primordial lineages such as ethnic affinities, according to the information obtained during the interviews conducted with several interviewees. It was also claimed that its beneficiaries would not feel the need to seek for other means of support such as the SSF. However, it was not possible to confirm or falsify such claims since it was not possible to interview any representative of MAREV during the field research. Association for Supporting the Poor Students of Suruç (Suruç Fakir Öğrencileri Destekleme Derneği), on the other hand, is locally organised since 2002 and relies upon donations of its 80 odd members. In 2003, the association has provided scholarships for 80 students out of 250 applicants, giving priority to female university students.

One final note in this section should be made in regards to the Development Foundation of Turkey (TKV) which has already been mentioned as one of the cooperating agencies while discussing the activities of ÇATOMs. It is, in fact, one of the long-standing NGOs active in the southeastern provinces especially involved with the promotion of rural development projects. However, it has also a range of other activities such as initiation of income generating projects in poor urban neighbourhoods. As observed in the particular case of Diyarbakır, TKV has been engaged in the promotion of such activities in collaboration with both the SSF and the newly established ÇATOM. It has also cooperated with KA-MER in terms of providing technical support for some of the activities elaborated above. While promoting such entrepreneurial activities, TKV has been described as preferring the provision of credits rather than loans to the would-be entrepreneurs so as to get them accustomed to the idea of paying back in kind or in cash.

V. A General Evaluation

The final section of this Report will be divided in two parts, first, there will be a brief review of the characteristics of the poor living in the six target areas as well as the socio-economic conditions prevailing in those areas so as to put the poverty alleviation programmes implemented into perspective; second, the observations made in regards to the agents and/or instruments of poverty alleviation in the target areas will be underlined.

The Profile of the Poor

It is apposite to start this brief evaluation by stating that the inhabitants of the targeted areas seemed to be entrapped in a vicious circle of poverty. The poor could only find low-paid jobs as seasonal or casual labourers mainly because they are deprived of the opportunities to have a better education. This is in line with one of the main findings of an earlier World Bank study on Turkey which contended that differences between the poor and the non-poor can best be explained by “differences in endowments”, especially “by differences in human capital” (World Bank 1999, p.47). Thus as exemplified by most of the participants of the FGDs, poor households lack a regular source of income, and a significant number of members of such households, are either illiterate or have left school at an early age. Since they lack gainful skills, they can only find work in such low-paid jobs without any job and/or social security. Consequently, they live in substandard conditions that are not very amenable to improvement. Moreover, the unreliability of their incomes underlines the subtle difference between economic vulnerability and poverty. Put differently, the risk of poverty is highest for households in which the head is employed in seasonal and/or casual jobs.

Last but not least, it is not surprising at all that women and children suffer most from poor living conditions. For, the women in the targeted areas, in many cases deprived of education, appeared, literally, to shoulder the burden of living in conditions without any adequate physical infrastructure and/or regular source of income. By the same token, most of the children of the targeted areas struggle to survive physically without having much of an aspiration for the future. In view of the fact that the average age of the populations of four selected provinces is much lower than national averages, it is quite understandable that the Chamber of Trade and Industry in Diyarbakır propounds the urgent need to adopt an industrial policy to tackle the phenomenon of unemployment which is rampant in the region as a whole, along with the social policy measures to tackle the phenomenon of street children in Diyarbakır. In the present circumstances, it is doubtful whether a considerable number of the youth and the children working in the street could even be considered as part of the reserved army of unskilled, uneducated labour since many steps are required to first ensure that they are protected from juvenile crime and the potential threats of substance abuse.

As anticipated, the average size of the FGD participants’ households was relatively high. In many instances, it was no less than 6 to 8. This is generally in accordance with the average size of poor households of the southeastern provinces in general, with the exception of those elderly participants who would be living on their own and/or with their spouses. Another striking feature of many poor households was the relative absence of a male figure as the breadwinner of the family. Not only were there many households which simply lacked a husband or a father, but there were also many others where the husband and/or father was largely incapacitated because of poor health or

disabilities suffered because of poor working conditions as casual labour. In many cases, the whole family would take part in the seasonal flow of migrant labour, thus preventing the children from attending their schools for significant periods. Similarly, women and teen-aged children work as casual labour during the cultivation and/or harvest periods of different crops earning wages that are minimal yet indispensable, for the sustainability of the poor households. At the time of the field research, such wages were no more than 5 million TL (about \$ 3.5) per day for a working day of no less than 12 hours, according to the participants of the FGDs in target areas such as Suruç/Şanlıurfa.

The FGDs also revealed that while the inhabitants of poor neighbourhoods can be broadly divided into two groups, there was not much of a difference between them in terms of their prospects to break out of the vicious circle of poverty. First group is comprised of those inhabitants who have been living in the same poor neighbourhoods for more than a generation, in many instances 30 or 40 years. Whereas the second major group is migrants most of whom has been forced to leave their villages because of the counter-insurgency operations in the region during the last two decades. However, both groups have been confronted with a high risk of poverty especially concentrated in areas such as the poor neighbourhoods of Batman, Diyarbakır, Mardin, or Şanlıurfa. In both, a common pattern could be detected where the low ratio of households with a regular source of income reflects the lack of activities that could provide a modicum of stability for the members of poor households. In this respect, there did not seem to be much of a difference between, say, Gül neighbourhood in Mardin or Dedeosman neighbourhood in Şanlıurfa where the inhabitants belong to the first group and Evren or Saraçoğlu neighbourhoods in Mardin where migrants make the majority of inhabitants.

In fact, the limited range of activities indicates, in turn, another important factor which needs to be taken into account in poverty assessment, namely, the availability of capital for investment in income generating activities. Lack of capital, however, not only implies its relative scarcity as a factor of production, but equally importantly, underlines a deliberate choice on the part of those who own and/or control it to refrain from investing in a particular geographical location and/or activity. Indeed, the latter has been identified as one of the determinants of the lack of productive activities in six target areas, and ipso facto, of the tendency to seek work on the part of the poor in areas other than their place of origin.

According to one of the advisors to the mayor of Diyarbakır metropolitan area, the migrants are not inclined to exploit the local resources as much as they could, for they are said to stay so long as they wait for the opportunity to move on either back to their villages or to the west. In other words, since those who migrate from rural areas to Diyarbakır city do not contemplate settling there permanently, they tend to work in casual jobs and live in rental accommodation and/or stay with their relatives, in overpopulated and dilapidated houses. According to a study undertaken in Diyarbakır in the late 1990s, the ratio of those households willing to move on was nearly 40 percent of a sample of 1072 households (Dağ et al. 1999, p.346). However, whether the incoming population has a real choice in this regard is debatable. The lack of investment in the region as a whole, no doubt, constrains the availability of jobs which will provide the households concerned with a regular income. The huge discrepancy between the phenomenally high rate of applications for investment incentives and the investments actually realised in Batman is a vivid illustration of the prevailing state of affairs. This seems to be a more critical factor to be taken into

account while considering the causes of poverty than the nature of the jobs taken by the migrant population. Perhaps one could develop a better understanding of the situation at hand, if one is prepared to acknowledge that the consideration of the target areas of Batman, Diyarbakır or Kızıltepe/Mardin as a staging post is largely due to the lack of employment opportunities with regular income and social security. As for the prospects for a return migration back to the villages in the light of an apparent establishment of peace and order in the region for the last few years, it seems that the prospects for a major exodus that would relieve the pressure on the target areas concerned are not very promising. The widespread perception among the central authorities as well as the representatives of the municipal authorities is that the younger generation is most likely to remain in urban centres, although there might be returnees among the older generations in due course. While there are serious efforts made to initiate an orderly return to villages programme, there seems to be a long way to go to accomplish tangible objectives.

This brief review of the characteristics of the poor living in the six target areas necessitates a reconsideration of arguments about 'new' forms of poverty in Turkey (cf. Buğra 2002; Buğra & Keyder 2003; Özgen 2002; Pınarcıoğlu & Işık 2001). This argument is largely based on the recognition of the fact that the migration to urban metropolitan areas such as Istanbul would not necessarily allow the poor to break the vicious circle of poverty anymore. For the types of employment that they would be able to find would not preclude them from being classified either as casual labour or economically vulnerable since the informalisation of the labour raises the spectre of unemployment even if it may provide them with a regular income so long as they are employed. Put differently, while those with the poorest education and skills turn out to be those

who are the most disadvantaged in terms of benefiting from the rewards of a capitalist market economy, the functioning of the latter might equally be decisive in blurring the difference between the poor and the economically vulnerable.

While it is true that the chances for breaking out of the vicious circle of poverty are dim for the predominant majority of the inhabitants of poor neighborhoods whether in İstanbul or in the six target areas of this study, this does not necessarily indicate a qualitative change on the part of the latter. As already emphasised, there is hardly any difference between the previously settled poor neighbourhoods and the relative newcomers in this regard (see also Can 2002, p.198). Nor is it quite accurate to argue that there emerges a 'culture of poverty' as a basic feature of this new form of poverty, reflecting the loss of any hope of being incorporated into the modern, better-off segments of the urban environment (cf. Can 2002, pp.197-198; Özgen 2002, p.14). Not only such arguments are trapped into the problematic of modernisation, but also fail to grasp the fact that the informalisation of labour has always been an integral part of their lives for the inhabitants of many poor neighbourhoods such as those in six target areas. Indeed, many participants of the FGDs have reflected that migration to the urban environment has not put an end to their accustomed practice of seeking work as seasonal agricultural labour or construction workers.

On the other hand, it would also be misplaced to reach a verdict that the inhabitants of the poor neighbourhoods have lost any hope of living better lives. There is no doubt a longing for living better lives while this may not necessarily be contemplated in terms of being incorporated into the system as understood within the modernisation problematic. Rather, there seems to be a seesaw between the

conditions of economic vulnerability and poverty, or put differently between relative and absolute poverty, for the inhabitants of such neighbourhoods. The exogenous factors such as the macroeconomic crises and/or conjunctural changes in the regional trade as exemplified by the closure of the gateway to Iraq have certainly been making a significant impact in this regard.

Yet, there were, of course, variations in terms of the ways in which this vicious circle of poverty is experienced in six target areas. As it has been pointed out in the case of Suruç/Şanlıurfa, the lack of income opportunities might also be considered, at least partly, as the result of natural environmental factors such as drought and lack of arable and/or irrigated land. Indeed, self-subsisting farmers cultivating small plots of land have been increasingly facing difficulties in maintaining their livelihoods, thus would be considered among the needy, because of the deterioration in the availability of underground waters in Suruç plain. On the other hand, Şanlıurfa itself has to a certain extent benefited from the changes in the natural endowments, thereby reaping the rewards of the major irrigation projects which have enormously increased the agricultural productivity in the adjacent Harran plain. As reflected in the relatively high rate of growth of income for the province as a whole, this productivity increase would even lessen the impact of economic crisis to a certain extent. However, the more visible impact of that change on those trapped in the vicious circle of poverty has been rather different. For many poor households in most of the six target areas seeking employment as seasonal labour, Harran would increasingly emerge as a new destination.

Similarly, the impact of the migration resulting from the displacement of the inhabitants of villages affected by the tense situation which had prevailed

in the region during the last decade and a half has shown variation among the target areas. While there was no such flow of migration to Suruç/Şanlıurfa, and relatively less to the target areas of Mardin and Şanlıurfa, the other three target areas (Diyarbakir, Batman and Kızıltepe/Mardin) carried the brunt of this influx. By the same token, the impact of closing of the trade routes with Iraq has been differential. Mardin and Kızıltepe/Mardin have obviously been affected most in terms of loss of income and employment not only for the owners and/or drivers of lorries, but also for others involved in a chain of tertiary activities which depended upon that trade for its existence.

Agents/Instruments for Poverty Alleviation

Most of the participants of the FGDs were holders of Green Cards. However, their experiences about the SSFs and the poverty alleviation programmes in general varied significantly. While most of the participants had, at least, an idea about the supports that are available, there were, nonetheless, those who tried to find out about them during the FGDs. In other words, the efforts on the part of the SSFs to reach the needy are far from being adequate as conceded by the authorities concerned in more than one occasion during the field research.

No doubt, the SSF authorities are confronted with a dilemma. On the one hand, there is both social and political pressure to do something about the poor, as reflected in the formulation of the basic justification of the present government's Urgent Action Plan - 'who deserve to be given priority since their abject level of poverty would cause distress among the public at large'(SYDTF 2003, p.17) - to hasten poverty alleviation activities. Hence the intensification of efforts both to enhance their capabilities to reach a target population identified as the poorest of the poor and to develop criteria to

differentiate between different categories of the needy. Indeed, efforts to develop 'a scoring formula to rank households according to their level of poverty', as it has been highlighted by the Letter of Sector Policy mentioned above (World Bank 2001, p.114), have begun under the World Bank funded SRMP together with the State Institute of Statistics.

On the other hand, they are confronted with the difficult balancing act of matching the capabilities with the objectives. That is, SSFs have limited resources to put into effect a multiplicity of poverty alleviation measures. While it is true that more needs to be done to enhance the capabilities of the SSFs, the attempt to reach those who have hitherto not benefited from poverty alleviation programmes has the potential risk of excluding some of the existing beneficiaries. In fact, this seems to have already been taking place to a certain extent judged by the information obtained from the SSFs as well as from the participants of the FGDs.

As for the other important instrument of poverty alleviation examined, obviously there are inherent difficulties involved in considering possession of Green Card as a reliable indicator of poverty. Nor should it, therefore, be considered as an effective means of poverty alleviation especially as it is construed as an ad hoc system, with a fragmented structure in terms of its sources of finance as reviewed above. So it is only natural that its fragmented structure would cause disenchantment among its beneficiaries as well as its implementing agencies. As already pointed out, many officials seemed to believe that it would make much more sense if the SSF and the Green Card are reorganised so that they could function more effectively as they target more or less the same category of people. But it does not seem realistic to make any judgements about the plausibility of such a reorganisation on the basis of the observations made in six target areas.

A closely related issue concerns the attitudes of both the officials involved in processing the applications for the Green Card and/or poverty alleviation programmes of the SSFs as well as those of the beneficiaries and/or potential beneficiaries. While the complaints about arbitrary behaviour of the officials involved, including muhtars, in the determination of the needy as well as the distribution of benefits would be common place, the attitudes of the beneficiaries would not be puritanical either, as also registered by other recent studies (cf. Buğra & Keyder 2003). This would, in turn, feed into a feeling of mutual distrust between the benefactor and the beneficiary. Caught between those who are so ashamed of their deprivation that they would even refrain from applying for support and those who would attempt to obtain as much benefit as possible, if necessary without being scrupulous, it is plausible that the officials might be inclined to use their discretionary powers. Hence, the emphasis on the need to develop more standard procedures so as to maintain uniformity in practice as well as to assess their effectiveness in terms of the resources used and the objectives accomplished. This is, in fact, the gist of the suggestions made by the most recent report of the Supreme Audit Board, to reform the procedural aspects of the activities of SSFs and/or SASF (YDK 2001, pp.32-33).

The procedural improvements are, no doubt, necessary not only to enhance the quality of the assistance programmes, but also vital to lessen the existing distrust between the parties concerned. Furthermore, they might also be instrumental in instigating the SSFs to fulfill another important function which have been originally assigned to them, but one that they have so far failed to accomplish as also exemplified by the evidence perceived in six target areas. In fact, they would be expected to initiate mechanisms that would augment the cooperation of other charitable institutions and individuals so as to expand the pool

of resources that could be activated for poverty alleviation purposes.

While it will not be wrong to consider SSFs as the implementing agencies of the poverty alleviation policies designed by the central government, as pointed out above, it is not quite possible to agree with the characterisation of their activities as the fulfillment of 'all the social responsibilities of the state vis a vis its poor citizens' who are not benefiting from any other social security system (YDK 2001, p.i). Yet, the question should not be posed in terms of how to transform the SASF and SSFs so that they could actually function as such, i.e. as mechanisms of 'a more effective redistribution of income to the poor' as envisaged by the 8th Development Plan.

The reason is rather simple. The SASF and the SSFs were never, as it has already been pointed out in this study, meant to be institutions of a welfare state that aims to prevent poverty rather than to relieve it. In the present circumstances, they can, at best, be envisaged as safety nets. Therefore the more fundamental question seems to be whether they can function as safety net mechanisms, albeit to compensate for the 'adverse effects of reforms on poor people', as envisaged by the World Bank's SRMP, while still remaining as originally conceived, that is, as an extra-budgetary fund to be made use of in flexible and quite often politically expedient ways. For as astutely observed by a recent World Bank study, "[t]he root cause of much of the ad hoc nature of social assistance in Turkey is the ad hoc nature of the institutions delivering it, including the Social Solidarity Fund." (World Bank 2003). The irony is that in attempting to institutionalize the delivery mechanisms so as to end the ad hoc nature of social assistance, the World Bank seems to end up with preserving the ad hoc nature of the institution that it opted for as its main safety net mechanism.

As for the envisaged role of SSFs functioning as 'a trampoline to help mitigate poverty and to give the poor opportunities to escape from poverty' (World Bank 2001, p.116), one is bound to be rather skeptical, when one is reminded of the fact that safety nets 'are not associated with people getting out of poverty' (Graham 2003). Nor is the Turkish experience very encouraging so far. As reviewed above neither the SASF itself nor the SSFs in six target areas have been able to prioritise income and employment generating activities to justify such an expectation. The rhetoric of the SSF authorities promulgating such activities as encapsulated by the worn-out cliché of 'lets teach them how to catch a fish' would remain unconvincing so long as their practice is confined to the sort of initiatives attempted in the six target areas. This would, in turn, underline the need to bring the question of the 'pro-poor growth strategies' with an emphasis on redistribution into the debating agenda. Only then, it will be plausible to initiate a debate about the appropriate institutional mechanism to create and implement schemes for sustainable income generation and increasing the employability of the poor at both local and national levels. Meanwhile, there might also be a need to reconsider the ways in which the technical qualities of the SSFs and other related entities could be improved so as to enhance the prospects for the employability of the poor and/or devising mechanisms to ensure the sustainability of the income generating activities, if they are nonetheless expected to function as a 'trampoline'.

In this regard, as reviewed above in the context of the six target areas, the activities of the NGOs and those of ÇATOMs in particular, have much commendable aspects. However, it seems that their basic contribution is to be assessed in terms of social rather than economic empowerment of the women, to use the jargon of the poverty literature. They

have, no doubt, been making important strides in highlighting the gender dimension of poverty alleviation programmes. Yet, both the NGOs working in this field and ÇATOMs are constrained by lack of resources which, in turn, underlines the need to seek ways in which the means of cooperation between different agencies engaged in poverty alleviation could be augmented. This gains a new saliency in view of the fact that the municipal administrations are mostly starved of resources to fulfil their own functions, let alone undertaking poverty alleviating programmes in a satisfactory manner. Furthermore, the UNDP Poverty Reduction Thematic Trust Fund recommendation that ‘the voices of the poor, especially of women, are to be heard and fed into upstream policy formulation’ is to be given serious consideration in developing policies aiming not only the alleviation of poverty, but no less pertinently, its prevention.

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