

*Summary Report**

ROCK, PAPER, SCISSORS

The Role of Arts in Psychosocial Support for Children During Armed Conflict

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2015-2020



Children had their share in the long history of Turkey that is full of human rights violations through loss of life, lack of access to health or education, displacement, and poverty in various periods. Most recently, one of the harshest instances of it was experienced in 2015 and the aftermath, which has been a period of crisis that witnessed explosions, urban conflicts, the coup attempt, state-of-emergency and the closure of civil society organizations in the aftermath, appointment of state officials in municipalities and the detention of politicians, journalists and civil society actors.

The social, economic, political, and demographic transformations experienced at the regional and national level since 2015 have significantly affected civil society in general, but particularly the field of work with children. Within this framework, we conducted a comprehensive research to portray the current situation and the aforementioned transformations, and to evaluate the losses and gains in the field of children's rights and works with children in the last five years. In this study carried out between July 2020 and April 2021, we pursued the organizations that utilize arts as means and their strategies; we tried to identify the current and evolving needs in the field in multiple dimensions.

This report that was published out of the research conducted by Ebru Ergin and Ezgi Koman from FİSA Center for Children's Rights (FİSA Çocuk Hakları Merkezi) focuses on the psychosocial support programs that aim to eliminate various effects of armed conflict on children – from violations of the right to life to restrictions on access to education and treatment, and displacement –. Through this study, the attempt was to assess how and to what extent arts is employed in these programs targeting particularly children, its impact on child's healing processes, and the challenges experienced by the practitioners and their underlying causes. Within the scope of the research, we conducted online in-depth interviews with 58 people composed of 42 representatives from 33 different organizations and 16 independent persons from Batman, Diyarbakır, Mardin, Şırnak, and Van. The interviewees of the study are comprised of the representatives of civil society organizations, art organizations and public institutions that carry out work with children; and the educators and independent activists who carry out such work individually. Overall, the ultimate purpose of this research report has been to assess the role and impact of art and craft activities used in psychosocial support practices by those who work with children and/or for children in regions undergoing an armed conflict. In that regard:

* This document is prepared to present the scope and findings of the research report "Taş, Kağıt, Makas / Kevir, Kaxes, Meqes" published in April 2021. The [full report](#) is available in Turkish and Kurdish on the website of Anadolu Kültür.

- We identified the skill sets, approaches employed, and forms of art used by those working with children.
- We evaluated the extent that organizations and individuals are able to address the extraordinary circumstances such as war, armed conflict, migration, the current global pandemic, and earthquake, and/or the new conditions and needs that arise from them.
- We contributed to the establishment of a discussion platform that would enable to detect the gaps in the triangle of psychosocial support, academia, and learning with arts and to develop tools, content, and skills incorporating arts in psychosocial support to compensate these gaps while in the meantime considering local dynamics.
- We examined the role of promoting the use of mother-tongue through art activities carried out in mother-tongue in the works carried out with children.
- We conducted an analysis that aims to create models that would contribute to the formation of comprehensive training programs for fieldworkers, original content creation, and organizational support.
- We compiled the needs and recommendations for training on diverse subjects that would render the psychosocial support programs incorporating forms of art carried out by the individuals and organizations more effective.
- We observed the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the current activities.

Though the methods that are familiar and would at least partially accomplish the goal in exigent circumstances such as war, armed conflict, earthquake, migration, pandemic are often preferred by the practitioners, this approach sometimes poses the greatest obstacle in identifying the constantly changing needs and methods. Based on the evaluations deriving from this point of view along with our long-term relationships and ongoing discussions with the organizations we work with, we carried out this study to address the need for comprehensive research that explores the practices of organizations since 2015 and examines how forms of art are used and transformed in psychosocial support.

Within the scope of this research, we analyze the information gathered from the interviews held with the participants who utilize forms of art for psychosocial activities held with children; we outline our analysis; and we provide a list of recommendations on the level of implementation and policymaking so that prospective works in the field can carry on effectively.

Recommendations

- For the significance of extensive implementation of psychosocial programs for children affected by armed conflicts and the inclusion of art in these programs to be more visible and widespread in the field of work with children, individuals and organizations should be provided with training that are empowering and facilitating in terms of content and method along with financial support.
- Different levels of support needed by children either living in conflict areas or had to migrate during and after the conflict, in the short and long term, should be determined through research; various approaches in psychosocial support incorporating arts should be developed accordingly and extensively implemented; and through sharing knowledge and experience on their effects, the enhancement of the field should be ensured.
- For raising awareness of the impact of armed conflicts on children, the works with parents, educators, civil society, decision-makers and local governments should be expanded.

- A regional and rights-based child database should be established to better identify children, and the planning of activities should be carried out accordingly.
- Each child has a different level and way of being affected by conflict. In addition to taking these into account, it should also be ensured that different psychosocial support programs are designed by considering the age, gender, personal interests, and needs of the children.
- Supervision assistance, from which individuals and organizations that carry out psychosocial support programs for children can receive support during the implementation processes, should be included in the programs from the planning stage, and if necessary, in the relevant budget items.
- Comprehensive training should be organized to empower the practitioners, and information should be shared on the use and effects of different forms and tools of art in these training. A pool of trainers who can combine artistic methods with psychological approaches and specialize in working in conflict areas should be established.
- Opportunities should be created for individuals and organizations that have experience in using art in psychosocial support to share their experiences, and a network should be established for exchange of ideas.
- Forms and methods of art employed for psychosocial support should be developed together with experts, especially when the focus is on the effects of trauma on children in conflict areas. These should be implemented within the scope of consistent and regular programs spread over a long period of time, and the results should be evaluated and used in the development of new programs. Knowledge transfer should be ensured through scrutinizing good examples from around the world.
- The effects of using the mother-tongue in psychosocial support programs on children should be rendered visible and the activities in mother-tongue should specifically be supported.
- In order to ensure that the design and implementation of the works are compatible with children's rights, principles of children's rights, most notably the child participation, should be adopted in these processes.
- Enhancements should take place to ensure parental participation in psychosocial support programs to be implemented.
- Systematic monitoring mechanisms should be established to ensure the impact assessment of the works carried out. Thus, both the results of works will become visible and the needs and potentials of the children will be revealed.
- Psychosocial support programs carried out during low and high-intensity conflicts constitute a valuable source of information in a field with limited examples in the world literature. Therefore, it should be ensured that these works are written down, reproduced and shared in different languages. Experiences from other countries should also be disseminated among those who carry out these works.

This report, which we hope will be instrumental in determining the general strategies to be followed in the field and supporting the organizations in line with their needs, serves as a guide for both Anadolu Kültür and the organizations operating in the field to prepare training programs incorporating arts. We anticipate that this study, thus the report, will fill a significant gap in the field of works with children and contribute to the literature and the practices of organizations. Moreover, we believe that it will serve as a guide for implementing comprehensive capacity-building programs intended for the aforementioned organizations and field workers, and prospective activities regarding original content production and institutional support.