



AFETLERDE ÇOCUK HAKLARI VE ÇOCUK KATILIMI

16 ARALIK 2023 - 13:00 - 15:30
MALİ MUŞAVİRLER ODASI
3053.SOKAK ADIYAMAN

1. OTURUM

Moderatör: İlke Cambazoglu - Fisa Çocuk Hakları Merkezi

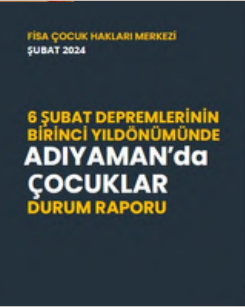
Çocuklar Anlatıyor: Adıyaman'daki Sorunlar ve Talepler

2. OTURUM

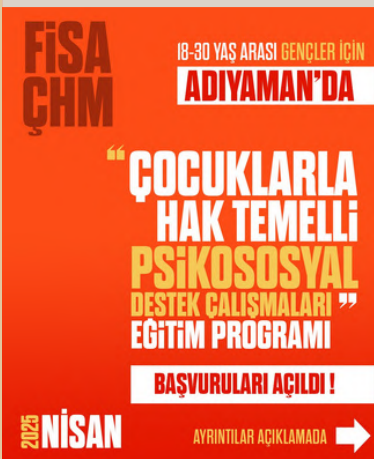
Moderatör: Alper Yalçın - Rengarenk Umutlar Derneği

Görde Durmuş - İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Çocuk Çalışmaları Birimi
Afet ve Kriz Durumlarında Çocukları Dinlemek, Anlamak, Onarmak

Gizem Kıyıcı - Şehir Dedektifi
Yıkıma ve Yeniden İnşaya Çocuk Gözüyle Bakmak



Notes on Solidarity, Experience and Life



Contents

• Notes on Solidarity, Experience and Life.....	3
• Esin Koman - Damla (11).....	5
• Ziya Özsökmenler - Zerda (11).....	13
• Elif Avzen Şirin - Menesse (9).....	16
• Deniz Türkeş Kazak - Devrim (9).....	22
• İlke Cambazoğlu - Ebrar (11).....	25
• Serkan Demir - Miraç (14).....	31
• Selvi Eldem - Asmin (10).....	35
• Ahmet Deniz - Uğur Çınar (14).....	37
• Ezgi Orak - Öykü (10).....	41
• Özge Ürer - Rana (9).....	45
• Aydın Şirin - Emine (11).....	47
• Ebru Ergin - Rozerin (13).....	50
• Hatice Değirmenci - Badesu (11).....	53
• Dilan Dursun - Zeynep Ceren (13).....	55
• Tülay Durmaz ve Zahide Göksu - Zeynep (14).....	59
• Basri Hasan Bayraktar - Zerrin (9).....	60
• Alper Şen - Yağmur (11).....	62
• Şevval Yücekaya - İklim (14).....	66
• Gizem Kıyğı ve İpek Kay - Sevda (14).....	69
• Naim Aktan - Çağan (10).....	73
• Barış Işık - Gülbahar (12).....	76
• Yasir Aktoprak - Hüseyin (10).....	84
• Açıyla Sakarya ve Meltem Ergezen - Elifsu (8).....	88
• Gökhan Kazak - Ecrin (9).....	93
• Ezgi Koman - İklim Ceren (11).....	96
• Zeynel Polat - Cansu (11).....	101

This publication has been prepared with the support of the Local Empowerment Support Fund, which is implemented in cooperation with the Civil Society Support Foundation and the Turkey Mozaik Foundation.

FISA Children's Rights Center is solely responsible for its content and does not reflect the views of the supporting institutions in any way.



NOTES ON SOLIDARITY, EXPERIENCE AND LIFE

Although the devastation caused by the earthquakes that occurred on February 6, 2023 and the ones that followed in Türkiye and Syria plunged everyone into deep mourning, hundreds of thousands of people mobilized to stand in solidarity with the people in the cities affected by the earthquake during these difficult times. FISA Children's Rights Center has been continuing its work in cities affected by the earthquake since March 2023, in order to be with children and their parents and to alleviate the difficulties they experience during these difficult times.

The two years since the earthquake, have been full of unforgettable experiences and examples of solidarity for the FISA Children's Rights team. Many people have been there in Adıyaman with their own areas of expertise and everything they can do and contribute, either permanently or at different intervals, to be there for the children in the solidarity networks that started immediately after the earthquake.

In all these studies we have carried out and the reports we have prepared in order to stand by our friends from Adıyaman who have started to build a new life with solidarity despite all the pain and destruction they have experienced, to carry out works to empower children, and to make the rights violations and acute needs visible, we have witnessed in these two years how we have been able to become many for the sake of a common goal for children.

While sitting and talking around the fire lit in the solidarity sites, we rediscovered the meaning of leaving aside everyone's own knowledge and just being a listener or carrying any materials, thinking together and living together no matter what. None of us would want to be in such devastating and difficult times. However, if a new life is to be established, we felt at every stage of the work how valuable it is to think about it together with the children.

As we gathered our experiences and working methods through this study and realized the importance of becoming many, throughout the process, we also felt that all these experiences belong to no one and to all of us. We have witnessed many times that it is possible to establish a common language of thought and action in order to be the voice of children in these difficult times and to make the problems they experience visible.



Therefore, this experience belongs to Adiyaman more than us. The working methods that emerged in Adiyaman over the course of two years also emerged in our collaborations, conversations and coming together no matter what, within this language of solidarity in Adiyaman. And most importantly, everything started when we started listening to the children. We also became stronger as we were able to be there for the children. We tried to solve all the problems that arose, both with our experiences and without creating a hierarchy, assuming that we knew nothing.

From the prepared reports to the short films made, from designing a park to making a puppet talk, we have created dozens of experiences that talk to each other with the help of people and solidarity that we cannot even estimate the number of. We could only include fifty-five people in this study. From the friends who provided our transportation, to the friends who printed the magazines made by the children, from the volunteers who contributed to the construction of the center to the parents and neighbors who asked us every time, “Do you need anything?”, the contribution of at least as many people to all these studies may have been incomplete here. For this reason, nothing will be complete in our minds and feelings. Because these experiences have been a flow of feelings and thoughts that emerged with the thoughts we all had about solidarity and life.

Maybe we can try to thank everyone, but especially the children, one last time, by remembering the memories we have never forgotten during this whole process. So glad you exist, so glad we're together...

FİSA Children's Right Center
2023-25 Adiyaman



“I am thinking of becoming a judge when I grow up. This profession reminds me of goodness and justice. There is a lot of injustice in the world. I want to defend people who are wronged and find justice. Adiyaman will also grow in the future. Although I don't like dealing with technology very much, I like dealing with science. I would like to do some activities with children in the future. I also want to taste all the chocolates in the world.” Damla (11)

ESİN KOMAN

FİSA Children's Right Center

When we hear about disasters, epidemics, conflicts or economic problems, we are motivated by the question of how people, especially children, women and the elderly, are affected by this situation. This is what happened in the earthquakes that occurred on February 6 and the following. The starting point of FİSA Children's Rights Center, as an organization that is based on rights and fights for rights in such crisis situations, stemming from our experience with Agenda is Children Association, was the question "What are people experiencing and how does this affect their lives, what kind of rights violations and difficulties do they experience? What can we do to eliminate these effects?"

It was necessary to carry out works to prevent rights violations, and how would we do this? As we saw how crisis situations negatively affected children's lives, what motivated us was "How can we eliminate these negative effects so that they can continue their lives where they left off?"

“We went to different regions with our friends from FİSA and each of us put forward our own observations about the problems and situations that children would experience in the provinces where the earthquake occurred.”

With the responsibility of being a rights-based organization and with other human rights organizations, we went to the provinces where the earthquake occurred, prepared a report based on our observations and published it immediately. The experiences of Agenda is Children Association in strengthening and protecting children in times of crisis since its establishment in 2005 contributed to the planning of our own part of the study. We went to different regions with our friends from FİSA and each of us put forward our own observations about the problems and situations that children would experience in the provinces where the earthquake occurred. We saw the most damaged areas and went to the least damaged areas. We were trying to figure out where we were going to work and while we were thinking about Hatay, Iskenderun or Malatya, the process regarding Adiyaman developed with the relationships we had previously established from the general to the local, the habits and collaborations that came from FİSA and the Agenda is Children Association period, with the aim of hearing the needs of the local people better. What we experienced, witnessed and the work we were doing became an experience in itself.

Civil society organizations moved a little faster to Hatay, İskenderun and the areas that were heavily damaged and had higher risk. Fewer organizations would go to Adıyaman and its region. It didn't matter to us to be anywhere. We thought, "It could be Adıyaman," but we had some prejudices about how we would develop working practices in Adıyaman. We thought Adıyaman was a more closed society. At first, we couldn't figure out the answer to the questions, "It could be Adıyaman, but can we do the work we want? Can we empower children, produce something with children, and work with their parents in a truly common area?" But when we decided to work in Adıyaman, and we met with civil society organizations there, local people, and cooperation groups that developed within the solidarity network there, tried to understand the needs, explained what we wanted to do, and found common ground, the idea of "Yes, it is possible to work in Adıyaman" gained a lot of strength in us, and we are glad we did.

When we first went to Adıyaman, we met with the unions and civil society organizations in the city. At the same time, the İzmir Metropolitan Municipality supported Adıyaman during the earthquake. Acute studies were carried out quickly. The cooperation that we could carry out children's studies in the container areas established by the İzmir Metropolitan Municipality in the city center started with a meeting we had. After the meeting with the municipality, we had the opportunity to create spaces where we could carry out children's studies in the container areas and after a mutual protocol, our work in K11 Container City started. After this, we developed solutions together with the local organizations regarding the studies we would carry out with children, such as "Where can we create spaces for these studies, where can we do them, should they be inside the container areas?"

Our aim was to conduct psychosocial support activities with children. Psychosocial support activities were not just about empowering children and providing them with counseling. It was a comprehensive program that we planned to hear from children about their lives, their feelings, and their needs. We were planning to do this with art, media works, or a program where we could create areas where children could be empowered and express themselves in different ways.

If we were going to do something for children, it was always our priority to do it with children. We tried to do that here too. Because the children would be the ones who would experience the problem and produce the solution. That's why we had to do the support program, create a place, the process of the support programs, and what needed to be done together with the children.

**"If we were going to do something for children,
it was always our priority to do it with children.
We tried to do that here too."**

First, as adults, rights defenders, activists, we determined the basic needs with the experience and knowledge we brought from our areas of expertise. Then, we contacted the parents and other adults in the children's close circle and talked about these needs with them. In the third phase, we started to create this entire program with the children. All of these were things that could be done after the acute period was over. Because we had a situation where we had to do whatever was possible, such as protecting children from risks quickly when basic needs were met.

The process that we can call a systematic program framework came into effect from the third month when the acute period decreased. Thus, we started the process of getting ideas from both adults and children. We determined a program as a result of our interviews with teachers who live very intensively with children, administrators, social workers in unions and health workers in the Turkish Medical Association about the needs of children. Since the children were experiencing this problem themselves, the purpose of our meeting with them was to explain this program to them, get their approval, and answer the questions of "How will we proceed? What do you want, what needs to be done? What is needed? What would be good for you?" together with the children and to produce solutions to these questions.

From the moment we first started working, the container areas were well established, children started to gather in the schools that were not damaged. We met with the children in the container areas and schools that we could enter and explained to them the work we wanted to do. We held meetings to ask them what they wanted to do and what would be good for them. We explained that we wanted to create a place, that we would work with the children in this place or that we would go to the container areas where they lived and explained the work we wanted to do and asked them how we would do this work. First, we tried to understand this work with the children and tried to find solutions together.

“K11 Container City was a model for us in a sense; however, I am not talking about a model that we limited, that had a structured beginning and end. I can call it a program that we all created together.”

K11 Container City was a model for us in a sense; however, I am not talking about a model that we limited, that had a structured beginning and end. I can call it a program that we all created together. K11 provided the basis for us. The work we did with the children at K11, our communication with their parents, the relationships we established with AFAD and municipality employees or other civil society organizations there became a model for us. All of these works were a model that we tried to spread by revising it according to the unique structure of each place.

We received feedback from the children as a result of the meetings we held to have a good time together, to reveal the problems together and to produce solutions to them together. The children gave very good answers to all the questions, “How should we paint the place? What materials should be in it? What color should the container areas be? Should it have a garden? What else could it have? We have volunteer friends, what kind of work should those volunteers do with you when they come?”

The children expressed what they wanted to do, their dreams, amidst all that destruction and human rights violations. They conveyed to us their requests that they had wanted to do before but had not had the opportunity to do. They made suggestions regarding the workshop hours and content; whether it was a repair workshop, a painting workshop, a film watching workshop, etc. Some of these requests were right in our program and were very similar to the work we had done before. Some of them became workshops that we could not do but that we would direct and transform into other works.

When you are in close contact with children and parents, you observe their needs very well in the acute period. Teacher friends put forward the needs of the children beyond their own needs in that acute period and established sincere relationships with them by observing the children very well. These were very facilitating for us. We also conveyed the relationship forms we established, all the information we gained from the workshops we held and the programs we implemented to those friends. While we mutually strengthened each other with knowledge and experience, this process turned into a communication in which the children became stronger. Since we have an approach that centers children and prioritizes them, the basis of the method was established with this understanding.

In addition to the reports and observations we prepared when we went to the earthquake area with human rights organizations immediately after the earthquake, a Child Coordination was established with the participation of organizations and independent individuals working on children in Türkiye. We practically analyzed the needs of children, the work done in the field and the deficiencies by ensuring the continuity of this coordination for a year. This coordination was effective at every stage of the work, from sharing the outputs of the work to ensuring its continuity. The method emerged by looking at the process from a holistic perspective by determining the needs at the local level.

“We determined the timing of the work according to their needs. For us, this method was one of the strengths of our work in Adiyaman. On the other hand, we immediately shared the report we prepared regarding the rights violations experienced by children with the public.”

As we saw the needs of children through such experiences, we gained the idea that not everything we do needs to be visible. We determined the process according to the children’s wishes. Children worked on magazines in the workshops and when the magazines were completed, they wanted to distribute them in the container city. We printed the magazines and they distributed them. If there were things that needed to be developed in the workshops, for example, if other materials were needed, we decided on this with the children. We determined the timing of the work according to their needs. For us, this method was one of the strengths of our work in Adiyaman. On the other hand, we immediately shared the report we prepared regarding the rights violations experienced by children with the public. We had to form a team to implement all these methods. A team that should had expertise, be connected to children, had a rights-based perspective, and be trier. It was important that this team was not there during the acute period and looked at the situation from the outside, but was living with the people there. For this reason, we did not define a problem as, “People there need access to clean water.” We all needed clean water from the moment we were there. We are not an organization that does much work in the field of psychosocial support. But when we saw that this was a need in Adiyaman, we started to develop it specifically for our own organization. Our priority was to empower children and make their voices heard. In the needs we determined considering the best interests of the child, the process became more important than the result. That is why we tried to organize all the workshops we did with children regularly, we went to meet at the hours we promised to meet. Even if one child came, we went. Being empowered with psychosocial support was something that emerged through systematic and regular processes.

These programs were not a process where a quick result would emerge, where we would observe the effects on children in a short time, where children would immediately express their needs and produce products in the art works in the workshops, and we would not be able to spread these. We tried to appreciate the value of that process and took each step by evaluating the previous process.

When we started to conduct children's rights workshops with children, the first thing we did was to determine common rules. We started to determine these common rules by asking, "How can we spend our time here better, what should we pay attention to without hurting or harming each other?" The child values the workshop he/she attends, the work he/she does, and the time he/she comes. This is a matter of empowerment and pursuing his/her rights... For each child, coming to the workshop, staying at that time, complying with the rules they have determined together, making an evaluation at the end of each work, knowing that a result will emerge, the children realizing that they are gaining skills and knowledge and feeling that this is seen by adults was a process in itself.

Artists came from out of town, we held workshops with children on manual skills and branches of art. The children's experiences were important in each workshop. At the end of the first year, we organized a panel to talk about the issue of children's rights related to the earthquake in Adiyaman. The children determined their own problems, their own topics, their own agendas and formed a table in that panel hall. I think the empowerment part of psychosocial support was something like this. We were in a time when they surprised us and we learned together with them and from them.

“As long as we were there, the children heard us while we were talking about our problems. When we published a report, the children heard us when we explained the content of the report in the panel we held, and we heard them. This is probably what living together meant.”

From now on, it is necessary to remind the civil society organizations, experts and volunteers who will work in crisis situations of the value of the process once again. Determining the process together with those who experience it without rushing makes the work more permanent. Being equal, equal production, equal knowledge, equal experiences, and none of us being above each other in hierarchy were very important in this process. We actually lived together. We knew what the children ate, and the children saw what we ate. When the electricity went out, we all had the same problem there. As long as we were there, the children heard us while we were talking about our problems. When we published a report, the children heard us when we explained the content of the report in the panel we held, and we heard them. This is probably what living together meant.

We tried to experience this process with the children as they returned to their neighborhoods, schools, parks and playgrounds, and made new friends. That's why our work was not planned from beginning to end. Many things happened spontaneously. Going on stage and dancing with the children, putting on the jewelry we made together in the workshop and leaving there, applauding together in the rhythm workshop, or watching a movie together with sadness or excitement...

We were in a common life. This was a process that we learned. The children taught us this again. If you stay outside of that life, nothing responds. You have to be in that life. When we are in that life together, what we experience is a process that is good for all of us. These programs were not a process where a quick result would emerge, where we would observe the effects on the children in a short time, where the children would immediately tell us their needs and produce products in the art works in the workshops, and where we would spread these. We took each step by evaluating the previous process.

“Although we met with children on the same themes in each workshop, the children, parents and conditions differed. What we observed was that the children were very aware of what they had lost.”

Children also know that we are in Adiyaman and that we will not leave. Many children now know how to use a video camera and take photographs. They are learning to write poems, some of them knew it already. They now know when they can express their feelings in writing or with pictures, and that this has a meaning and value.

We thought together about the risks in the containers, in order for them to live in a more peaceful environment with each other, and how they would protect themselves from those risky situations. Nothing is rosy. Children encountered many risks in the living spaces in container cities. For this reason, we thought a lot about child safety. We tried to ensure child safety by talking to the children and among ourselves with our teammates, experts, parents, and volunteers.

Unfortunately, something memorized does not always work. Being original, being local, producing things that arise from needs and making them permanent are more valuable. That is why this model belongs there, to K11 and Adiyaman. But it is like a guide that we will learn from here, understand and show us what to pay attention to when we need to produce work from now on. It will provide guidance, but it will not be the same.

Although we met with children on the same themes in each workshop, the children, parents and conditions differed. What we observed was that the children were very aware of what they had lost. It was their city, their neighborhood, their street, their playground, their grandfather's garden, their father's shop. Therefore, they needed spaces that could reflect or connect with their shared past for a common memory again, places where they could have a good time. During those acute periods, most of the children's playgrounds were transformed into living spaces and later became unusable.

We answered the question of whether there could be an area where children come and spend some time, feel good, get out of the container areas they are in, spend time as much as the conditions allow, come together with their peers, set up games, slide down the slide for the younger age group and support all their developmental characteristics with the construction of a park that we designed together with the children and with the support of Adiyaman Municipality, within our means. We tried to realize the construction of this park by asking them about its name, the play equipment inside and the seats.

While the children were designing Hayat (Life) Park, we provided guidance, tried to carry out the economic process, ensured cooperation with the municipality and the children said that they had the park they had dreamed of. Thus, with the design and implementation contribution of the City Detective team, we established Hayat Park together with the children in Adıyaman. I think the children were also very touched by the fact that its name was so meaningful. It also corresponded very much to the issue of 'rebuilding, reconstructing' for us. They allowed us to experience a construction process with them, thank you very much. The existence of a park and a workshop in the park area, the fact that we are still continuing our psychosocial support activities with the children there, the fact that we meet with the parents of the neighborhood, the fact that we could not reach the children in their adolescence at all, meeting them in the park and saying "How is life going, what are you doing? Could this Park be a place for you too?" As a result of all these efforts and observations, a park was built with joint effort, but the process still continues on its own, open to new experiences in Hayat Park.

“As a result of all these efforts and observations, a park was built with joint effort, but the process still continues on its own, open to new experiences in Hayat (Life) Park.”

In order to continue this process from beginning to end, first of all, there needs to be human resources. We need to have a stronger economic system. While working in an earthquake zone, people are also doing professional work. We determined our working hours in line with the needs of those colleagues. We were working 24/7 during the acute period, but when the acute period ended and we moved on to more systematic work, we carried out more flexible work in line with the needs of our colleagues.

There were also things we felt were lacking. If we had more human resources, we could have done more work and gone to different areas. It was important to expand our team, in terms of different specializations. We could have found ways to better manage our economic resources. We might not have been able to do it in the early days, but in our current way of working, we delegate the work to organizations established locally, young people who want to work with children, and experts, and ensure that they continue the process. Maybe we could have focused more on creating public spaces that children can use. Container areas and shelters are very limited. And I think we should have done more art work. Painting a container area, our center, and walls on the streets was very good for children. Music activities, bringing children together with artists contribute to the creation of areas where children can express themselves more easily. We could have done more of these.

We also had times when we needed to get stronger, when we had a hard time but we still continued to be there. It is important to do things that will help us in the meantime and get back on track. In order to strengthen our team, we tried to provide supervision work to our expert colleagues and regular communication with psychologists. But we couldn't do that for ourselves, for example. We got stronger in other ways. We came back, hugged our friends, spent time with our loved ones. We tried to do the things we loved, but I think it would be good to say that we left a little bit of things that would help us mentally in order to plan better. Because we need that.

I can't forget the march on the first anniversary of the February 6th earthquakes. That crowd, that sound, being there, walking, gathering in a large area formed by solidarity beforehand... Setting off from there were unforgettable moments. The children's presentations, their expressions, and their statement that no images would be taken during the panel we held have a special place in my memory.

“Especially the first times we had tea with our friends in civil society organizations, unions, our fellow travelers, sharing their pain, the times we cried together... These are moments I will never forget.”

One of the things I can't forget is the opening of Hayat Park, the children being present at the opening with the mayor and them saying something, showing us that there is an environment where they can express themselves. The songs they made with musicians coming from outside Adıyaman, their excitement, writing those lyrics, their enthusiasm, their desire to be strong and reflecting the pain they went through are unforgettable. Especially the first times we had tea with our friends in civil society organizations, unions, our fellow travelers, sharing their pain, the times we cried together... These are moments I will never forget.

“I want to be an artist in the future. This is my biggest dream. Art tells me happiness. I love music. I am happy when I listen to music or when I am filming. In the future, Adiyaman may be a beautiful place, or a bad place. I am not sure. If people keep nature and the environment clean and are careful, the world can be a beautiful place in the future.” Zerde (11)

ZİYA ÖZSÖKMENLER

Performance artist, Musician

Earthquakes, natural disasters, accidents, things that would never have occurred to you suddenly affect people deeply. A disaster that you don't experience but someone you know or your neighbor experiences is also very shocking. But the most impressive thing is definitely not what you hear or are told, but what you see. I also spent my childhood in the Southeast. I remember very clearly the small earthquakes from my childhood and how the adults behaved in those earthquakes. The first thing I remember was fear, maybe because I was afraid. But the first thing I saw from the adults was also fear. What we hear affects us as much as it can, when we go and see, the real gravity of the situation becomes apparent. Working with people who have experienced this trauma deeply there is definitely a great gain. We cannot take everyone to the place where an accident occurs and the building collapses. But we need to somehow reflect the empathy for what people are going through to the other side. What I saw when I went affected me a lot. What affected me even more was the children's never-ending joy and their ability to adapt. The adults always came later.

“We cannot take everyone to the place where an accident occurs and the building collapses. But we need to somehow reflect the empathy for what people are going through to the other side.”

If a child in a family can adapt to daily life again after any event, the mother and father provide this adaptation after the child. That is what I observed during my time in Adiyaman. This is a survival skill, because the things that make us human emerge and develop in childhood. The children were showing this not with a survival concern, but in a very ordinary way, like a game, like the flow of daily life. It is very important to continue everything again without losing the joy in the true sense. This is an important thing I learned from the children.

When the idea of making music by making sounds from the body was formed in me, I was always influenced by children. I worked with children for many years and everything I learned with children, I now do with adults. We work with adults with the joy of children now. I am a father, I have two adult children. I also learned fatherhood from my children. The more you develop a behavioral pattern based on the conclusions you draw from the things you observe, the faster you adapt to daily life.

In a group of children, at least one or two of them are always separated from the other children. Their observation skills, deduction skills, and understanding skills are different and immediately show themselves. They are more active and ahead, for example. Meanwhile, there are also more introverted children, and they are no exception to this situation. While observing children, it is possible to notice which children in this group can help you. Because this is an interactive workshop. The children's help on how this group works and what we will do is absolutely invaluable. I conduct the workshop by getting help from the participating children. Some children are more active, one learns faster. One learns slower, but he/she has a very different character. I try to act according to the character of each child without making them notice, and at the same time show the skill of being a group. How does this happen? You need to observe the children one by one and decide very quickly which child is more capable of at that moment and how he/she can help the group. Depending on the workshops I attend, I have two hours or maybe one or two days to get to know the children. Even though there is not much time, what we call play is the most natural and beautiful way to understand a child and a person. Everything starts with games.

There are many ways to explain music, but the simplest way is to say this: If you bring random sounds together in an orderly and harmonious way, it becomes music. When you bring just two sounds together in harmony and harmony, this becomes the basis of music. Rhythm is like that too. This is very valuable for children and adults, because a person uses their own body as an instrument. When an adult does this, it may seem funny to people. But it is not funny for a child. For a child, this is a job and a really important thing. When you show them how to do these things in an orderly way, the child first learns to communicate with their own body. Then they understand that they have the ability to create something through the communication they establish with their own body. When they bring sounds together in an orderly way, they feel that this is music. When children feel this, understand this, and if you can create something together, this becomes very valuable.

“Even though there is not much time, what we call play is the most natural and beautiful way to understand a child and a person. Everything starts with games.”

I think one of the most important aspects of my workshops is this joint production. Before setting up a workshop, I work on what I can do for a long time. But what comes out of that workshop is always something very different, very far from what I work on. Because everything is produced at that moment. We create a composition with rhythms. When we work together, everything comes out at that moment and the children do it themselves. There are times when I do what I know, and there are incredible things like, “Teacher, let’s do this!”... This is also a joint production. Doing something with sounds, and having the sound you make be your own body, and at the same time having everyone make those sounds together at that moment. Everyone gets a share there. This is why the process becomes much more important. There is something else I believe in, to crown this process. At the end of three two-hour workshops in three days, we make a show. Most of the time, what emerges in that three-day workshop and what emerges on stage can be independent of each other, frankly, different. This is the production process that continues until the end of the workshop. Some of the children forget. Some don't forget, they do the same. Sometimes I forget. This time, something different comes out.

The important thing is for children to experience producing together in a few days and to show the confidence and courage to display this in front of people. This is very good for children. When we first started the workshop, there were twenty children. At the end of the workshop, we went out to perform. At first, eight or nine children came; there was no audience. We said, "We will do this even if three people come." We started the show with seven or eight children. Then I looked, a shy child came. Then another child came. Then another child... While I was working with twenty or twenty-two children, about fifty children had come to the show. The children we had not worked with also came. Of course, they did not know the movements. This time, the children who had learned started to show the movements to their friends. Then the same movement occurred with the adults. First they looked. Because something was happening there. There were people making noises by themselves. Then an aunt came out. She sat in front of her door. Then an uncle came out. Then others came out and finally the show was like this: The mothers brought the tea tray, cookies... The uncles took out the cigarette packs and offered them to us. They saw both the fun, the production and how spontaneously and naturally the children behaved.

They came from a pain and it is very good for people when children are happy. You see it in the eyes of the child and the eyes of the parents. Mothers and fathers started not to put work into their workshop hours. Because it is good for them when children are happy and cheerful. And of course, children are leaving the house, the container. Eight people live in twenty-one square meters. It is an incredible life.

I wish I had been more resilient emotionally. I was really affected. But this is not a weakness or a deficiency. It is a human aspect. You have to live this too. Because the children there immediately connect with you. You have to connect with them to continue communicating with them and this connection continues later. I wish there was more time, more workshops were held.

**"I wish I had been more resilient emotionally.
I was really affected. But this is not a
weakness or a deficiency. It is a human
aspect. You have to live this too."**

There was construction work while we were working there. They blasted the rocks with dynamite to make a foundation. But when they blast with dynamite, they don't tell us this in advance. There had been an earthquake a short time ago anyway. I saw what happened when there was a noise without people knowing. Everyone panicked at that moment and didn't know what to do. There was a simple thing to do: to inform it.

All moments are precious to me, but the natural, spontaneous joy I saw on the faces of children and parents was a moment that will never leave my mind. I wish we could have had the educational pleasure of working with children after other events, but that is something...

“I think they didn't build the houses well, that's why our house collapsed. It was a forty-year-old house, it lasted so long. They didn't tie the iron bars to my teacher's house, they just put the iron bars out there like decorations. His house collapsed. They built our houses with low cement. If they had built them with strong cement, our houses would have lasted. We could have moved out of our houses. I think if we work together well, the houses will be better in the future. I also want to buy the uniforms of all Galatasaray football players in the future.” Menesse (9)

ELİF AVZEN ŞİRİN

FİSA Children's Right Center

I was 15 years old when the earthquake happened. February 6, 2023 was a very scary day in itself. It was a disaster that I could never have predicted, that no one could have predicted. I woke up with a piece of plaster on me and our school was closed the night before. We were happy, very happy. We laid our heads on the pillow very comfortably. It is a very strange feeling to wake up and find a piece of the wall on you, not being in your bed, not being able to see anything when you look around, only feeling and being afraid. I am shaking and I don't see anything, I don't know what will happen. Those ten seconds were like ten hours for me. I got up, I can't stand up anyway. Coincidentally, maybe my biggest luck that day was my phone. I reached for my desk, I came across the phone. I picked it up and opened the door. My father wasn't home. My mother screamed, "Elif, something fell behind the door, I can't get out." Even where I am now, the first thing that comes to mind when there is the slightest vibration or an earthquake is my mother's scream. I'm in my pajamas, with the phone in one hand, and I don't even have socks on. I went out, I don't know with what consciousness I turned on the light on my phone.

“We were happy, very happy. We laid our heads on the pillow very comfortably. It is a very strange feeling to wake up and find a piece of the wall on you, not being in your bed, not being able to see anything when you look around, only feeling and being afraid.”

My mother said, "I can't get out." I said, "Get out from behind the door, I'll open it." I'm so angry because my only solution is to get my mother out of there. I can't leave her there, I can't go alone. While all this is happening, I'm in the hallway when I hear that scream, the bricks are falling. There's something very scary about it, like the house is going to collapse. My mother pulled away. I think I was able to force that door open five centimeters. I don't remember how hard I opened it. The only thought in my head was, "I'm going to get my mother out of here." My mother left, she couldn't take her phone. My brother was just waking up while we were going through all this, he was a heavy sleeper. We can't get through the hallway. Everything has collapsed, the cupboards are empty, the coat closet has been knocked over, the doors are broken. There's nothing there and you feel like you're in a torn labyrinth.

My mother accidentally touched the floor in front of the cloakroom to find the car keys, and found the car keys. None of us had socks, shoes, or anything on. It was a day when we slept in short-sleeved, thin pajamas. There was nothing we could do. When we opened the door, there was a collapsed stairwell in front of us. "Is it over?" I said. I may be telling this in ten minutes right now, but we experience all of this in one minute, forty seconds. Our only concern was to get out of that house right then.

I was the first one up. The stairs had completely collapsed. Think of it like a slide, but with glass, iron, pieces of concrete, countless things that could hurt... You can't think about that at that moment. "I have to get out of this building." We crawled up. I slid down on them. My parents were coming after me, but I had to wait for them. My parents were a little late, so I guess they couldn't slide down. There was a lady with a newborn baby on our site. "Can you shine a light?" she said. I was the only one with a light. I waited for them, and then my parents got down in that short period of time. The earthquake stopped in the meantime. We were going down, but the neighbor's coffee table was in the stairwell. Dozens of pieces of glass, water pipes had burst, everywhere was wet, and the weather outside was minus degrees. It had rained last night and snowed the day before, and there was a freezing effect. When I first stepped through that door, I screamed so loudly; it was our victory that my mother and brother also came out. Maybe our biggest luck that day was that my father was not in that house. Because my mother is a bit weak compared to my father. It was very difficult for my mother to even pass through that door. Please, even if you are in a city where there is no fault line, do not put things like carpets behind your door, and do not even hang coats if necessary. Because those things are such a big obstacle at that moment...

"The screams of the people were so deep, families with babies, families who had to wait inside for hours, families whose doors were locked, families who were perhaps trapped under a collapse at that moment... All of these are very difficult."

We got out, by the way we were lucky. Because parts of our building had fallen into the open parking lot. We had parked the car in a different spot by chance, away from the buildings. I am cold, but I am not cold. Because I got out of that building. This is a huge victory for me. The day the clock stopped. It was 4.17 that day. It was a huge disaster. The walls had collapsed, it was dark. The screams of the people were so deep, families with babies, families who had to wait inside for hours, families whose doors were locked, families who were perhaps trapped under a collapse at that moment... All of these are very difficult.

We got in the car and tried to leave the site. We were waiting. Another earthquake, but it felt bigger than the first one... You felt like everything was over. Where I would normally see four or five blocks, I saw a pile of dust. I couldn't see anyone. There was nothing, nothing. There was a railway building in front of our house. There was a railway below and a site above. I went out, it wasn't there. I turned around and said, "I guess it's over." Everything was dusty. Normally there should be around twenty buildings around me, and this time there were none.

I have a few relatives living here. We don't know their situation. There are people in Adıyaman that we are very, very close to, but we don't know. We were able to contact my father five minutes later. We said, "We're fine." We went to a meeting place and waited. My grandmother and grandfather are very old people. We were afraid that something would happen to them. But they were okay hopefully.

When I went to that gathering place, the city was so scary... People were crying, so helpless... One said, "My mother is gone," another said, "We couldn't wake up." We called some of them, they didn't answer. We had a very close family friend. They said her house had collapsed. My mother said, "No way!" People I had been with since I was a baby. We went. She wasn't there. My closest friend, my confidant, she wasn't there either. Their house had collapsed, even though it was detached. Five hours passed. Two of them were able to get out. Two of them couldn't, they stayed like that. We were always hopeful for a while, we were hopeful that everyone would be able to get out. But I was very, very angry. They were actually in the triangle of life. They can live, it's just that their bodies can't handle the cold or they are restricted to one area, they can't move.

"Those screams under the rubble were not heard. Because no one was there. I often question this. There is enough support team, but why didn't they take action? Why?"

The two people who survived did not get out with any team sent during the crisis in Türkiye. They got out with the support of the people around them. Coincidentally, someone from the fire station next to them helped them and they got out. In fact, this is the main reason for my anger when it comes to earthquakes. Because even people who have the potential to live, who have a small chance, after a while, they cannot lift their bodies from that cold, it gives them endless sleep... It was a very scary day. There was no description. We gathered, we all went to the village, to my grandmother's. They have an independent house. There were still many people we could not reach.

Everyone was frozen, in shock, and when I got in the car by chance, I saw that my feet were covered in blood. I didn't feel that pain at all. I didn't feel any pain when I left that house. Thank God, we are all together. Hopefully, my nuclear family is alive, everyone is fine. There was another earthquake and we shook very badly. This time, there were ten or fifteen of us in the house. Our relatives had come. I think I was the first one to leave again. My brother came after me and the house leaned to the right for a while. We got in the car. We lived in the car for about two or three weeks until we got over that fear. Then we slowly started to receive news of people we couldn't reach. This became much more devastating. It was a very difficult process. I am very full. Because there was nothing, no one at the points where help could be provided. Those screams under the rubble were not heard. Because no one was there. I often question this. Why wasn't there? There is enough support team, but why didn't they take action? Why? On the one hand, people were leaving the city, on the other hand, there were funerals. On the other hand, we saw people working in those hospitals without fear. It was so bad that people who lost their lives were being thrown on top of each other and they were covering up the doctors' mouths on the air. So much effort was put into covering up that bad event... If they had made an effort to send those transportation vehicles, support teams, and AFAD after the earthquake, there could have been significant gains.

There was countless chaos in the city. At the point where people were supposed to leave the city, the planes were not moved. The necessary team did not come. Last year, I made a speech in front of the ruins of the Isias Hotel at the commemoration program, I said, "We did not die, we were killed." I still defend this. This city did not die, this city was killed. This was a massacre. You cannot prevent or stop an earthquake or a natural event. The movement of those faults is not under your control. But it could have been helped. Everyone screamed for days. Everyone tried to help as much as they could, society was in solidarity with itself. But how much support can society have against such disasters? How much more can a fifteen-year-old girl who got out of the rubble struggle to get her family out of that rubble? Why was Isias Hotel in that state? Above all, there should be a control and monitoring system for buildings. Sometimes we saw such terrible things; the inside of the column was empty, there were grains of sand as fine as beach sand inside. With every aftershock since February 6, every time the earthquake issue comes up, every time we see a video on any social platform, we remember the same traumas again and get angry again. There is no apology for this. There is no way this can be compensated. They used to say, "Some rights cannot be forgiven." We do not, we will not, we will not forget. We will not let anyone forget.

It was a difficult process after the earthquake, a process in which we tried to pull ourselves together. On the one hand, you confront your losses, but on the other hand, you can't accept them. On the other hand, you say, "Everything is over." On the other hand, the situation is presented as if it's not that bad. Very soon after, through my father, I met the FISA Children's Rights Center near the Adiyaman Medical Association. When I came to the center one day to clear my head, Esin Koman and Ezgi Koman from FISA welcomed me so warmly... I hadn't seen anyone for a very long time. I was alone, going through a psychological process full of my own uncertainty, anxiety, and losses. They only spoke to me for ten minutes, but those ten minutes were like the beginning of a three-year therapy process for me. They asked about my interests. They talked about a few projects to be done here. It really caught my attention, and it's such a beautiful thing to have someone ask you, "How are you?" at the beginning... You've been very alone for ten months, you've been together with great traumas, and this is an indescribably beautiful thing. It was so nice to see new people, to be welcomed, to be shown and seen that life can go on again.

"You've been very alone for ten months, you've been together with great traumas, and this is an indescribably beautiful thing. It was so nice to see new people, to be welcomed, to be shown and seen that life can go on again."

A very beautiful process started for me after that. Coming here and going was the greatest pleasure I had, it was a process where I could distract myself and see that things were actually continuing. We experienced great things, but life was continuing, it was not over. Maybe this was my turning point. Although I don't want to talk big, I completely gathered myself here, I felt good here. Time passed, I met new people. It was great that these people were in daily contact with me, that we were able to do things together with other children. That was the moment I felt very happy.

Very bad things happened, but children between the ages of five and eighteen were perhaps the most affected group, and FISA CRC was working on these people. They showed us that life was not over, that we were actually at a stage where we could recover, and that they could support us to recover until the end. We did a lot of things over a very long period. I saw FISA Children's Rights Center as a home where I could socialize and talk. It had become like a complete family relationship, and maybe that was what I needed. Maybe my biggest thanks goes to them, because I could say that I recovered with them.

I would never want to experience this disaster. No one would want such great losses to occur. Sometimes you can't explain everything with words. Feeling that moment, even thinking about it again is like pouring salt on our wounds every time. That's why not talking about it too much was always my escape, but from time to time I faced it, because I have to. I have to act knowing this reality. Even if it's bad, even if it's a disaster, even if it sometimes comes to a very, very apocalyptic point, it was important to see that life goes on and to face it.

“I woke up. The sun rose, there was the sky. I met different children and they were all from very different age groups. Each of them had a very different story, a very different perspective on life.”

I have never been a child who hesitated to express myself and I will never be. The earthquake was very difficult in itself, but maybe I became an ambitious person in order to be able to bear the reality of it and to fight for my life. What gave me hope in the beginning was this. I woke up. The sun rose, there was the sky. I met different children and they were all from very different age groups. Each of them had a very different story, a very different perspective on life. But the hope of the children in the point of “We will not give up!” also lifted me up a little. Each child showed a much stronger attitude than many adults with their solution-oriented orientation to life. The Center here ensured that the children did not remain in crisis at that moment of crisis and got back on their feet. In order for them to develop themselves and grow up in a peaceful environment, it provided an environment where they could express themselves comfortably, where they relaxed as they talked, explained, drew and did. This was what lifted me up too.

We did all kinds of workshops. Music, painting, jewelry, art, podcast workshops... We published a periodical journal and that was a great power for us. We were together. “Get up, don't give up!” Because we are good, because we are together, because we have a solution. FISA CRC actually taught us that every child is an individual, that even if very big things happen during a crisis, you can look back from different points and not leave yourself alone with that crisis. It taught you to be able to fight that crisis, and if necessary, to fight against the difficulties that may arise after the crisis. We will recover despite everything, we are together and that gives us strength.

I would wake up at eight in the morning and come to the Center as if it were my own home. We would chat, talk, have breakfast, plan the day. We would simply do workshops and be together with the children, exchange ideas, cook together, eat together.

These children really worked hard throughout this process. I wish the society could see this a little, this could be known and heard locally. FISA CRC revealed the essence of these children. I wish there were events organized for this and these children could be noticed more. The children carry the pride of making a magazine so well, I wish everyone in Türkiye could read this magazine. Different people will see what I have experienced and it was a great pride for me to be able to express myself to them. That is why I have been grateful to this Center since the day I met it.

“The children carry the pride of making a magazine so well, I wish everyone in Türkiye could read this magazine. Different people will see what I have experienced and it was a great pride for me to be able to express myself to them.”

There are many things I will never forget, but I can name three. I will never forget the first time I left that building. Watching on TV that the person I had lost, whom I said I was very close to, was found dead, is something I remember very well. I will never forget the panel day either. I was so free, I expressed myself so freely... The first time I left, the first time I lost my closest friends, and the first time I felt free...

“There are small flowers next to big trees. People should not pick them. Plants and thorny flowers grow from between the stones. The stage is also the play center. When a show is performed, colored lights illuminate the stage. I don't know the names of some flowers, but I like their smell. Flowers grow because the soil absorbs water. I like to blow on wish flowers and make them all fly away.” Devrim (9)

DENİZ TÜRKEŞ KAZAK

Radio Programmer

The podcast we did with children in Adıyaman and the other events I attended made me realize that my perspective on children's rights advocacy and the city changed a lot due to the natural disaster. The question "How is life going?" that we determined as the title of the podcast study with the children also emerged in our conversations with the children. Over time, the topic of the conversation had accumulated in one place, that big question had become a common question for all of us, and the children wanted to fill in the blanks of this question. On the other hand, the children were also asking us how their own lives were going and we were comparing our daily lives.

There were actually many other topics that came up in our conversations there. But the children wanted to start everything from the beginning: "Let's analyze a situation first." I think that was what they needed, so we all wanted to start with this sentence. I really liked the question "How is life going?" It was a great thing for me to end our work with a question mark instead of a period, and to turn the whole conversation into a question that everyone would think about.

“During our work in Adıyaman, one evening, I remember sitting around a table there, leaving their own burdens of emotions and thoughts, and then getting up from that table feeling more empowered.”

Until I came to Adıyaman, I had not realized the magnitude of the earthquake on a city scale. I was a child during the 1999 Earthquake and I could not imagine what it meant for so many things to collapse at the same time. I had no such imagination. After I came to Adıyaman, the work we did there and all these solidarity processes really made me feel this lack there. During our work in Adıyaman, one evening, people working in many different fields came to the common living area where the FISA Children's Rights Center was located. I remember sitting around a table there, leaving their own burdens of emotions and thoughts, and then getting up from that table feeling more empowered.

I think sharing your troubles and finding strength is useful at times like these. I saw this in the earthquake victims there as well. As people share their pain, the intensity of that pain decreases or changes. Perhaps as a self-criticism, I did not think I spent my time very productively when I did not know exactly what to do, my feelings, and what I should be ready for when I saw the state of Adıyaman. Because I had also gone through a process where I struggled with my own feelings there.

Partly for this reason, I remember having difficulty controlling my emotions at first. I was very anxious, very scared, very afraid of the ruins and the future. I don't want to go into what I felt, but I really experienced all of these emotions. On the other hand, it was very valuable to see that table. Everyone coming around that table and saying something, those working there, sharing something with the children around and the earthquake victims... I think we found strength there.

Perhaps I preferred to sit in the public spaces I could find in order to feel that power. There were sofas and cushions in the common living area where the FISA Children's Rights Center was located. Children would come and go from time to time. After all those intense emotions, sitting on those cushions, looking around, becoming silent and first accepting existence, and then chatting about a subject with the person next to you, with the person across from you... I did this a few times in K11 Container City as well. I sat somewhere, on a bench, on the stone there. I had methods like trying to normalize the environment I was in: First, let me stop and see.

I think that I gained the power to produce something by first stopping, watching and listening. Daily life conversations with people living there and other facilitators like us also encourage people to produce together. An adult living there suddenly told a family story. This story, which may seem very personal, can be enough to disperse the worries or negative feelings in a person's mind.

“The podcast we did with children, other events I witnessed and our trips around the city also showed us how a city cannot be child-friendly. A city that has not been destroyed is not child-friendly either. That is why when a city is destroyed, it is not child-friendly at all, everything gets worse.”

The podcast we did with children, other events I witnessed and our trips around the city also showed us how a city cannot be child-friendly. A city that has not been destroyed is not child-friendly either. That is why when a city is destroyed, it is not child-friendly at all, everything gets worse. That is why areas like 'Hayat (Life) Park', designed by children and where children determine the play equipment and materials, are very good for children. I also observe how valuable this is for children in the parks built along the coast in Istanbul, the city where I live. When children are asked what kind of city and environment they want to live in, you come across a very different city and living space design.

We also experienced an earthquake in Istanbul very recently, although there was no destruction or loss. We live in Zeytinburnu and the city infrastructure is in a very bad state. You can find your way among the high-rise buildings with signs showing where pedestrians should walk. I share the street I walk on every morning with children and workers in the neighborhood I live in. In the event of a possible earthquake, there is no place we can call a gathering place, and you cannot predict which buildings are safe. You can understand how dangerous vehicles parked on the sidewalk can be by thinking about these. But we are in Turkey and initiatives made with such concerns remain individual and mostly do not reach a solution.

“Can I get my ice cream home without it melting after I buy it from the grocery store?” If I remember correctly, a girl asked this question in a media workshop about ten or fifteen years ago, and it was explained to me. Her ice cream melts by the time she gets home from the grocery store. Because the sidewalks, streets, houses, and the city are not child-friendly from beginning to end. Today, cities and public spaces are still not accessible to children. Neither in disaster areas nor in many cities where we live our daily lives... That’s why ‘Hayat Park’ or all other child-focused areas are so important and valuable. I started thinking more and more about the questions “Is a child-friendly city possible?” or “Is a human-friendly city possible?” The Adıyaman experience also changed my perception of space. We don’t notice it when we are in the city. When very large buildings and huge streets pile up, a person’s perception changes and you start to realize what is more important.

“The child sees a new life and life there, sees rooting, knows where to pick that rose and gives it to you as a gift. There is hope there. There is a different perspective on life again.”

My husband Gökhan is a graffiti artist and we went to Adıyaman together. Later, when Gökhan went to Adıyaman for the second time to continue his graffiti work, he brought a rosebud in a teacup on his return. It was a gift from Yamaç, one of the most active participants in all the events in Adıyaman. He also explained in detail how to plant it. We tried to root it in Istanbul and take it out, we tried very hard. But it didn't work. That moment meant a lot to me. The child sees a new life and life there, sees rooting, knows where to pick that rose and gives it to you as a gift. There is hope there. There is a different perspective on life again.

“We had a cat, she was pregnant. We were building a house for her, we were giving her food, she would come to our house every day. The last time she went, she never came back. After two days, we started to worry. But a week later, she came to our house again. We were playing a game at that time. She was not pregnant anymore. Then we followed the cat. There is a house by the park. I think she had her babies there.” Ebrar (11)

İLKE CAMBAZOĞLU

FİSA Children's Right Center

On the day of the February 6th earthquake, I was with my family. In the morning, I learned about the earthquake news with my family. I called my friends in the cities affected by the earthquake. I understood the extent of the disaster from the news and my friends' stories. Then I met with a friend from the field of children's rights. People who are children's rights advocates had formed a group. They were friends from the FİSA CRC, with whom we had previously worked during the Izmir Earthquake (2020). We started talking to do something together. My first days were spent with the anxiety of being far away and trying to understand how people were doing. I came to Diyarbakır in the second week of the earthquake. I can actually say that I understood the seriousness of the situation here at that time. The fact that we still kept a channel open with the group we worked with after the Izmir Earthquake until this earthquake was effective. The fact that a call came from there and that many children's rights advocates came there with all their knowledge, even from a distance, laid the first stone for me. An accumulation began to form there. It was necessary to monitor the experiences of children in the earthquake zone. A structure was established with international and local resources and collaborations according to the needs of the region. I started monitoring in Diyarbakır. Then I went to Hatay. Since the destruction in Diyarbakır was less, those who came to show solidarity started to go to Adıyaman. I came to Adıyaman with them in the second week of the earthquake.

“We entered the city from the road from Diyarbakır to Adıyaman. I hadn't imagined that a building could stand like that. The roads were completely covered in ruins. It was like a ghost town.”

Everyone's experience was very valuable. But I think we learned almost everything when we went to the cities affected by the earthquake. Adıyaman had local needs and dynamics. That's why I learned a lot from the children, the unions here, friends in professional chambers, and organizations. We entered the city from the road from Diyarbakır to Adıyaman. I hadn't imagined that a building could stand like that. The roads were completely covered in ruins. It was like a ghost town. The people of Adıyaman were saying, “This place is forgotten, abandoned.” That's why I wanted to come back here. When friends from FİSA ÇHM called to work in Adıyaman, I accepted immediately. The civil society of Diyarbakır and Hatay was very strong. There was an absence here. But solidarity was established very strongly afterwards. The time I spent here was a process in which I forgot and relearned everything about the building, the people and the work. Because everything had been destroyed. It had to be rebuilt from scratch.

In the first days I came here, we actually sat down and cried with people. People, especially adult women, needed to talk at length. Games were starting to be played among the children. But on the other hand, they were suddenly telling their memories of the earthquake, saying, “Bad things happened to my aunt and neighbor too” as if it were a very everyday thing. People needed to talk about these for a very long time and share them. I think children cope with the negative effects of the earthquake differently than adults. A person in Hatay said the following, and I think it was true: “COVID pushed us apart, the earthquake brought us closer.”

No matter how difficult and traumatic the experience was, I think that children were able to go through a different healing process because people were together. Children also had a process where they could be together more safely, play games, and develop a different language compared to adults. The goal is to ‘rebuild’ as an adult term, and I think children showed this in their practices. What allowed me to say this sentence was the things I learned from children. Because how to re-build that language, how to re-shape games here, or how to say a new word about Adiyaman, these were things we heard and learned from children. Compared to before the earthquake, most people were unemployed or could not earn money in the same way, their homes were destroyed, it was a completely different difficult life... In this sense, the way adults and children experienced grief and recovery was different.

“No matter how difficult and traumatic the experience was, I think that children were able to go through a different healing process because people were together. Children also had a process where they could be together more safely, play games, and develop a different language compared to adults.”

There were only six containers in the area where FISA CRC was located with other civil society organizations at first. A living and working area could be allocated here, and one of the reasons why this area was chosen in particular was that it was located in a central location in the city. There were container cities in the area where work could be carried out. It was in a neighborhood and very close to schools. Afterwards, we talked with the children about how this area would become a center and planned it. What should it be in, what should it not be in, what kind of need is there, etc. First, we went to the Democracy Primary School nearby. We talked to both the teachers and the children about how the center could be and got their suggestions. Thus, a structure began to be designed. On the other hand, the force that enabled the establishment of the center was the solidarity of the local people. The FISA Children's Rights Center was a place established with the support of unions, professional chambers, Yusuf, the taxi driver we met when we first arrived, and other friends in the area. Everything from the paving stones to the furniture was designed with the support of people and with the safety and needs of children in mind. We conducted a risk analysis within ourselves, taking the perspective of children, their needs, and their safety to the forefront. The construction of the place was not something that was finished. As the changing needs, possibilities, and impossibilities of this place were discovered, we were in an area that was constantly being established, changing, and developing. There were places that the children who came to the Children's Rights Center touched upon and transformed.

I don't think the work done here is only within the project boundaries. That was the most liberating thing. We came here and could only find the needs by seeing and listening. Maybe by sitting and listening to someone for hours, trying to be a local without thinking about work hours... I grew up in Izmir. This place makes me feel more like my hometown. I wasn't affected by the earthquake that way. I'm not from Adiyaman. I didn't experience the same things. But since we continued by listening to each other and constantly thinking about the city, I think this place became a different hometown for me. While listening to everyone, before saying "How can we solve this now?", I spent some time just trying to hear what was being said. If a solution was going to come, it came together. Children or women suggested some things. On the other hand, we were lucky that children like Elif Avzen Şirin, who eventually became part of the team, came here.

After the earthquake, there was an environment where people felt unsafe even inside the container. Everyone was squeezed into twenty-one square meters and a container city. They are still experiencing the same difficulties. There was a girl, her family was more conservative and naturally protective. Almost every child's family actually became more protective during this process. And the girls were the ones who were most affected. That's why there were adolescent girls who were sharing the burden of care and trying to share the chores at home and their mother's burden. We met one of these children during these studies. Since her mother trusted here and us, she also observed her daughter and helped her leave the house. One of our goals in the work that was being done here was to reach out to adolescent children. We were estimating how girls were sharing the workload at home compared to adolescent boys. But we couldn't just go with the goal of getting these kids out of the house. That's why it was so important to build that trust relationship. Listening to people was part of building that trust relationship.

“We were not directly affected by the earthquake, but we were affected by the conditions of the earthquake. When water and electricity were cut off, we were cut off as well. The dust affected us too.”

This center was a support center for the aftermath of the earthquake, as well as a space where children could socialize and express themselves. Unlike the children I worked with before, I lived in the same area as the people here and was affected in the same way. We were not directly affected by the earthquake, but we were affected by the conditions of the earthquake. When water and electricity were cut off, we were cut off as well. The dust affected us too. I felt the insecurity that those living in containers felt. I was also a woman living alone in a container. After all, I was also experiencing the negativities here. So I cannot say that I was able to completely isolate myself from the developments in this area.

I was thinking that I should provide a 'here and now' state here. This is both a good thing and sometimes tiring. The process of drawing those boundaries started with small practices for me. I was doing facial care routines for myself. This was both very symbolic and very practical for me. I realized that I was not looking at myself, neither looking in the mirror, nor looking back at myself. I was paying attention to what I was wearing. I had started to forget a little bit about 'me', no matter how much I reminded myself... On the other hand, this was not something I paid much attention to in Istanbul.

We would light a fire in the common area here in the evenings and it was good for everyone to gather around it and chat, sing songs and folk songs together, and listen to each other. Actually, just being able to stand side by side with the people here, looking at that burning fire together, maybe sometimes... After a while, I tried to make the container a home. This was also a way of remembering myself. I was trying to feel at home, to drink my own tea, to have a space for myself, when we had time for ourselves. I put the pictures and small objects I brought from Istanbul. Of course, I was always in a position to move if I had to move suddenly. On the other hand, I needed a sense of home, a place to relax. And then we had our holidays. Being here all the time can be something that prevents you from protecting yourself. We had a six-day holiday every six weeks. It was good to recover mentally and physically during these holiday periods.

People working in all cities affected by the earthquake had difficulty reaching adolescent children and especially adolescent boys. It was difficult to reach adolescent girls. But in a way, boys were a completely different world. When we asked, "What do you do?" we often got the answer football from the boys. That's why the idea of organizing matches on the artificial turf pitch came up. It was actually a challenging process for us. Because there were many risks to be eliminated, from the transportation of the children to the presence of the health team on the artificial turf pitch. In addition, the children who could not play were unhappy on the sidelines. They answered the question, "What should the children on the sidelines do then?" by recording the videos of these football matches.

“Here, the children wanted everything they did, every trace they left, to be visible. Because there was almost nothing visible or standing here.”

Here, the children wanted everything they did, every trace they left, to be visible. Because there was almost nothing visible or standing here. Thus, we started a study of both doing what they wanted to do together and keeping a record of this process. Afterwards, we established another language and field of work with the children in the astroturf match in the media workshop through video cameras and magazines. All of these happened thanks to football. I think we learned these things in a process that developed with an idea brought by the children. Serkan Demir and Naim Aktan, who were referees and facilitators during the matches, had important interventions. When sexist language was used, stopping the game and talking about it was also a developmental effect. Football is discussed on the basis of something very patriarchal, frankly. As far as we can see, Adiyaman had a very patriarchal language. In order to break these or at least think about them, the indoor matches were an important tool. The support of the Health Workers Union was also very important. They contributed to this work in a way that eliminated our concerns in terms of health and injury risks.

The process of making the 'Our Knowledge of Life' journal was something we discussed a lot among ourselves. Making a journal was not an original idea and we were not sure that it would be functional for children. However, beyond our discussion, making a magazine had another meaning for children. One of the things that was most meaningful to children in the first place was that their names were written under their own words.

The journal work had been like an introduction before the video work in the media workshop. What does it mean to produce together, to develop a language together? The journal was like a practice to answer these questions. All of these children had access to phones, were able to shoot, and were very aware of technology. But the journal workshops were not workshops that directly required technological knowledge. We cannot talk about a tool. It was a workshop that was at an equal distance from everyone. If you produced, it was there. The journal workshops had become a place where adolescent children who were not as interested in other workshops came and produced, and where boys made perspective pictures and talked about them. Later, they started to produce content other than writing and painting.

It was very valuable that while the children were interviewing us, the child behind the camera said, "I am the director Yağmur Göksu" and another said, "I am doing the science column" and created an archive. The children were assigning roles to themselves in the journal. Some of them were poets. The media workshop started to develop another dynamic of its own. I think that these studies will touch many places later. Because there are still children who write stories and poems and put them aside. After the workshops we held, a group of children formed who said, "Then let's hold a workshop with children under the age of six who cannot go to these workshops in Container City." I think that this started the process in which the children took more initiative in the workshops. I think the method I learned here was to forget all the methods. Especially when working in places affected by earthquakes, it is necessary to relearn many things. One of the regular activities here was that people went to the cities affected by earthquakes and made reports. Because unfortunately, since there was no child policy implemented and data was not collected, it was painful not to be able to obtain information.

"I think the method I learned here was to forget all the methods. Especially when working in places affected by earthquakes, it is necessary to relearn many things."

I think that when such a situation occurs in the future, these steps should be followed again. It was necessary to forget the practices in Istanbul and Ankara. But on the other hand, you may not be able to apply what you did in Maraş in Hatay or Adıyaman. It seems very important to me to discuss the needs specific to that city with the people you work with there and to talk about what you can establish and how you can establish it.

It is very critical that people working in the field who continue to be indirectly affected by the earthquake have information on how to protect themselves and how to remember themselves. I think I will keep the information I have gained here in my pocket.

"Would you come to Adıyaman if there was no earthquake?" the children once asked. The answer to that, at least as far as I could think, was "No." And why are these people here? The table is full. This is a wonderful thing. But why is the table full? What happened here?

There are many images of this place that I can't forget. One of them was the moment I first entered Adiyaman. Buildings were destroyed, wires were holding each other together, iron was visible, everything was crooked. The city was in front of my eyes, not a single stone was left on top of another. It was a photo that made me start to see the solid buildings with a different eye.

There are also happy photos from Adiyaman, from here. One of them is the moment I first entered K11 and made eye contact with the children. That moment of sparkle... Because I had the same sparkle in my eyes. We were going to call everyone one by one from their homes, but there were also children playing in the park. Sometimes they would come running, sometimes we would walk side by side. The photo of the moment they talked to us while swinging on the swing... Are the images or the emotions running through my mind? Sometimes it's like they get mixed up like that.

There was also a symbolic meaning to planting trees here. Something about rooting. One of the aims of this work was to leave a centre here. I think the trees carry this intention. When we first started the work, a nine-year-old child asked, "How long is your project?" People's sense of abandonment is permanent. That's why they were asking, "Have you left, when will you return?" The trees were also an answer. It was about saying, "We are here," about leaving a voice, a trace, something permanent here. Stones were not on stones. People were no longer the same. Animals were not themselves. It was as if they were trees that remained standing despite everything.

"I remember from friends who came to rescue animals at that time. I felt like we took shelter in each other while looking at the cats that came to the center. The children had started bringing cats to the center. Because they were bringing them to a place where they wanted to bond."

The earthquake was a terrible process that animals went through. I remember from friends who came to rescue animals at that time. I felt like we took shelter in each other while looking at the cats that came to the center. The children had started bringing cats to the center. Because they were bringing them to a place where they wanted to bond. They would say, "This place is very safe, that's why we're bringing them." Since they brought kittens, we started living together with them. This was something we hadn't thought of. The cats also called each other, as if. The children did the same. When we joined the workshop, they would say, "This workshop is good, you come too," and bring their friends. We still talk about cats when we see children. Talking about the situation of animals had become a different language between us. We really grew up here with children and cats.

“There used to be three heavily damaged buildings behind the K11 Container City, and they have been demolished. They could build a small football field in their place, because almost everyone here is interested in football, and we have to go very far to play. It would be great if they built a small football field on that empty land.” Miraç (14)

SERKAN DEMİR

Football Player, Sports Instructor

The February 6 earthquakes coincide with a time I would rather not remember. I’m from Adiyaman myself and experienced the earthquake firsthand. The feeling that stayed with me the most from that time was helplessness. We felt it to the core, and it deeply saddened us. While we adults were at least able to talk among ourselves and share our pain despite our helplessness, one of the biggest problems at the time was that there was no platform where children could receive psychosocial support or express their emotions. They had no idea how to cope with such a traumatic period. This issue was initially overlooked because, during that acute phase, basic needs were the priority. In that state of deprivation, almost no one was in a position to say, “My child’s mental health is deteriorating.” During a time when finding shelter and food were the main concerns, children were deeply affected by the entire process. That’s why we were somewhat late in providing consistent and regular psychosocial support to children during the acute phase. I hope this delay won’t lead to serious problems in the future.

“There needed to be a fixed location for our work so that children and parents who wanted to benefit from these activities could come regularly and have a good time. However, back then, we were only able to conduct mobile activities.”

From the very first day of the earthquake, I was involved in volunteer activities in Adiyaman. Later on, I began working with civil society organizations such as Needs Map, Community Volunteers Foundation, and Support to Life, providing psychosocial support. One of the key issues I observed during that time was the absence of a communication center. In the places we went, we could stay for a maximum of one month, and there was no continuity in the work being done. There needed to be a fixed location for our work so that children and parents who wanted to benefit from these activities could come regularly and have a good time. However, back then, we were only able to conduct mobile activities.

Later, I met the team from the FİSA Child Rights Center through Hamit Levent from the Solidarity People group. They told me about their plan to organize regular and ongoing football matches for boys in the K11 and K19 Container Cities. Since I am a physical education teacher and a licensed football player, I accepted their offer and started contributing to FİSA CRC’s work.

The most important aspect of this work for me was the continuity of the process. İlke Cambazoğlu and Naim Aktan from FİSA Child Rights Center were deeply involved in every part of the organization. They took care of every detail of the football matches, from arranging transportation for the children to and from the pitch, to providing drinking water, ensuring the availability of first aid supplies in case of injuries, and even having a health professional present on-site. This was exactly what I had hoped for. Instead of simply organizing football matches and then sending the children home, our main concern was how we could support them and provide real benefit throughout the entire process. That's why we were able to continue this work for a long time.

One of the main goals shared by both the FİSA CRC team and myself in organizing these football matches was to create an environment that would prevent peer bullying among the children. At the beginning, we witnessed instances where a child who looked physically different from the others was being bullied by his peers, and offensive language was frequently used. Our tool to address this issue was football, and our goal was to use this tool to help children build healthy communication with one another. Whenever we observed such negative behavior, we would immediately stop the game and talk to the children about why that kind of communication was wrong.

“Instead of simply organizing football matches and then sending the children home, our main concern was how we could support them and provide real benefit throughout the entire process. That's why we were able to continue this work for a long time.”

Encouraging the children to develop empathy for one another was also a key method we used at this stage. It wasn't easy at first, the children were communicating with each other based on negative behavior patterns they had previously witnessed. Additionally, the nature of the game always involves a distinction between winning and losing. Every child plays to win. I even observe this with my own four-year-old daughter when we play, she's focused on winning. But throughout these football matches, we aimed to show the children that while winning is possible, so is losing. We tried to help them understand that although winning can make you feel really good, it's still just a game, and that we also need to learn how to cope with the emotions that come with losing. In life, we won't always win, and things won't always go our way. What truly matters is strengthening the bonds of friendship between us, no matter the outcome of the game, and that's something we shared with the children throughout this entire process.

Over time, throughout all these football matches, we observed that the children's relationships with each other, their mutual respect and affection, significantly improved. Children who, at the beginning, didn't want to include certain others in the game were now the first to choose them. This was because they had come to understand that discriminating against someone is wrong. They gradually realized how deeply hurtful it can be to exclude someone or say something cruel. The emotional wounds such actions could cause became clearer to them over time. We could clearly see the difference in the children's behavior between the first and the last matches, it was like night and day. The children felt and understood that we loved them unconditionally and respected them without condition.

With the earthquake and everything that followed, the children had lost their self-esteem and sense of identity. In that acute phase after the disaster, even for something as basic as a bottle of water or a loaf of bread, people were forced to act in ways that went against their true selves — doing things they never imagined they would. The children experienced this too. They witnessed their parents nearly begging for shelter, food, and clothing. To help the children rebuild their lost confidence, it was essential to show them that they are valued individuals. That's why these football matches were not just ordinary games. For example, I served as the referee, we had a first aid team on-site, and the matches were recorded with two cameras. Through all of this, the children understood that they were truly being seen, that they mattered.

The area we're in was already home to disadvantaged groups even before the earthquake, and unfortunately, we're part of a broader region that is similarly disadvantaged. A child is born, reaches school age, and perhaps doesn't receive respect from their teacher at school. Then they come home and may not receive that respect from their family either. They go out into the street and may not be respected by their peers, and when they go to the market, they might not even be treated with respect by the shopkeeper.

“Before every match, we sat down together, formed a circle, and introduced ourselves, especially to the new kids. The children didn't just experience a football match, they experienced the entire process.”

Not seeing the child as an individual is a fundamental issue in our society. We rarely care about what a child thinks. Instead, we present them with a predetermined life and career path and expect them to follow it. But we don't ask the child whether they want to go down that path. We don't consider that they might want to take a completely different direction in life.

With this motivation, while organizing the football matches with the FISA CRC team, we first asked the children these questions: “What should we do? How should we move forward?” Once the children realized they were being valued, everything began to change. They showed us respect, and we showed them respect in return. Based on my own observations, I can say that the children's interest in sports, and even in other areas, began to grow. While some dreamed of becoming football players, we also saw children involved in filming with cameras start to pursue their own dreams. Before every match, we sat down together, formed a circle, and introduced ourselves, especially to the new kids. The children didn't just experience a football match, they experienced the entire process.

I've been a teacher for many years. I've been actively playing football for nineteen years, and I've been working with civil society organizations for about nine years. Throughout both my teaching career and my work in civil society, I've observed just how important immediate intervention is. A child learns first and foremost from their immediate environment. If we had witnessed negative behavior during a football match and waited a few days to talk to the child about it, that conversation might have meant nothing to them by then.

It's not just about negative situations, we also saw how valuable it is to give positive reinforcement at the right time and in the right way. Praising a child after a positive behavior, clapping for them, recognizing their efforts on the spot, these make a real difference. I've played in hundreds of official football matches so far. I don't remember who committed a foul against me in those games. But if, after I fell, the opposing player who fouled me helped me up, I remember that moment and that person, even by name. Because in life, these are the moments truly worth remembering.

I strongly support the continuation of these efforts. Because everything we experienced went far beyond just a simple trauma. In the aftermath of the earthquake, many organizations have now withdrawn from the field. But the reality is, it's not over yet. We may not fully understand the value of these activities today. Their impact may only become clear ten or fifteen years from now. The children are slowly trying to emerge from the psychological aftermath of the earthquake. But this city is still an earthquake city, we can still come across rubble everywhere. Construction is ongoing, and tens of thousands of people continue to live in container settlements.

“The children are slowly trying to emerge from the psychological aftermath of the earthquake. But this city is still an earthquake city, we can still come across rubble everywhere.”

Sooner or later, people will leave these containers and move into apartment buildings, and in a way, all those traumas will resurface. I've experienced this myself. When I returned to living in a concrete building, I had to relive those feelings for a month or two. That's why continuing this work is incredibly important, especially for the children and the entire community of Adiyaman. Maybe now these efforts need to be more concentrated in specific regions, because much of what has been done so far has only reached certain areas. There are still possibly thousands of children and parents who haven't been reached yet. I truly hope that we and the children here will not be left alone.

“I play games with my friends here every day. I go to the library. Then I go to the park, jump rope, play ball. Before the earthquake, when we were at home, we even played in the kitchen, my friends would come. Everyone had a separate room, we could play with toys. We can't play much inside the container, but we can play outside and it's not boring at all. There are two rooms in the container anyway. I go to another room, I can do my homework. My brother doesn't bother me. This makes me happy.” Asmin (10)

SELVİ ELDİM

K11 Container City Library Officer

We experienced a major earthquake on February 6, 2023. Children, women and older people were the most affected by this earthquake. There was incredible victimization. There were housing problems and there were difficulties in accessing food. However, after the earthquake, we tried to overcome the earthquake in Adıyaman with support from neighboring provinces, then from all of Türkiye and the world. I cannot describe how emotional and tearful this support was. We were in a bad situation and we were happy that the society touched our wounded hearts.

I am a librarian at K11 Container City and I work as a counselor for parents. Adıyaman is trying to transition back to normal life as a city. The psychology of our children and women was disrupted by the earthquake. There was nothing in those difficult times. Great support was provided. We are currently in the recovery phase. But our children have not yet overcome this psychology. There are still children who are afraid of being alone, of the dark, and of the possibility of something happening at any moment. Children need psychosocial support during this period. I am trying to support them and help them gain the habit of reading books. Therefore, having a library in the container city is a very positive thing.

“I observe anxiety about the future in the children here. There are still children who worry that an earthquake could happen again at any moment and that night will happen again. For this reason, it is important to communicate with children by empathizing and caring about their psychology.”

I observe anxiety about the future in the children here. There are still children who worry that an earthquake could happen again at any moment and that night will happen again. For this reason, it is important to communicate with children by empathizing and caring about their psychology.

I think it is a great success that such a journal was published as a result of the media workshops held by friends from the FISA Children's Rights Center in the library. It is great that children reflect their feelings that they cannot express through these journal workshops. There are not many things that can make children happy and laugh in Adıyaman after the earthquake. Parents can be more protective of their children after all these disasters and children can feel the pressure on them.

Being a child is great, but not being able to live your childhood is terrible. After the earthquake, I witnessed children with speech problems, difficulty understanding what they read, constant absent-mindedness, and mood disorders. In order for children to overcome these, we need to work with parents. Instead of forcing children to study or read books, we should allow them to do all of these things while having fun. With these journal workshops, you showed that children can not only read books, but also write books while having fun.

“Children write poems, draw pictures, and sing songs. Your work here increases children’s self-confidence. You transform children’s anxiety of “Can I do it?” into “You can do it” in the workshops.”

Children write poems, draw pictures, and sing songs. Your work here increases children’s self-confidence. You transform children’s anxiety of “Can I do it?” into “You can do it” in the workshops. They come to your workshops with excitement. Since you conduct workshops without putting pressure on them and by establishing a trusting relationship with each child, their self-confidence increases. In the journal you make with children, I see everything here, I see life, and I am deeply moved.

“Adıyaman has gotten worse so far, but it will be a better place in the future. New places are being opened and established. New parks, roads, water systems are being built. People were working with sweat before the earthquake. They will continue to work like that. For example, Israel is attacking Palestine. They are experiencing worse things than the earthquake. They are attacking with tanks, where will they live? So many children died. Everything in the world is getting better and then getting worse. I hope our lives are good. Good luck to everyone.” Uğur Çınar (14)

AHMET DENİZ

FİSA Children's Right Center

The moment of an earthquake is not actually a moment we want to remember very much. But it is not unforgettable either. I have witnessed a few earthquakes before. I was in Bursa during the Gölcük Earthquake (1999). I was studying, another earthquake occurred at night, we were shaken. I experienced the Düzce Earthquake (2022) afterwards. I was in Bursa again. But people think that bad events always happen far away. When it happens to you, you say, "So it wasn't like that." My first memory of what we experienced that night was a terrible tremor.

My house was on the fifth floor of the building. There was a terrible shaking from side to side, as well as a strong vibration from underground. I was lying alone in the bedroom. I couldn't get out of the room because I couldn't walk because of the tremor. My little girls were in their room, calling out, "Daddy!" My wife was screaming for me. But I couldn't take a step towards any of them. The tremor didn't give me that chance. Finally, I was able to get out of the room. I took the kids. We somehow took refuge in the bathroom. The walls were close together, maybe it would be a little safer, that was the first thing that came to mind. I couldn't reach my wife. I mean, there were ten meters between us, but none of us could move. When the earthquake stopped, my wife was able to come.

“News was coming to me, many of our relatives' houses had collapsed. I can't tell my wife. I can't share it with anyone. I don't want to increase this panic.”

While I was thinking, “What are we going to do?”, I was hearing sounds from outside. But we don't know what sound it was, there was a rising buzz. While reciting all the prayers we know, I was thinking, “This is it now.” I look for my phone, I can't find it. The electricity is out anyway. I can't find my car keys. It rained terribly, we don't know. When I went outside, I was wearing sweatpants, one sock, the other wasn't. I was wearing only one shoe. We took shelter in a neighbor's car. I managed to say, “Get us out of here.” He took us and we stopped at a gas station. But our minds were everywhere, the hours weren't passing. The sun wasn't rising, everywhere was dark. Many cars had taken shelter there. The cars were slowly starting to hear cries and wailing. Because people's phones were starting to have some signal. “This one's house has collapsed, their house has collapsed,” cries... News was coming to me, many of our relatives' houses had collapsed. I can't tell my wife. I can't share it with anyone. I don't want to increase this panic.

Finally, we were able to get back to where our house was. My nephew's apartment building was also destroyed, it was under the rubble. I had to get there somehow. Dozens of houses, everyone we knew was under the rubble. You can't reach any of them, there's nothing you can do. I went to my nephew's house to see the building somehow. Oh my God, the view is terrible... The five-story building has been destroyed. There are people around it, but they can't do anything. There's no equipment. We didn't feel or see any government support for three days anyway. Frankly, everyone was trying to do something with their own means.

I had to get the car keys and my phone somehow. We have no clothes, our child is one year old, he has no food, nothing and I know everything will be closed for a long time. "Oh God, in the name of God!" I said. I went upstairs with that fear and stress. That fear and stress was worse than the earthquake. The six-winged wardrobe, everything has fallen on the bed I was lying on. I can't find the key. I would need money. Because the banks won't work either. But I can't reach anything. I had received my weekly salary the day before. With that fear, I tell myself, "I won't leave here until I find that key, because I'll be disgraced. Where will we go with the kids?" The car became more important than anything else at that moment. It was freezing cold, raining, the kids were outside. It probably took half an hour. Finally, I found the key. I reached as much cash as I could. I took the kid's diapers, blankets and a few clothes. I went downstairs, my hands were covered in blood. In that state, I went and got the car. We were able to breathe somehow. Two hours later, the second big earthquake happened. Many buildings collapsed again.

I was at the wreckage of my nephew. All the family members are there. We can't do anything. People are on the roads again, everyone is screaming... It continued like this for three or four days. We stay in the car. There are maybe a hundred earthquakes a day, the car is constantly shaking. I turn on the air conditioning in the car at night, it warms up in half an hour. There is no gas in the car. The gas stations are closed.

“The need for shelter became very important and we had to worry about tents. Because no one could stay in their homes. You can't reach the authorities. We were without tents for three months.”

It was very bad not to be able to hear from anyone in that anger, stress, and desperation, not to be able to provide any help to those trapped under the rubble, the state showing its inability, the police and soldiers not being seen. There were definitely people in their families who had problems, but it shouldn't have been this bad. In previous earthquakes, the first thing we witnessed was the army working tirelessly on top of the rubble. But we couldn't witness that. I wish we had. "Oh my God, have we failed as a country?" I said to myself. Because no support was coming, people had started looting. There was nothing in the way of food. When a few trucks started arriving on the third day, I said, "Oh Lord, thank you!" Our people showed their generosity. When the first week was over, food and emergency supplies started coming from all over the country, and the looting also stopped. This time, the need for shelter became very important and we had to worry about tents. Because no one could stay in their homes. We couldn't find tents. You can't reach the authorities. We were without tents for three months. There was a container in the village from the previous Samsat Earthquake (2018). We could stay there occasionally, but our minds were in the city center because everyone was under the rubble.

Every tent had become a condolence house. Where would I go after leaving this? I couldn't go anywhere for three months, nearly a hundred of our relatives passed away. People were shedding tears of joy when they pulled their relatives' bodies out of the rubble. "I was able to pull them out!" they would say. But this time you couldn't find a shroud. The prosecutor's office was going to start an investigation, an autopsy was going to be done. This couldn't be done either. When the health teams determined that the person pulled out of the rubble was dead, a document was issued through the prosecutor's office and we buried our lost ones that way. The tragic thing was that people were fighting over the order of digging graves in the cemetery. "First dig my grave!" "No, first mine!" When that cemetery was covered, there was a great sense of relief that we could say, "We have a place to pray." With this mentality, I stayed in Adiyaman for three months. My sister was living in Ankara, and we went to Ankara at her insistence. I was able to stay for a month, then I came back here. We have been continuing in Adiyaman ever since.

When I started working at the Adiyaman Medical Chamber after returning from Ankara, our friends at FISA CRC were in the same container area with us. We were chatting one-on-one, we were in the area. From that time on, I have always acted with a sense of duty of loyalty to those who showed this common sense, sacrificed their own comfort, and came to support those who experienced those feelings after the earthquake. We are still working together. No matter how much we thank them, it would still be not enough.

What I told you is not even one percent of what I experienced. It was very important for those people to come here and support people in this psychological state, to say, "We are with you." When you see these people with us that day, you feel hopeful. You see that you are not helpless as a nation. Yes, the state failed, but the nation showed its generosity. These guys were running around, they never stopped. They went to container cities and provided psychological support to children, women, and people whose relatives had passed away, and I think it was very useful.

"You see the environment, you present the problem, you present things that could be a solution point with different ideas. Thus, something new emerges and it is implemented. Everything was like this."

You can't apply a ready-made, memorized format in such a disaster without seeing the culture, experiences, and emotions here. I am an educator. I was watching closely about how you worked. You see the environment, you present the problem, you present things that could be a solution point with different ideas. Thus, something new emerges and it is implemented. You publish this as a report in magazines and bulletins. Everything was like this. You note it down in a way that may shed light on future studies.

Recording these and making a note in history are very important things... Your compassionate, friendly, respectful and loving approach to children caught my attention and I appreciated it very much. I speak on behalf of the people of Adiyaman, on my own behalf, as a father. I was also witnessing my own shortcomings. I express my gratitude in this regard. It was a very good work.

When I look back, I don't have a written history right now. All my memories have been destroyed. I want to remember, but what happened after is so strong that it kills what happened before. But when we read about it in written, printed bulletins like this, we can remember what we experienced.

“When I look back, I don't have a written history right now. All my memories have been destroyed. I want to remember, but what happened after is so strong that it kills what happened before. But when we read about it in written, printed bulletins like this, we can remember what we experienced.”

One of the moments I will never forget was the attention of the team from Izmir. They distributed toys to the children. They were loving towards people, they hugged my mother and took pictures with her. Even though my mother could not talk to them because she did not know Turkish, my heart felt relieved. We are not people who easily express our pain. After my brother lost his children, he was crying from the bottom of his heart, but he could not shed tears. One time, he went to the corner and burst into tears. It is very painful to see adults cry, no matter what the reason. I can count hundreds of moments like this. I can only express it.

“In the future, Adiyaman will be a more solid city. But I am not so sure about that. Earthquakes will continue to happen. Because we continue to be afraid because there are still small earthquakes. After the earthquake, beautiful places were built. Since there is garbage everywhere, playing games is not the solution. I am sure about that. But I still have hope.” Öykü (10)

EZGİ ORAK

FİSA Children's Right Center

On February 6, 2023, I was in Diyarbakır and went there for a short time. Diyarbakır was a place where the destruction was perhaps less than other cities, but we felt that intensity a lot. When I was a child, lower-intensity earthquakes were felt in Bingöl and Elazığ. But I had this knowledge: Diyarbakır is not an earthquake zone. I had the confidence of this knowledge. The February 6 earthquakes were a moment when that knowledge in my mind was shattered. It was very strong and lasted for a very long time. That day, it created great anxiety. I did not know what to do in Diyarbakır during that period. I was someone who was directly affected by the earthquake, and on the other hand, I was following what was happening. The Disaster Child Coordination was established, children's rights advocates and people from different fields came together. I started to follow them. It was a process in which I tried to understand the situation, to see what was happening and what we could do. I was a children's rights volunteer at that time and I had no experience in what to do during disasters. I met with other friends at FİSA and went to Elbistan. I was still a student in the child development department at university. After the earthquake, the idea and desire to do something else, to work with children in the field, became clear to me. There is a pedagogical perspective in schools and it is very inadequate. I felt this in every field while I was receiving education. With the earthquake, I felt more that what we learned in school did not offer a solution. This thought was one of the situations that pushed me to be involved in the process here. I had to both work on children's rights and do monitoring and reporting. Monitoring was not an action in itself, because you expect something to transform as a result of monitoring.

“While there was a dynamic in Ankara, I saw that completely different things were happening here in Adiyaman.”

I didn't have much work experience. I had internships during my school years. I didn't have experience working in a crisis or disaster area. I had never had the experience of going to a different city and working. I had a rote learning about working with children that I had learned at school, and here I saw that this information was actually something completely different. Or I knew methods for working with public institutions. But while there was a dynamic in Ankara, I saw that completely different things were happening here in Adiyaman. I had previously been doing desk-based monitoring and reporting on children's rights. But after I came here, monitoring with children and civil society organizations gained a different dimension for me with the contacts here. I saw how monitoring that was combined with field experiences, instead of desk-based monitoring, was different.

Normally, when we monitor right to life violations by scanning the media, it was important to present a policy proposal, to show a situation, to reveal that rights violations are systematic, to present a report to policy makers so that they can take action. But there were many moments here where I saw that the issues I was following at the desk were completely different from the ones in the field. For example, I saw in the reports that a certain number of buildings were being built in Adiyaman. But we learned in the field that although the buildings appeared to be turnkey, they were not delivered yet. People are still living in container cities. Again, as far as I follow from the press and reports, children are provided with free transportation support for their schools. But the information we actually obtained from the children shows that this is not the case at all and that the children are starting to receive education in closer schools because of this.

When I noticed a difference between my experiences and the current situation while reporting or monitoring, this created a feeling of inadequacy. I was thinking, “I can’t follow this situation, I can’t understand what’s happening,” while I was at my desk. I was watching different areas of rights and thinking, “It shouldn’t be up to me to write about reconstruction.” This had to be done by an engineer, an architect, or a group working in this field. There was a lot of information, and at the same time, no information. Every day new information came, but some of this information contradicted each other. It is really difficult to write a report about the earthquake region from Ankara. I still feel the inadequacy that this situation created in me in my daily life practices. But then I realized that even if I don’t know, I see it, or I should see it. Maybe I should go out to the field and ask. I should get that information from the people there. Because it was not just a period when houses were destroyed, it was a period when the mechanism collapsed. Public institutions and professional organization buildings were destroyed. People in Adiyaman, for example, architects and engineers who could do the reconstruction, lost their relatives, and maybe even fewer people continued to work in this area. My observations there had turned into a thought that everyone should do something. Thus, we transformed the monitoring and reporting work into a method where we asked experts in professional organizations there, children, and obtained information from families.

“All of these works were something that showed that monitoring actually carries a claim of transformation. If we had not been here for two years, we might not have noticed this.”

Today, as FISA Children's Rights Center, we are in the period where we are working to strengthen local organizations so that they can carry out work based on children's rights. All of these works were something that showed that monitoring actually carries a claim of transformation. If we had not been here for two years, we might not have noticed this. Conditions such as container cities being side by side after the earthquake and people seeing each other more often can turn into situations where children are hesitant to talk and do not report. Because they will encounter those people again tomorrow and they now know what a threat it would be for them to complain. This situation also showed that the effects after the earthquake may not be something that is reflected in numbers and statistics.

Before the earthquake, there were many cases that we provided legal support and followed up as part of the program to prevent impunity in children's rights violations. After the earthquake, we wanted to follow up on the İslas Hotel Case in particular. Because it was a very special case for us. We wanted to do this because we knew that we could advocate for it together with local organizations and follow up on those cases. Twenty-six children lost their lives. They had come from Cyprus for a sports tournament. It was one of the cases that really resonated with the public and was visible. We requested to intervene in the case. However, our request was rejected. If it had been accepted, it would have been very meaningful for the model of 'monitoring also causing change'. For a long time, requests from children's rights organizations to intervene in such cases have not been accepted. We worked on this case with a lawyer friend. What we wanted to do was to show that this case was not just a violation of the right to life or an earthquake case. Because those children were in a hotel under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, and this situation also reminds us of other obligations of the state. There is a different situation and regulation regarding the areas where children stay than adults. The families followed this case closely. They wanted this case to set a precedent so that other children in Türkiye would not lose their lives in earthquakes. It was very important for us to try to ensure that the trial was evaluated from this perspective.

“Seeing solidarity, seeing that grounds can be formed where you can do something together, reveals hope. Even if that hope itself does not give hope for the ongoing grief, it also reminds us to be able to turn our faces elsewhere, to look at hope.”

We traveled to Adıyaman very often while following the İslas Hotel Case. We also witnessed changes during the case process. The way of holding people to account changed during that process. “We are carrying out the struggle for all children,” said the families. “We are carrying out this struggle so that other children in Türkiye do not lose their lives and those responsible do not go unpunished,” they said. A ground for solidarity was created. We also saw examples of international solidarity there. We would make a call at the end of the case call videos we made to say “Justice for all children.” Then the family’s demands evolved into something like that. This is one of the sentences that I remember from the İslas Hotel Case. “For all children, to set a precedent, so that children do not lose their lives again.” That process itself was a strengthening process for us, for the families, and for other earthquake files, from the first hearing to the final hearing.

On the one hand, solidarity creates hope. Seeing solidarity, seeing that grounds can be formed where you can do something together, reveals hope. Even if that hope itself does not give hope for the ongoing grief, it also reminds us to be able to turn our faces elsewhere, to look at hope. I think this is the strengthening aspect of solidarity. I don’t know if we can call it secondary trauma, but solidarity and multiplication is a very good door for those working in the earthquake zone to get out of the negative feelings they experience. The fact that an issue remains unresolved leaves a negative impact on people. But here, the possibility of strengthening that solidarity leads me to a bright place.

I wish I were here every day, I could do that monitoring and reporting directly. Now, it feels great to come to Adiyaman at regular intervals. Monitoring and reporting could have a different meaning for someone living in Adiyaman. I would have direct contact and personal observation with institutions, civil society organizations, experts, local governments, and what the central governments are doing.

“We are in a time when this crisis is deepening and invisible. A process where the violations are invisible but deeper. The recovery process is not progressing healthily anyway.”

In those reports where we tried to show the current situation in Adiyaman, it would have been better if there were more people who had the chance to observe what was happening in that area and who could enter the areas where they could investigate. The state's child protection mechanism was already a mechanism that did not work well and that mechanism was also destroyed after the earthquake. Experts working in this field may have lost their lives, or maybe they moved out of Adiyaman. Those public buildings were no longer there. Hospitals were damaged. Monitoring leads to a feeling that we have to do everything. We are in a time when this crisis is deepening and invisible. A process where the violations are invisible but deeper. The state is actually the one who has the responsibility here, but there was no mechanism after the earthquake. The recovery process is not progressing healthily anyway.

One of the images I can't forget here was a moment when we were leaving the final hearing of the Isias Hotel Case. There was a tree there. Banners held by families with photos of their children were lined up around the tree. I took a photo of it, I didn't want to forget that image. It was a moment when I looked at it like that and didn't know what to feel.

“I like the people in the containers here. It's a good thing they made the containers. If they hadn't, we would have been left outside because we were earthquake victims. Our days were going well before the earthquake. I would go out to the neighborhood. I would play with my cousins because they were upstairs. Now I go out occasionally. I have a few fewer friends, but now I have a new friend, for example, Elif. They held an event here in the evening, they put a drum and a zurna in the library. We also have fun at İlke and Naim's events. I like shooting with a camera.” Rana (10)

ÖZGE ÜRER

Musician, Songwriter, Producer

I am a musician, a singer, a songwriter, a producer, a creative director, and someone who works creatively in different areas when appropriate. I am a woman with a child's soul, I could never grow up. It feels great to do something with children here and to be in solidarity with you. I see producing, sharing and experiencing together as a life mission.

From the moment the earthquake first happened, our hearts started beating here; both individually and collectively with our musician friends. We have a collective called 'Sista Sound' consisting of female DJs and women from all areas of art. As a collective, we started a solidarity campaign for the regions where the earthquake occurred as part of our March 8 events, and we collected donations. But we knew it wouldn't be enough. I really wanted to see this place, my mind was also here. But we knew that we had to be here when we felt ready.

“As a collective, we started a solidarity campaign for the regions where the earthquake occurred as part of our March 8 events, and we collected donations. But we knew it wouldn't be enough. I really wanted to see this place, my mind was also here.”

I definitely wanted to be a musician when I was a kid. I grew up idolizing my father, I always wanted to be a musician, play an instrument, sing. Even though the world sometimes seems like it's not in a good state, I have a more optimistic view. I also believe in technology, and my work is very much related to technology. That's why I can predict where technology can go. We are in a period where the human mind and creativity are evolving.

The events we held here went very well. Especially girls are very valuable to us. They are like bright stars. But of course we do not separate girls or boys. They are our children of light. The moments we made songs and sang together with the children were the most valuable moments for us. We created a very nice synergy with them. We see that more artists should come here, more work should be done.

We felt very lucky to be able to come here, even though we were drops in the ocean. Their words, “This place will not be the same after you leave,” touched our hearts. The children we spent time with and did activities with were very brave, there was a great participation. We created melodies, wrote lyrics. And we will turn this work into a song. When we leave here and return to the cities we live in, it will be great to tell our friends about our experiences and work here.

“We felt very lucky to be able to come here, even though we were drops in the ocean. Their words, “This place will not be the same after you leave,” touched our hearts.”

We are leaving Adıyaman with very good feelings. I hope it is the same for the children we met with, did things together with, and that we left a good impact. It was great to produce together.

“When I grow up, I want to heal sick and elderly people. I like helping people. In the future, I want the garbage on the ground to be removed and people to stop smoking. Of they dont stop smoking, children will smoke too. When the earthquake happened, I felt very bad. Then I came to this container. I am happy here. When I grow up, the world will be more beautiful and there will be no ruins. Everyone will change.” Emine (11)

AYDIN ŞİRİN

Turkish Medical Association- Adıyaman

I was not in Adıyaman at the time of the earthquake. I was in Ankara for a meeting. I learned about the earthquake when my neighbor called me. Then, I called my wife and children immediately, feeling tense and uneasy. I reached them, they told me that there was a big earthquake and the situation was serious. As the Turkish Medical Association, we called a meeting immediately and gathered, and with a friend from the board of directors, we set off that day by purchasing some supplies for the earthquake. Our aim was to reach the earthquake zone and Adıyaman, and to examine the places affected by the earthquake on the way. As we got closer, the winter conditions, snow and the condition of the roads were getting worse. The roads we tried were closed. There had been landslides, they were closed. We were constantly looking for ways to reach Adıyaman. Finally, we arrived in Maraş and stopped by hospitals in the city along the way. We visited doctors and health workers there. The situation was terrible. Only the emergency department was working in the hospitals in Gölbaşı and the districts of Maraş. Everything had been taken outside. Patients were being sent to provinces that were not affected by the earthquake. There were doctors and health workers coming from outside the province.

“There was a terrible situation. People on the roads, main arteries, side arteries were closed. It was like being on a movie set. But you weren't a spectator, you were an actor there. You had to do something.”

Thirteen hours after we set off, we arrived in Adıyaman city center. My family had gone to the village because the place we lived in was badly damaged. I went to the village to see them at around three in the morning. Everyone was staying in the cars. The weather was very cold, people were trying to warm up with the air conditioners in their cars. Our sick relatives were living in the cars. Nothing could be reached. There was a desperation. But life forces you to get out of this feeling and do something. No matter how much you know, when you see places where the earthquake happened, you have very different feelings.

After daybreak, we started touring the city. It was scary, you couldn't find the places you were going to. The roads you had been on before were closed. There was a terrible situation. People on the roads, main arteries, side arteries were closed. It was like being on a movie set. But you weren't a spectator, you were an actor there. You had to do something. You were trying to learn the transportation routes.

The process of getting together with friends and institutions to discuss what to do began. But everything was very complicated. There was no water, no communication. No electricity, nothing... Bread and water were sent from neighboring provinces. But there was no energy, phones were not charging. There were no toilets, no water, there was desperation. As an individual, you could not meet your daily needs. This was a big problem. You were looking for a way, a method for this. We had friends who were experienced in this matter, we were trying to get in touch and do something. The first week was spent trying everything, learning, coming together and sharing information and experiences. In this way, we were able to reach the power to do something. When the process becomes more stable, you feel better. Because now you are figuring out what the situation is. Although many things are still unclear, it is a little clearer who will do what. You are not just concerned with yourself. Most of society is traumatized and in need. Everyone is doing something in their own way, but it was not enough. The workload of institutions and individuals who were in a position to provide this competence was increasing. This continued for a long time.

We tried to establish some order in the first month. The first days were more traumatic, you lose a lot of friends. You go to the cemetery to bury them. This affects you a little. Afterwards, there is a need to rebuild your life. Since there is no giving up, you have to do something. The effort for this is still ongoing.

After the earthquake last year, nothing is the same. The routines of normal life are gone. Therefore, this situation causes you to be different, more creative, more devoted, and to exert more effort than your previous life. The places you need for life have been destroyed. When you cannot see the places, people, and geography you see every day, this creates great surprise. Everything is more difficult than before. Therefore, responsibilities have increased today in the face of the difficulties of life. This is still going on, and will continue. It will continue for a long time.

“At the end of a year, we are at least in a process that we can call adaptation. There is still uncertainty, deficiencies in meeting basic needs, and fulfilling basic life routines. This situation applies to the whole society. Therefore, we are trying to overcome this deficiency with solidarity here.”

At the end of a year, we are at least in a process that we can call adaptation. There is still uncertainty, deficiencies in meeting basic needs, and fulfilling basic life routines. This situation applies to the whole society. Therefore, we are trying to overcome this deficiency with solidarity here. We had to continue our daily routines, the work we do, and do our jobs socially. This makes us feel good. When we only do routines related to ourselves, life is incomplete. You are somehow in contact with dozens of people every day. You have a responsibility to deal with these problems and find solutions.

My profession requires the implementation of certain methods and methods to achieve a healthy society and to provide for people's basic needs. When you look at it from this perspective, you are both very busy and you learn a lot. Sometimes it is exhausting because you are faced with an excessive workload. Sometimes when you go to a place that has not experienced an earthquake, you see that peaceful life. The questions “Where am I?” can confuse you. You are looking for your old habits.

I think that this trauma will last a long time, and that reestablishing a social life like before is still an ongoing process. Even if you try to learn new things about yourself every day, apply what you have learned, and understand, the void created by the absence of routines before the earthquake also leads to questioning your pre-earthquake life patterns. These are times when individuals need each other more. In a period when today's modern society and cities isolate people, the collapse of those structures has created a situation where people see and contact each other more. Perhaps this desire to find a quicker solution to those devastating effects creates this togetherness. Individuals learn new things.

“Disasters like earthquakes show us how chaotic life is, how unpredictable things are outside the individual. You grasp this and try new things about yourself and society.”

Disasters like earthquakes show us how chaotic life is, how unpredictable things are outside the individual. You grasp this and try new things about yourself and society. Therefore, this process will continue a little like this, life is a little like this. Like a puzzle... An earthquake is perhaps the biggest and most traumatic of these puzzles. In these times, reaching out to those around you and existing as a society makes a person stronger. Everyone has different talents. Everyone learns from each other. This trauma is also an opportunity to establish new communication with people and do new things. We will heal each other together. It is definitely not a situation that can be overcome alone. An individual cannot heal without being in social life. I believe this.

We have met thousands of people who are involved in this effort. We are here with you (FISA Children's Rights Center) in solidarity right now. We had friends who came here to show solidarity before you. We will have other friends in the future. Solidarity is a situation where togetherness is valuable. We thank all the owners of these efforts and those who support them. Life is a bit like this...

“We were at home during the earthquake, we were very scared. I lost my relatives. My siblings and I were psychologically damaged. My youngest sibling is four years old. He keeps saying, “There’s an earthquake, mom!” He was a very brave child, he was also very scared. I was also very scared, I was impressed. I made new friends here. I don’t like adults to think of themselves as big and to look down on us. Sometimes they do activities in the library, games come, youth groups come. They give concerts sometimes, they play the baglama. I like it.” Rozerin (13)

EBRU ERGİN

FİSA Children’s Right Center

After the February 6th Earthquakes, I was at a point where I knew the disaster area very well and at the same time I didn’t know it. In previous years, while I was working as a general coordinator at the Turkish Psychologists Association, the 2011 Van Erciş earthquake had occurred. The Turkish Psychologists Association (TPD) is one of the organizations that conducts major operations and definitely works in the field in such disaster situations. I was involved in the administrative side of that work. I did many things such as coordinating the field teams. I knew a lot about the disaster area, but I didn’t go to the field because I was in an administrative position. Then the Soma Mining Disaster (2014) happened. I was working at TPD again and I was in a position where I didn’t go to Soma but I managed many things related to the disaster area.

When the February 6th Earthquakes happened, we all had knowledge and experience from different places. But every disaster probably recreates its own conditions. We didn’t think, “We’ve done this work before. We know what needs to be done.” On the other hand, an earthquake like this had never happened before. We anticipated what needed to be done, but the conditions were different from previous experiences. So we were in a situation where we were building, starting from scratch.

“An earthquake like this had never happened before. We anticipated what needed to be done, but the conditions were different from previous experiences. So we were in a situation where we were building, starting from scratch.”

On the one hand, it was scary. Because we were going to a place we didn’t know. I had never been to Adiyaman in my life. When I first went to Adiyaman with human rights organizations, I felt like there hadn’t been an earthquake there, but a war, and we had entered after the occupying forces had left the city. It was a city I had stepped into for the first time. So we were there with many experiences, but everything was still new to us. If you trust the experience you bring with you, the probability of ignoring existing conditions increases greatly. In this sense, I think we were at an advantage because we have a structure where we can remain flexible.

Of course, we kept what experience told us in our pockets, but our first observations in Adıyaman were a process in which we sought an answer to the question, “How can we adapt to the existing conditions, what is needed?” In previous experiences, for example in Soma, we had established two centers. Because the need during the TPD period required it. We saw a similar need here. We could not work within living spaces, we needed an independent center. This was both what experience told us and what the conditions there presented to us as a need. We experienced many advantages of acting with the logic of learning everything new. Otherwise, we might have acted at a point where we did not take into consideration the ideas, suggestions and guidance of the organizations we cooperated with and supported locally. It was valuable to see every piece of information as new information and to act in a way that we should make new decisions and actions according to this new information.

There had been a major earthquake. When we considered occupational health and safety, we could not stay in a building. One of the safest places was the container, but on the other hand, the place where we established our center and positioned ourselves as a living space for a long time was not just ours. It was also a common living and working space for components such as Eğitim-SEN, KESK, Adıyaman Medical Chamber. In addition to the practical reasons of staying close to the center we were going to establish, one of the reasons for staying in the living space containers was the desire to be side by side with these organizations. This was their working and living space and they had opened it to us.

“Since we have established a center in an earthquake area for the first time in our lives, we have experienced how we should take physical security into consideration at this level and in this depth. What does it mean for a work area to be safe for children?”

Were there any difficulties? There were. It was the first time I had stayed in a container. The other friends probably experienced this for the first time. But on the other hand, experiencing those difficulties was also a way to meet the needs. If I have a problem with the water or the water heater in the container, probably all the people staying in the container are also experiencing a similar problem. Or if the container creates a security gap for me, the place where I will be working with children also consists of containers and I have to think about that security gap in terms of the children.

Since we have established a center in an earthquake area for the first time in our lives, we have experienced how we should take physical security into consideration at this level and in this depth. What does it mean for a work area to be safe for children? Where do we need to look? We did not have information about how electricity, water, and plumbing would be in our previous work. This information and risks were very new to us. We were also thinking about all the precautions or opportunities we were thinking about for ourselves for the children we would be working with and using that area. Therefore, it was very important to both learn about the area and to be together with organizations that opened their areas to us and supported us. We were in a living space where we could consult with everyone about the events and what was going to be done. I think the fact that we are conducting a relatively solid study in Adıyaman is very much related to these relationships we established at the beginning.

Being in the living space of the civil society organizations here gave us a great advantage and we learned many things from them. Because after coming to Adiyaman with very little information, we learned and experienced many things we did not know such as "What is where, how is it done, who reacts to what and how, where is this place and how should we behave here?" while drinking tea and coffee with them, eating, buying and giving water to each other.

FISA Children's Rights Center is actively working in Adiyaman and this work is still ongoing. Many organizations have been working in many fields since February 6, 2023, but I feel that we have not been able to share enough experience and knowledge with them. The use of social media or communication tools may have also been effective here. We may have been at an overprotective point. I would like to do more to achieve that balance and foster visibility. Apart from Adiyaman and the work of FISA Children's Rights Center, each of us has other things we do to survive, but I wish the conditions had matured so that we could be in Adiyaman for longer and more often. This is something I personally lack.

Some scenes during the construction process of the center in Adiyaman have not left my mind. During the physical construction of the center, we waited for days for the interlocking stones for the ground. Then the stones were brought by vehicles and piled up there. Each one is heavy and needs to be arranged. On the other hand, we had a problem with the water pipes. The stones had to be arranged in such a way that the pipes underneath them would never burst. I had carried those stones to the side by myself. I could not forget our efforts and joy, which turned into a bit of torture and comedy, with the watering continuing while the stones were arranged on the sand.

“Volunteers were going to paint the containers with the children. But after an hour, the children put down their brushes. They started to apply the paints to the walls of the containers with their hands. It was a moment when the children included their own will in the system.”

Another image that remains in my mind is when we were painting the containers while opening the center. Many volunteers had come to support us. They were going to paint the containers with the children. But after an hour, the children put down their brushes. They started to apply the paints to the walls of the containers with their hands. It was a moment when the children included their own will in the system. They had enjoyed it so much that even a stroke with a brush was not enough for the children in that excitement. The instructions on how to paint were all on the sidelines and it was completely up to the children to take charge. They started an incredible act of painting as they wanted, freely, sometimes with themes and sometimes without. “Should we do anything?” “No, we shouldn’t, the children are in control now and they can paint however they want.” If you go and look now, some of that paint has been erased but you will still see a really colorful and complex work.

“My days at Hayat (Life) Park are fun. We chat in the park, play games, and make more friends. We learn our rights. We understand each other better. Our manual skills improve as we paint and write in the workshops here. Many things have changed in two years. Thanks to Dilan and Şevval, we are about to forget the earthquake. Hopefully, we can forget and Adıyaman will recover soon. I think we will forget if there are no aftershocks. Nature was polluted a lot after the earthquake. No one could keep our environment clean. I hope Adıyaman will develop more in the future.” Badesu (10)

HATİCE DEĞİRMENCİ (LADY KADIJAH)

DJ, Software Engineer, Activist

I live in Izmir. I work as a project manager in a software company. I play bass-based music such as reggae, hip-hop, drum n bass. I am also the founder and current president of the association called ‘A Paw Gang’.

My motivation for coming to Adıyaman was to be with children and young people. Because I think many things start with young people and children. This idea of mine is related to my own music and the difficult processes we have to overcome. At this point, a very nice opportunity presented to us by friends from FISA Children's Rights Center emerged. We were able to come to Adıyaman as a result of meeting them.

“Not only healing the wounds of the difficult times, but also leaving them behind and sharing really well, learning and teaching excited me a lot. I always think that this communication is two-way.”

When I came here, I thought that we could both get something from the children and that the children could get something from us. Not only healing the wounds of the difficult times, but also leaving them behind and sharing really well, learning and teaching excited me a lot. I always think that this communication is two-way.

A useful communication where both sides get something out of each other, and doing this with the most international, most limitless music and rhythm... Before I came here, I had no plans in my mind about what we were going to do. I believed that we would do something with the plans we would come up with together with the children and the youth, and that is what happened.

My experiences during the workshop were truly amazing. At first, I thought that communication or our synergy with each other could be difficult with children and young people. But we fell in love with each other so quickly that it was as if I was there every weekend doing this activity with the children. And I think they felt the same way. I will never forget the children's activity and participation in the workshops. I think it was great that everyone was motivated and participated in the games, singing, and activities. I got emotional at times. There were times when I had a hard time holding back my laughter and tears.

There is a saying in English, “If life gives you lemons, try to make lemonade.” Life has given us very sour and unpleasant days in Adiyaman in the last two years. We tried to make lemonade together. We were all aware of this deep down, the kids and us. I think we said, “Okay, let’s put the lemons aside and look at our lemonade.” I will never forget any of these that I remember.

“There is a saying in English, “If life gives you lemons, try to make lemonade.” Life has given us very sour and unpleasant days in Adiyaman in the last two years. We tried to make lemonade together.”

When I was a child, I saw the future as a time when I would overcome every problem. I would say, “When I grow up, I will do this, when I grow up, everything will be very different.” Then I grew up and nothing happened like that. But the love for animals and people that remained inside me at that time, the desire to work to be a hardworking and proper individual, never went away. Of course, I had some disappointments. But life is not a house with pink shutters. That’s why I am actually a little more careful when looking to the future now. Frankly, I have learned to be happy with smaller, shorter things in the future. I do my best to look to the future with more hope with what I have left.

“Art means labor, emotion, thought and respect. Many of you may think of different things when you say respect. But for example, picking up a painting instead of throwing it away is a form of respect for art. Labor is the difficulties we overcome for art. In my opinion, the more labor we put in, the closer we get to art. Emotion in art is the state of reflecting our feelings such as happiness and sadness onto art. In short, many things we experience are actually art.

Thank you for reading my article.” Zeynep Ceren (13)

DILAN DURSUN

FİSA Children’s Right Center

I was in Ankara when I heard the news of the February 6 earthquakes. A lot of information and visuals were shared from my social circle, news sources on the internet, and television. I was skeptical about most of what I saw and read. My belief was that there was probably a very big disaster. Because when it came to such news, we couldn’t access a lot of data. Social media was blacked out. There were also many special videos and visuals there, including the personal information of everyone affected by the earthquake, the moments of being rescued from the rubble or the aftermath. I tried to stay away from these visuals in order to reach concrete information. There was a need for numerical information, but according to official sources, how many people have been staying in container cities since February 2023? What kind of services do civil society and state institutions provide here? We still can’t reach definitive data that will answer such questions. We often had difficulty accessing this information in published official reports and studies published by other civil society organizations.

“How many people have been staying in container cities since February 2023? What kind of services do civil society and state institutions provide here? We still can’t reach definitive data that will answer such questions.”

Before coming here, I was part of a team that carried out psychosocial support work for women in the rural areas of Adıyaman and Malatya after the earthquake. Then, starting in April 2024, I started working as a social worker at the FİSA Children’s Rights Center in Adıyaman. The situation was much different in the villages compared to the cities. Because there were containers there that would function as temporary shelters, not the ones in container cities, but containers with no compartments next to people’s damaged houses. This made it difficult to meet some needs. In villages, containers are placed in a suitable area near the house. Therefore, people who have experienced the earthquake continue to live where the ruins or damaged buildings are. This has positive and negative aspects. Those experiences, having a ruin right next to them can negatively affect people. These are also foldable containers without a toilet or bathroom. Women living in the village were telling that the containers closed on a few people during periods of increased wind and rain. An area of only twenty one square meters, the toilet and bathroom are two small cabins in front of the door. This also creates problems due to weather conditions and many other reasons.

Adults and children were living together in these containers. There was not much opportunity for personal space or privacy. Almost all of the containers I saw in container cities were living containers with a sink, shower area, and one or two closed rooms. Again, space is limited, but at least you can meet your needs inside that container.

When we come to the center of Adiyaman, the placement positions of the containers in container cities can make people's lives much easier or, on the contrary, make them difficult. In certain container cities, doors that do not directly face each other are made and the containers are arranged at certain angles. People can put up a railing, a tarpaulin and allocate more space for themselves and use it as a kitchen or living room. In some container cities, the placement positions had such an advantage. However, in other container cities, this was not considered or containers with doors directly facing each other were placed for certain reasons. There is no area where people can use and expand the front of the container with their own additional materials. This situation eliminates the possibility of people to organize their own environment according to their important needs, even if they are staying in the container.

When we meet with the parents of the children we work with, we usually meet with women because the fathers or other adult men who care for the children usually work outside the container city. In the small container cities, the parents said, "We have a neighborhood environment here." Everyone knows everyone, everyone knows who is sick. It is a little difficult to imagine such a neighborhood forming in the big container cities. There are 1,300 households and it is spread over a very large area. The lighting is often inadequate, there are not many common social areas. Therefore, it was more possible to see the neighborhood culture in small container cities like K11, which has a capacity of about 150 households.

"In the small container cities, the parents said, "We have a neighborhood environment here." Everyone knows everyone, everyone knows who is sick. It is a little difficult to imagine such a neighborhood forming in the big container cities."

Along with these, mostly those who were tenants before the earthquake do not want to leave the container city immediately. People bought houses from TOKİ, but buying a house does not mean that the house will be ready for use immediately. Common services and living areas such as installations, infrastructure, transportation, shopping areas, schools, health centers are not yet available in the new houses. That is why rumors such as "Container cities will be gathered in one place" from time to time make people very nervous. Are people ready to move into houses? This process may continue differently for children. We often witness feelings such as the fear of another earthquake not being overcome.

Since February 6, 2023, we still have very limited access to pure data, so some planning can proceed hypothetically. When conducting a discussion, sometimes we cannot discuss the main information due to the concern that "This may not be clear" for a piece of information. At least, we had to proceed by creating our own data in many mobile fields where we carry out the project. But access to general data is still limited. When there is a need or a risk, when a problem occurs, you may not know exactly which source to reach in the city.

Rather than producing a general strategy with all this incomplete information, it was important to make joint decisions with children and parents and move the process forward with them. That's why we have a very separate folder in our minds for each field. We need numerical data in our social service work that we will do at the macro and mezzo level. But personal observations also take place in the work done at the micro or individual level. That's why K11 Container City was a different field. It was a small container city and that had its advantages. You can see social solidarity and neighborhood culture more concretely.

K13 Container City was a large field and an area with more than a thousand containers. As of 2025, we know that there is one family health center, one civil society organization, and a team from the Adiyaman Social Services Provincial Directorate. There are actually thousands of people living there. That's why each area was different from each other in terms of health, security and meeting daily needs.

The work we are conducting in Adiyaman basically includes psycho-social support activities through art for children affected by the earthquake. For this reason, we are conducting workshops inside container cities, in areas close to container cities and schools, in fact in a neighborhood. However, in these studies we conduct with children after the disaster, we do not assume that the children affected by the disaster are 'victims of trauma'.

“At this stage, we proceed without taking keywords such as ‘disaster, earthquake, trauma, victim’ into our pockets from the beginning, without ignoring the individual approach of children within their environment.”

We shape our work in the fields where we work for two years starting from the acute period after the earthquake, when we come together with children, from where they are and with their participation in the decisions. At this stage, we proceed without taking keywords such as 'disaster, earthquake, trauma, victim' into our pockets from the beginning, without ignoring the individual approach of children within their environment. I believe that this approach constitutes the routes of the principle of child participation in particular in practice.

Our work here is not limited to workshops that are based on rights-based approaches such as the principle of child participation. There are many new situations such as the continuation of aftershocks, although their intensity and frequency have decreased, living in temporary shelters, and changes in social services and resources. There is also the routinization of these 'new situations' after the earthquake.

We establish a relationship with everyone living in the field we are in. The relationships we establish with children and parents through children grow our work layer by layer. The needs, problems and risks expressed regardless of age and gender turn into situations that we seek solutions for through various interviews and guidance as a result of professional responsibility. For this reason, the work we carry out in Adiyaman after the earthquake as FİSA Children's Rights Center progresses in a dynamic structure with the effects of daily life, nature, social policies and many other systems.

It is possible to say ready, but I came here at the point where I said, “I am ready to go through this process.” The opportunities and conditions were different here, but I always had plans B, C, D in mind. As Virginia Woolf said, I have protected and will continue to protect ‘a room of my own’. It was not just Dilan, the social worker. It was all Dilan’s. I tried to create and protect this in Adiyaman. I always felt the advantages of this. When I went home from work, I tried not to bring anything home. Whatever Dilan wanted to do in her own space, however she would feel comfortable, I did that and continued to do it.

Every morning before going to work, I prepared my bag, walked to the bus stop, got on the bus, came to work, conducted workshops with children, kept in touch with friends from other organizations we worked with in the field, took care of the cats and rabbits in the center. I had such a routine. I also tried to protect the place that I knew was very important to me. I also used my own resources for this. This always made me feel very good. Not losing daily life habits can be things that reduce feelings of secondary trauma and burnout. Sometimes, even if we are in challenging conditions, I try to change the atmosphere in my mind at least. There may be another disaster somewhere else one day. These will be the thoughts in my pockets, to be honest.

“Every morning before going to work, I prepared my bag, walked to the bus stop, got on the bus, came to work, conducted workshops with children, kept in touch with friends from other organizations we worked with in the field, took care of the cats and rabbits in the center. I had such a routine.”

While thinking about a photograph or a visual that has remained in my mind here, I realized that there was a picture in my mind about the general view. There is a picture in my mind about the time I lived in Adiyaman from the first year of the earthquake to 2025. It is like an oil painting. Containers stand out somewhere. We see piles a little closer; some of them are rubble waiting to be removed after controlled demolition, some of them are humid soil hills formed by excavations carried out for on-site transformation. There is dust in the atmosphere and the smell of food emanating from the containers. Finally, a person walking with his hands covering his mouth due to the dust cloud that has just risen.

“I thought of a magazine name called ‘Dream Magazine’. I thought there could be cultural games like Karagöz-Hacivat. In the science section, I could talk about objects in space like the Sun, Earth and Moon. I remembered this during the activities we did yesterday. I thought of drawing dreams as speech bubbles. I want science to be in the magazine. I love science class. I also want to surprise people with surprising information.” Zeynep (14)

TÜLAY DURMAZ & ZAHİDE GÖKSU

K11 Container City Residents

Tülay Durmaz: I am thirty-six years old, Öykü’s mother, a housewife. When I saw the ‘Hayat Bilgimiz’ magazine made by the children, I was very happy. When I saw Öykü’s poem there, I felt like the world. I believe she has achieved something. I think the same for the other children. I can say that these workshops were a change for all of us. Everything the children wrote caught my attention. I was very happy to see them trying to express themselves, express their feelings and thoughts, and present their dreams. My perspective on children has changed a little. Now I try to show more respect for their thoughts. From what I have read, all of their inner worlds have been revealed. All of the children had poems and pictures. When Öykü brought the magazine and showed it to me, we shared it with my wife, our loved ones, and our teacher. I believe it had a great impact on Öykü. In my opinion, this magazine gave Öykü some self-confidence. It did the same for me. I am happy for my daughter. She loves playing with the camera and writing. She is always trying to write something with a pen and paper in her hand. She is also talented in drawing, but I believe she will be very successful in poetry and composition. First they were happy, then we were happy. I hope it will continue.

“My perspective on children has changed a little. Now I try to show more respect for their thoughts. From what I have read, all of their inner worlds have been revealed.”

We performed a play when I was a child. I played a male role. There was sadness in the play when I played it. But we had a lot of fun with my girlfriend and our teachers while playing. It remained a beautiful memory for me. We are staying in a container city here. We have a beautiful tree as a work of art in the library: The ‘Tree of Love’ that children drew. I want everyone to participate in these activities you do.

Zahide Göksu : I am the mother of Yağmur, Damla and Zeynep. When I first looked at the magazine that the children published, I was very excited. Damla had written a poem in the magazine. When I read it, I felt joy and sadness together and my experiences came back to my mind, I was very impressed. It makes us proud that the children are engaged in such work. I liked that they wrote articles about all animals from ants to birds in the magazine. When the workshop time approaches, the children get excited and discuss among themselves what they will talk about in the workshop. They are constantly preparing something for the magazine. It was good for us too. With your help, the children got through the difficult times, thank God.

“In the workshops at ‘Hayat (Life) Park, we have fun, learn new things and develop. For example, today we did a cooking workshop. We lost many people in the earthquake. It was very sad. The buildings, the city center, workplaces, some schools were destroyed. Thanks to Dilan and Şevval, we seem to be forgetting the earthquake, but I think this is something we cannot forget. There is a lot of dust in Adıyaman. We need to be careful. I want people not to litter and to drive slowly. If I can, I want to make the world more beautiful.” Zerrin (9)

BASRİ FIRAT BAYRAKTAR (KAMUFLE)

Musician

I was born in 1988. I've been rapping for about twenty years. I've been involved in hip-hop culture for as long as I can remember. My foundation is rap, but I get to know and learn about different sounds, music, people and cities. This is how my life goes.

I wanted to come here right after the earthquake, but I didn't go because I thought we would cause trouble for people and become a hindrance. I didn't feel ready either. This desire came at a time like this. We wanted to write lyrics with the kids, make music, do something about DJing. Özge took her guitar, played, and we wrote a chorus with the kids. So there was a great interaction with the kids and the parents. The kids we spent time with had a great energy. It was a magical thing to be side by side with them, to perform art, to write lyrics. And this should continue.

“I wanted to come here right after the earthquake, but I didn't go because I thought we would cause trouble for people and become a hindrance. I didn't feel ready either. This desire came at a time like this. We wanted to write lyrics with the kids, make music, do something about DJing.”

I am far from what I dreamed of as a child, because I am still on Earth. I had dreams of being an astronaut or an athlete. Then I became a rapper. Instead of flying into space, dunking in the air or doing a nice overhead kick, I let my words and pen do the talking. In fact, I can take my mind to space with music. I have no regrets and I am very happy about rapping in many ways, I am glad I do it.

I don't know if it was because of my childhood, but back then everything was so colorful and bright for me. In the world I created in my head, all I wanted was to live forever with my parents. My classmates, my teachers, our neighborhood games, getting ice cream, riding skateboards, riding bikes in the neighborhood with friends... I thought my whole life would be like this. Whatever happened next, I don't remember much after high school. Time passed so quickly. Inevitably, life started to impose responsibilities. Everything was so pastel before, now it's like foggy gray. Still, there are things that keep me positive in the flow of life. We create our own changes in life by making music, going to concerts, and getting together with you. It feels good to get together with people and create changes as we breathe.

I think that things can get better as I slow down and focus on my own environment. I am now in favor of staying calm in life. That is why there is always hope for me, I have never lost hope. I have people I love around me, I gain new experiences. I think that I can reach out to the children here because I can meet good people.

“I think that things can get better as I slow down and focus on my own environment. I am now in favor of staying calm in life. That is why there is always hope for me, I have never lost hope.”

Even though life is a bit rough and difficult right now, I like to add color to things and apply the paints I have in my stash somewhere. Maybe if we start with our own environment and our small worlds while dreaming of good changes in the world, everything can be much more beautiful. Sometimes I am neutral, sometimes I am very competitive with myself. But when a person calms down, they say to themselves, “Go ahead.” It is nice to share experiences with other people.

“I want to be a brain surgeon when I grow up. I want to heal people. I love making subtle touches. Every person in the world has a life. You have to do your best to save that life. I think the weather will be worse in the future. There will be more wars. There is a lot of water in the world, but there is little drinkable water. There will be global warming. There will be no natural place left in the world. Maybe beautiful things will happen in other parts of the world.” Yağmur (12)

ALPER ŞEN

FİSA Children’s Right Center

Since the end of June 2023, I have been working as a consultant for the media workshop on behalf of the FİSA Children’s Rights Center in Adıyaman, in a living space consisting of containers where many civil society organizations in cooperation in the region such as Adıyaman Medical Chamber, KESK, and Eğitim-Sen carry out their work. We mostly hold media workshops in K11 Container City, which emphasize the empowering feature for children. We try to conduct these workshops with the contributions of adults who are experts in their fields and who care about pedagogical language. The first goal of the media workshops is to create tools that children who have been left alone with many problems in many areas after the earthquake can express themselves in order to provide a positive transformation in their lives. For this purpose, we carry out different studies from podcast workshops to video-camera workshops.

With the earthquake, our old knowledge also experienced a serious shake-up. We had to reconsider a significant portion of what we knew or what we learned from our previous experiences. In the workshops we held, a conviction emerged that if a new life and daily life was to be established, it would be in vain to do so with old bookish knowledge. Partly for this reason, we first questioned ourselves and what we knew and then went after new knowledge with the children after the earthquake. Instead of adults transferring what they know to children, we conduct studies in media workshops that will enable us to understand and feel our surroundings with visual thinking through new information that we will gain through stories and experiences.

“Instead of adults transferring what they know to children, we conduct studies in media workshops that will enable us to understand and feel our surroundings with visual thinking through new information that we will gain through stories and experiences.”

While discussing a new life order in the workshops, we needed to see where we were in their daily lives, as far as the children shared with us. Partly for this reason, the first media workshops we conducted with the children were spent together searching for an answer to the question “How is Life Going?” At this stage, the podcast study Deniz Türkeş conducted with the children in K11 Container City under this title was very instructive for us. When you feel the presence of a different deprivation and deficiency in every child and adult, you should not be gripped by a sense of helplessness, on the contrary, you should probably describe daily life in this way while trying to establish a new life with the excitement of being together.

Each child has lost something different with this earthquake. From having to give up very simple daily habits to losing loved ones, there are situations that we will try to understand and feel to the extent that they can share with us. Therefore, it is probably not easy to describe a single daily life. Nevertheless, each child's daily life is no longer the same; from the house they stay in to their friends, from the school they go to the games they play, each one tries to adapt to their new life by creating or being forced to create new habits. The idea of carrying out a production with children at regular intervals in media workshops, the search for developing a new habit in children with the affirmative language of art was one of the reasons for the emergence of the magazine 'Our Knowledge of Life'. When the children started to write articles in the magazine regularly, draw pictures and ask each other questions in video interviews, they had the opportunity to develop their visual thinking skills more and more each time, express themselves, experience abstract thinking, and producing metaphors in writing and images.

The topics or questions we determined for each issue of the magazine together with the children were as follows: 1. How is Daily Life Going on in the Container City? 2. What are Children's Rights? 3. What Kind of Environment/City/World Do We Live In? 4. What Kind of City and World Do We Dream of in the Future? 5. What is Art in Our Opinion? One of the reasons we determined these topics was to observe the transformation of children's conditions and emotional states after the earthquake under these topics and to disseminate children's words and thoughts during this process. Upon the children's request, we turned the first three issues of the magazine into a book in September 2004 and printed them. The children, the writers of the magazine, also distributed the magazines in their schools at K11 Container City. During this process, we also documented the work of the volunteers who came to Adıyaman with the children. In the festivals and exhibitions organized by the center, the children who participated in the media workshop were the ones who documented this process together with the adults. In the media and short film workshop we held with children at Hayat Park, the children made a video about the need to keep the park clean, with adults acting as workshop facilitators and children acting as directors and cameramen.

“The idea of carrying out a production with children at regular intervals in media workshops, the search for developing a new habit in children with the affirmative language of art was one of the reasons for the emergence of the magazine 'Our Knowledge of Life'.”

In the video camera workshops we conducted with children, our initial idea was to realize short films or documentaries that children would make. However, over time, discovering children's perception of 'seeing' with a camera became more prominent. When children's ages range from seven to thirteen, it is necessary to consider that the camera is also a fun game tool. The 'game of finding details around us with a camera' that we developed with children in the workshops also meant looking at our environment with eyes that could transform this environment. For this reason, we tried to keep the workshops with technical information as short as possible. It was important to obtain equipment that would be very practical to use, suitable for their hands, and heavy enough to carry, and to use equipment such as video cameras, audio recorders, and photo cameras regularly in order for them to develop their 'fine motor skills'.

On the one hand, showing that there are frames that children can change in a world where it is very difficult to change their surroundings were the first steps for children to become the directors of their own lives. Creating environments that would facilitate their discovery instead of explaining technical information to them, and witnessing the pride they felt when they set up and lifted the tripod on their own was very valuable.

I can say that I witnessed once again in the earthquake zone how necessary and important it is to document, along with keeping a record of the collective visual memory. Instead of any artistic production about the events, documenting the events and turning them into evidence, evaluating the images for social benefit, and not publicizing traumatic images should become priorities in these times. On the other hand, trying to document situations that will make you want to close your eyes involuntarily also means immortalizing this trauma. I had not anticipated that my heart would hurt this much while recording in cities destroyed by the earthquake in the last year. Nevertheless, anticipating that this record could become evidence makes recording necessary. If those who came to the earthquake zone to show solidarity did not record, there would probably be almost no evidence of all the rights violations that took place, other than the 'official records' and television footage. Because everything is somehow erased by force or by reactionary impulses. What would be more difficult to bear, beyond the pain experienced, would be for this process to continue in silence and fade away: "We are in such a bad and desperate situation that no one records our words or sees the need to document the situation we are experiencing." On the one hand, what you record may impose ethical responsibilities on you. Being able to be the voice and image of people struggling with their lives and pain is important in terms of making the heavy traumas experienced understandable to people far from the earthquake. People who lost their homes, relatives and jobs in the earthquake said that when they could not remember certain things, their memories were also erased a little with the earthquake. We are in search of new information that we need to replace the erased memory by documenting this whole process and solidarity. When I looked at the ruins in the neighborhoods of Adiyaman or Antakya, everything I knew about the question "What is a city?" seemed to have fallen into the void. When I compared old pictures with what I saw now in the middle of a destroyed city center, my heart was squeezed like everyone else. Not being able to answer the question "Where are we?" is a confusing destruction of memory, like being left in the dark in the daylight...

"We observed during this process that children who use cameras are given much more importance by adults and that their voices can be heard louder because they can create their own media products."

We observed during this process that children who use cameras are given much more importance by adults and that their voices can be heard louder because they can create their own media products. The events following the earthquake may have fallen off the agenda in these times. On the other hand, for a person who summarizes his experiences in one sentence by saying "I also lost my wife and two children", the situation can be more than forgetting the earthquake, it can also be like trying to forget his life before the earthquake. Starting to remember the events differently over time, the memory reproducing the past corresponds to another transformation.

In order to make the rights violations that are experienced visible by recording them with the language of visual thought, by making films, or to remind us of the good times without turning them into melancholy, it is necessary to first create mechanisms and all kinds of healing processes that will enable people to cope with their traumas. During these workshops, we witnessed how children created their own visual languages while recording what they saw over time. Therefore, during the media workshops, we can talk about multimedia products that emerged as children discovered the visual language with which they could express themselves rather than a production. These products were the clips of the astroturf tournament matches organized by FISA, an interview on children's rights or children documenting the flowers in the container city... Therefore, the magazine became a common representation area where all these productions existed on an equal level and where every child participating in the workshops had a page where they could express themselves with the media tool or information they wanted.

“During the media workshops, we can talk about multimedia products that emerged as children discovered the visual language with which they could express themselves rather than a production.”

This book and documentary, which compiles the experiences of adults and children who carry out the work of the FISA Children's Rights Center and contribute to the center, also includes examples of video work done by children in media workshops throughout this process.

“I want to study law in the future. Because this profession progresses on the path of justice. Being fair in life is a very good behavior. There is almost no justice in our lives. There are so many injustices and inequalities that people do to each other. I think that when I grow up, I will be able to find solutions to these. I want this very much. Everyone wants equality and justice in their lives. If we use our resources economically in the future, if our environment is kept clean, if global warming does not occur, Türkiye and Adıyaman can be a very beautiful place.” İklim (14)

ŞEVVAL YÜCEKAYA

FİSA Children's Right Center

I experienced the February 6th earthquake. I can never forget the first earthquake, the moment when my friend's house that I saw every day collapsed, the state of my own house after the earthquake. Search and rescue teams arrived after daylight. Our friends and neighbors were under the rubble. There was a building next door that collapsed on top of ours. They put the balcony rails together to try to save the people in that building. It was a very difficult time.

We were here for four days during the earthquake, two days we stayed at the airport waiting for them to pick us up. We were actually looking for a cry for help. Various WhatsApp groups were being created. AFAD and other aid organizations were being tagged on social media. We didn't know any civil society organizations other than AFAD before the earthquake. We were trying to establish a network on our own. We were trying to get a construction machine to where the debris was, because there were only a limited number of construction machines that came to help. There were streets where even construction machines couldn't enter. I left here four days after the earthquake. The only thing I felt was a terrible loneliness, a desperate search for help, and not being able to reach anything. I knew that people came in the first days after the earthquake, but they couldn't stay long. They had to wear warm clothes when they came here, it was raining, it was very cold. They came to help us, but since there was no sustainable progress, they also became victims of the earthquake and left.

“The only thing I felt was a terrible loneliness, a desperate search for help, and not being able to reach anything. I knew that people came in the first days after the earthquake, but they couldn't stay long.”

We came to see our house two weeks after the earthquake. We had our personal belongings inside. It was very risky, but we had to go in. Because we had some security in that house. There were heavy smells coming from everywhere. There were cats and dogs that we always fed in front of our building. They were gone now. Maybe they died, maybe that's why it smelled so much. There were still debris that had not been removed. There were families whose acquaintances could not be saved, whose bodies they could not even get, waiting by the debris and two weeks had passed since the earthquake. Then I did not come to Adıyaman for six or seven months. My friends who stayed here and who had gone out of town and returned because they could not stand it were trying to do something on their own.

I was trying to learn current developments from the Solidarity People Association in Adiyaman. We were going through a difficult process before the earthquake. The earthquake was another test for us. I lost my home. I lost many friends. Many young people are my age... We were trying to contact their families, but we didn't know what to say.

FISA Children's Rights Center has always been a very special institution for me. I knew FISA before, they were in Adiyaman after the earthquake and I had received their children's rights training. My field of study at university was classroom teaching. I was trying to integrate FISA's working style, approach and sensitivity to children into my own. Since we work based on rights and we care about children's participation and listening to children, their approach was special to me. After the earthquake, the university switched to an online term. When the university reopened after the online term, I returned to Adiyaman. I was thinking, "I have to do something, I have to be somewhere, I have to be useful to someone." The city was recovering. People were slowly settling in containers, tent cities were being removed. But I knew there were still deficiencies in these container cities and in the villages. That's why I was looking to volunteer in a civil society organization. During this search, I became an active volunteer for the Solidarity People Association for six months. We were involved in the village school renovation project.

Before going to village schools, we had to receive training on children in order to ensure that our communication with children was reliable and to develop a language suitable for this. FISA Children's Rights Center was also a civil society organization that advocated for children's rights. We met Ezgi Koman, Esin Koman and Ebru Ergin Çopur, who came to Adiyaman for children's rights training. We attended their training as university students. Later, on November 24, 2024, there was a teachers' meeting in Adiyaman. We had a conversation with Ebru again at this meeting. I started to follow FISA's work with curiosity. What was being done excited me. Doing workshops with children, doing them good, and even being able to reach a child was a great thing for me. Since I knew that they were following a good path in this regard, I was curiously examining their work. Later, I also joined FISA Children's Rights Center's work in Adiyaman. The current process, the children we work with, the feedback from the container cities and the events and meetings, everything that is current is going great for me.

"If the students and teachers in the faculty of education did what FISA CRC is doing now, both an accumulation would emerge and an educational preparation would be made for future disasters. In such a case, a plan would also be made regarding who can reach whom."

There are some applications in the academic field under the title of 'alternative school applications for children', such as creative thinking, art branches that we will offer them to express themselves. If the students and teachers in the faculty of education did what FISA CRC is doing now, both an accumulation would emerge and an educational preparation would be made for future disasters. In such a case, a plan would also be made regarding who can reach whom.

Here, we do some workshops that allow children to express themselves and establish a trusting relationship with us. I would like such workshops to be integrated into faculties of education. We mostly see theoretical information at school. There is no alternative out-of-school practices section. I can recommend these working methods of FISA CRC as a model for faculties of education.

One of the methods we developed to include children in their communication in the workshops was to determine a focal point among the children. When we go to K11 Container City, some children greet us at the door and say, for example, "Yagmur and Damla will not come today. They went there with their mother." They actually establish a news network among themselves. In other words, this is not only the case in K11, but also in K13 and Hayat (Life) Park. Before we conducted the workshop with children between the ages of thirteen and eighteen in K13, a girl helped us visit each house one by one to reach all the children. Thus, we determined a focal point and formed our group of children in that age group. Determining a focal point or persons to include children in the communication process before and after the workshop was one of the successful methods I have seen in these studies.

“Here, we do some workshops that allow children to express themselves and establish a trusting relationship with us. I would like such workshops to be integrated into faculties of education.”

Among the dozens of things I couldn't forget in two years, three moments affected me the most. I witnessed someone being pulled out of the rubble after the earthquake. I don't forget that image, it was the image I remember of Adiyaman. The first day I came to FISA CRC is still in my mind as a photograph, and the first workshop we went to in K13. I will never forget my excitement that day.

“My days are fun here. We play games with my friends, sit on benches, go to the library and study. I love my new friends. It gets a little boring inside the container. We used to have separate rooms at home. Now we have to go out when we have guests. Since my room is large, I could pack my bag easily. There are books everywhere here. All the buildings around us have been demolished and when they are demolished, dust spreads everywhere. We have to get into the containers.” Sevda (14)

GİZEM KIYGI & İPEK KAY

‘City Detective’ Group

İpek Kay: I am an interior designer. I also illustrate children's books. A few years ago, I completed my doctorate in playground design. Then I started producing games for children. And at some point, Gizem and I crossed paths. We did a few different workshops in Istanbul. After the earthquake, the idea of creating a park with the FISA Children's Rights Center and children in Adiyaman developed. After this project came to the City Detective group, I joined the team. Thus, I started to take part in this design process.

Gizem Kıygi: I am an urban planner. I studied at Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University. I loved my profession. Urban planning can be a difficult profession to understand. We ask our friends in our workshops, “What do you think an urban planner does?” There are many houses, roads, playgrounds, hospitals, forests in the city. We decide where these buildings or living spaces should be by looking at a map. On the other hand, it seemed a little strange to plan and make decisions by just looking at a map in a city where thousands of people live. That's why I started working on the concept of participatory design.

“We can define child participation in design as the design of the spaces that children want in line with their needs. This process is also realized with many games, by designing together, by drawing pictures, by expressing our ideas in various ways.”

Participatory design is a fun concept. People living in any place, big or small, can be involved in an architectural design, for example, a park design. These are the processes where participants express their ideas and needs during the design and construction of the space. And it is a fun process, we experience the processes of generating ideas and making decisions together not only by talking, but also by playing games. We can define child participation in design as the design of the spaces that children want in line with their needs. This process is also realized with many games, by designing together, by drawing pictures, by expressing our ideas in various ways.

İpek Kay: We came to Adiyaman in September 2023. It was important for us to design a park with children. First, we designed a three-day workshop. In this workshop, we were together with different children between the ages of 7 and 18. We first asked them what kind of playground they wanted here.

When asking the children about the park they dreamed of, we wanted to follow a path where they could share their experiences with us, and for this reason, at first, each child tried to tell us about their dream playground with pictures. Even though we all play together on the playground, there are different encounters. We also saw these encounters in the workshop. On the second day of the workshop, the children made collages using the papers with the playground elements we prepared. It was a process in which they explained what should and should not be in the park, and what kind of a game they wanted to create together. Finally, they made such a game setup by extending this two-dimensional environment to three dimensions. These workshops actually told us the following about children: The only need of children is not just to play. Because children can play anywhere. The bottom of the table can also become a home in an instant. We saw that it was important for them to establish a space with solidarity and sharing. There were also older children who did not play with the park staff. We also saw their need for play. On the one hand, we learned about children's color knowledge and preferences in all these pictures, collages and models.

Gizem Kırıcı: When we say park, there are actually unlimited possibilities. A park can have an ornamental pool, very large slides, and a Ferris wheel. However, we may not have the financial means to do everything and our space may be limited. We had to discuss these requests and possibilities among ourselves in group work. This is why group work is very important in participatory design processes. How can we create a common request when everyone wants something different? We tried to make this process work. The area of our park was small, but if we put our needs as accurately as possible, it was possible to have a park where we could create very beautiful play areas. Therefore, we created a park design with the children by discussing what we could and could not do in our workshops. Then, the physical design process of the space began.

“The only need of children is not just to play. Because children can play anywhere. The bottom of the table can also become a home in an instant. We saw that it was important for them to establish a space with solidarity and sharing.”

What did we learn from these workshops as designers and people who also do this job in their professional lives? First of all, our friends who participated in this workshop need more ‘gross motor skills’, which is climbing, jumping, and leaping, which is a game where we can use our large muscles and bones. We learned that everyone here loves playing together. All of the designs the children made were aimed at playing together. Therefore, we tried to create different spaces in our park where we can play together.

Another feature of the park is that different age groups can come together. A seven-year-old child may not have the same needs as a seventeen-year-old child. But that doesn't mean they can't play in the same place. Therefore, another purpose of the park design was aimed at young people and was to create areas where they can sit, chat, sometimes dance, eat sunflower seeds, drink tea or cola and spend time. In a part of the park, in line with the ideas we received from the children, we tried to create a group of equipment that includes games where our friends between the ages of seven and ten can slide, jump, climb and swing.

İpek Kay: Interior architecture education is a bit like architecture education. In the projects you do during the education process, you mostly determine the rules. You are given a design problem and given a place. But you decide on the project you will do and its users or the rules of the design. In studies with children, you do not determine the rules. Since we especially try to advance the design process by listening to children as much as possible, what I learned was this: Children are very aware of their experiences and can easily put these experiences into words. They can express the things they cannot put into words with very beautiful pictures.

When you can give them enough time by talking, writing, drawing, when you can spare time for them, you see that the words they will say about the place they will live in are very powerful. I think the difficult thing for us was to cope with that sense of responsibility. Can this really be the place the children want? Because even though there were missing parts, thanks to the dialogue we established during the workshop process, we were able to create an environment where we could talk about the reasons for these shortcomings. At the opening of the park, we heard the words “This is not enough”, “This is exactly how I drew it!” but we also saw that the shortcomings did not make them unhappy. This was a learning for me. This was an experience of being able to communicate.

Gizem Kıyıcı: My experiences with participatory design in my professional life or at school were mostly at the neighborhood and mass housing scale. Although this study was like a continuation of participatory design practices, I experienced the construction process of a playground for the first time here. The implementation phase was very instructive for me. Because actually, participation did not end with the workshops. We had friends with whom we worked in the workshops.

“Here, we see that the places we observe, try to design by foreseeing something or gathering information can be used in completely different ways. This excites me a lot. In fact, the process never ends.”

There were also other children around the park. While we were building the park, they followed this process day by day and made suggestions. In our conversations, I was particularly impressed by how well the issue of child safety was understood in such a short time and how they gave me feedback. Two days after the slide was installed, Fatma, one of our neighbors, came and tested the slide, telling us the safe and unsafe places. We started to see our playing habits after the park was built.

There are two sides to the process that was instructive for me. One was before the park was built. After the park was built, that intensive learning process actually continues. Because children's playing habits change with the park. Here, we see that the places we observe, try to design by foreseeing something or gathering information can be used in completely different ways. This excites me a lot. In fact, the process never ends.

İpek Kay: When the park was designed, it was clear on paper which spaces would be used by which age groups. However, later on, due to both the dimensions we determined and the materials, all age groups started to use every space. It was also fun to try to figure out why. For example, if we had made the slide play elements much narrower, that space itself probably wouldn't have been able to turn into another play area. It turned into an area where older children could also use it, where they could meet and play group games. We continue to explore these.

“When the park was designed, it was clear on paper which spaces would be used by which age groups. However, later on, due to both the dimensions we determined and the materials, all age groups started to use every space.”

Gizem Kıyıcı: In the workshop, we asked the children what they wanted the name of this park to be. There were many suggestions such as lemon, rainbow... Then, the very exciting suggestion of 'Hayat (Life) Park' came and this name excited everyone. Thus, the name of the park became 'Hayat Park'.

“I want to be a football player when I grow up. I love playing football. I play in the midfield, Galatasaray's Torreira is my favorite football player. He is tough and a hard fighter. Adıyaman will be very beautiful in the future because new houses are being built. All the workplaces are gone, I want new places to open. I think the weather will be warmer in the future. Alper Gezeravcı from Türkiye became an astronaut and went to space. I would like to go too, but it is very difficult.” Çağan (10)

NAİM AKTAN

FİSA Children's Right Center

On the night of February 6, 2023, I received a notification on my phone. It said there was an earthquake centered in Maraş. I hadn't checked the news yet, I hadn't learned that it was a very large earthquake. Then another notification came. The second earthquake... As the images started to appear on news sites and social media, I began to realize how serious the events were. I understood that a mobilization would begin from all sides. I had to do something, too. We went to the municipalities and started to prepare aid packages. I had no previous experience working with children who had experienced disasters. But I had previously taken part in a six-month project with children who were victims of violence. I could more or less guess what kind of emotional state traumatized children were in. But I can say that I applied most of the things here after observing them firsthand and progressed by building on them.

“I remember my entrance to Adıyaman very clearly. Because it reminded me of a city that emerged from World War II.”

In the early days of the earthquake, I thought that psychological first aid could be important and functional due to my profession, so I tried to attend trainings on this subject with the idea of how I could be more equipped. Some reports were published. There were mobile institutions such as the Turkish Psychologists Association in the earthquake region. With these reports, I tried to see the picture of this place and follow the situation. Then, I went to Malatya as a volunteer with a group of psychologist friends in the third week of the earthquake. There, I actually observed the situation that children were in for the first time. I did not stay in Malatya for very long, and then, with the impressions I gained in Malatya, I went to Adıyaman and participated in the work of the FİSA Children's Rights Center.

I remember my entrance to Adıyaman very clearly. Because it reminded me of a city that emerged from World War II. I felt like I had entered Berlin after 1945, remembering the images in the documentaries I watched. The half-damaged buildings and desolation I saw in the neighborhood at the entrance gave me a dark feeling. In July, I first observed the works and the surroundings. Then I decided that I could work and started working. There was a film screening at K11 Container City. My first visit to K11 was the evening of that screening. The first children we met were the children we later held workshops with for a long time.

The people in the container city had just moved there and did not know each other well yet. The children who came to the workshops had a feeling of “I wonder how I started living with these people”. Any disagreement was sometimes tried to be resolved with violence. I can say that there was an anxious atmosphere. This changed a lot later. Now they are all children who produce work together, publish magazines, and develop workshop ideas.

The project was created as a structured study with children and women as a psycho-social support project. The construction of a center with a meeting room, library, office, media workshop and a proper ground was planned. This center was created on an area determined by the needs that emerged after coming and observing in advance, and by meeting with the authorities and children. When I started working, the center was still being built. All the people who were in the normal flow of life were actually disaster victims here. Life seemed to have stopped. Whatever comes to mind when you say a normal neighborhood or city, Adıyaman was not like that back then. What kind of life was it in the past? A person I met in K11 Container City had lost almost all of his friends, he even gave their number. He just said, “Thank you for coming, you are the only person we can talk to.” He needed to remember the beautiful feelings the past had given him. When you meet older people in an average Anatolian or Kurdish city, you can guess that the music they listen to is the folk songs of the dengbej. Thus, in a short time, we started to sing Şakiro’s poems together in a spontaneous way. This actually corresponds to the method called on-site and immediate intervention. You support the state of well-being. At that time, such an intervention is constructive. We did not do anything extraordinary. But the fact that we came from outside and were there was important in terms of supporting their state of well-being.

“The workshops were fun. When we prepared for a workshop and went there, we would think of something else to do with the children because the electricity was out. Therefore, the project provided us with a certain amount of freedom.”

During this process, I tried to bring my outside self here. There is a metaphor; you should put the mask on yourself first, then on the person next to you. That’s why a few days after I started settling in the container, I bought a carpet and a desk for my room. I had a routine of cleaning my room almost every day. This was good for me. I tried to do regular morning exercises by walking, cycling or doing exercises inside the room. This helped me start the day more motivated. Gathering together by the fire, sometimes playing instruments, listening to our friends’ Adıyaman experiences nourished us because it strengthened the feeling that we were not alone here.

The feedback we received was an important source of motivation. We generally received positive feedback from families and children. The workshops were fun. When we prepared for a workshop and went there, we would think of something else to do with the children because the electricity was out. Therefore, the project provided us with a certain amount of freedom. It allowed us to work more comfortably with the children. Of course, going to our hometown or different cities for six days every six weeks allowed us to start our work more energetically when we returned here.

The indoor football tournament we organized with the boys in K11 and K18 Container Cities contributed to the children socializing by doing sports. Our friend from Adıyaman, Serkan Demir, from another NGO, was a football coach and referee. When he said he could be a referee in indoor football matches, our job became easier. We learned a lot from there, and the children did too. The most important thing was to learn together how to have a good time while playing a fair game, regardless of the outcome.

At first, when we started talking about the 'Our Knowledge of Life' magazine in media workshops, we were talking about something abstract. But when the magazine was finally put into the hands of the children, with their own names on it, it is necessary to mention that their self-confidence was strengthened. We also received similar feedback from their parents. There were children who said, "Our self-confidence came back after you started the workshops."

"When the children came to the center and saw the growing trees, they asked with curiosity: Were these trees there before, or did you plant them?"

From now on, the experiences we have gained in the possibility of encountering similar situations will perhaps show themselves better in the future. I will have some unchanging methods, for example, I will keep in mind that I need to do sports and take good care of myself, and that I need to put the mask on myself first. Of course, I think this is a valid method for everyone.

There were no trees in the container cities. There were no green areas, or they had dried out from the heat. We bought saplings from a florist, thinking about how we could create an environment where the children could breathe a little when they arrived. The ground was concrete. We set up a digger, carried soil, and laid soil to plant the trees. We tried to choose a lot of resilient saplings. No matter how much we watered and cared for them, some withered. The ones that did not wither continued to grow. When the children came to the center and saw the growing trees, they asked with curiosity: "Were these trees there before, or did you plant them?"

There are many images left here that I will never forget. I saw one of them for the first time when I was entering Adıyaman. There was a light burning inside the half-demolished building at the very beginning of the third ring road and a silhouette passing by the window. There were people living in the house. I could not place that image in my mind. Why do people live and continue to live in a building that is about to collapse?

“When I grow up, the thing I want to do most is to be a movie actor. Because I love being in movies. Acting in movies while the cameras are filming you is very interesting to me. I think the world will be cleaner in the future. They won't build houses higher anymore.” Gülbahar (12)

BARIŞ IŞIK

Mordem Art Center

Although we are an earthquake country, and disaster scenarios and conspiracy theories are always on the agenda of the country, we did not expect the magnitude of the February 6, 2023 Earthquake to be this large. Although we, as Mordem Art Center, were affected by the earthquake in Diyarbakır, our first reflex was to seek an answer to the question of “What can we do?” based on previous experiences. The question of “What will happen to children and young people?” was especially important to us. Our space was a single-story building and we had built it ourselves in 2017-18. It was both an association building and an art center. Since we had built it ourselves, we were sure of the structure. But we still called experts between the first and second earthquakes and they quickly checked the building. Immediately after the experts confirmed the strength of the building, we made an announcement and approximately forty families affected by the earthquake stayed in our center for almost a month. During this entire process, we were discussing what could be done with people and institutions we had worked with and knew before.

When ISIS attacked Mosul and Sinjar before, refugee camps were set up in Şırnak, Batman, Diyarbakır and Mardin for Yazidis who had escaped the massacre. However, if we compare this experience with the earthquake, the impact area of the earthquake was very wide and it did not seem possible for us to carry out the solidarity systematically on our own. Many institutions had to come together and form a large-scale organization in the region extending from Malatya to Hatay. Therefore, our first step was to create a common platform with these institutions and to seek ways to act together. We launched an open call with forty-three institutions and three independent artists. We also went to the field during the open call. We prepared the report consisting of the impressions we gained and the information we received from the cities affected by the earthquake to the rural areas before the end of the first month after the earthquake.

“The Children's Art Area Platform, which we coordinate as Mordem, was also established during this process. Independent artists and seventy-six institutions from Türkiye and abroad contributed to this platform.”

The Children's Art Area Platform, which we coordinate as Mordem, was also established during this process. Independent artists and seventy-six institutions from Türkiye and abroad contributed to this platform.

After the earthquake, many institutions and individuals were coming to Diyarbakır for solidarity, but when we saw the deficiencies and needs in other places, we started to direct institutions and individuals to these places. What we meant by this need was this: We knew that children had the right to access education, culture and art activities according to articles 29, 30, 31 and 32 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and unfortunately, it was not possible for children to access these rights, especially in rural areas affected by the earthquake.

When we decided to conduct these studies in the earthquake region, we set out with this need and first focused on rural areas. None of us had any expertise in earthquakes or disaster situations. We had experience as a team in the solidarity work after the Yazidi Massacre. However, this experience was not the same as the magnitude of the disaster experienced in the earthquake. The situations of those living in the city and those living in the countryside were almost equalized. Everyone had experienced a disaster, and this common disaster had somehow left everyone in the same condition, and had reduced all opportunities to zero.

“The situations of those living in the city and those living in the countryside were almost equalized. Everyone had experienced a disaster, and this common disaster had somehow left everyone in the same condition, and had reduced all opportunities to zero.”

Before going to the field, we all received training under twelve headings, from experts to volunteers, such as psychological first aid and what to do in cases of abuse. Some of these headings included topics we did not know. As artists, we had information about what to do when working with children in the field, but we also needed to receive other training to apply this to individuals who had experienced trauma after a disaster. The institutions that are members of the platform we created and specialized in psychology provided this training with various training modules and supported our friends who would go to the field. After this training, we started working to organize workshops, games and shows with children in Adıyaman, Hatay, Antep Nurdağı, İslahiye, Maraş, Pazarcık and Nurhak. I can say that we have reached approximately ten thousand children as a result of these efforts.

We were carrying out all these works as a reflex. We started working after the second week of the earthquake in Adıyaman. We first carried out a study in Adıyaman Narlıkuyu. A shelter and shelter area was formed and we tried to design children's areas there with tents and trees according to the conditions at that time. We started to do various workshops with children here.

After the disaster, institutions and associations working in the field of psychology were there with the best of intentions and were trying to do something. At this stage, we need to mention two problems we observed. First, we thought that there was a point that was missed in all these works. This was the biggest reason why we insisted on implementing art works on the platform we created. After the destruction, people needed psychosocial support. However, there is a difference between providing psychosocial support to a child and making that child able to receive this support, and this problem can be solved with art.

We discussed this with many social workers and psychologists in every field we went to. What pushed us to work actively and continuously with the FISA Children's Rights Center was the right approach of the FISA CHM for us at this stage. Perhaps no one, no institution had such a large post-disaster work experience, but FISA was an institution that approached the process correctly for us. For this reason, it was the organization we worked with in the field for the longest time and felt comfortable with each other when handing over a study. We saw many institutions working in the field and sometimes we observed different deficiencies in psychosocial support work. When we talked about psychosocial support through art, not many institutions knew what this meant at first.

Another problem we witnessed after the disaster was that we had difficulty reaching earthquake victims in the organizations and areas established by AFAD. AFAD subjected every institution and volunteer who wanted to work in their field to a long bureaucratic process. We had different methods to overcome this. For example, we were holding workshops in KESK's solidarity area in Pazarcık and right across from this area was AFAD's tent city. Since we announced our activities and workshops everywhere, children from the tent city across from us would also join our work. Or, we would join the work there as volunteers who were cooperated with by the institution on the initiative of individuals and institutions that had permission to enter the tent city.

“We saw many institutions working in the field and sometimes we observed different deficiencies in psychosocial support work. When we talked about psychosocial support through art, not many institutions knew what this meant at first.”

FISA Children's Rights Center was one of these institutions. We did not have a rule such as entering any field with the name or logo of Mordem. Therefore, we were able to solve many of the problems we encountered by thinking practically with our colleagues we collaborated with in the field.

When we established this platform, we had the following observation at the first meeting: People really went to the field with intense participation in the first days of the earthquake and tried to do something there. This was a situation that generally occurs after every disaster. However, we had concerns that the work would not be beneficial unless they stayed in the field for a long time and that short-term work could sometimes turn into abuse. Some institutions did not even last six months in the field. You go to the field and work in a suitable area and design a space. While designing the space, you offer the child something with your stance and presence. And after six months, maybe you have to leave because your budget or project does not cover that much time. I do not blame the institutions at this stage. For example, we initially had the idea of establishing three different permanent areas. However, while preparing the field report and after carrying out these studies, we came to the conclusion that we should not conduct a permanent study. Once we settled in that area, we would have to stay there for a very long time. However, if one day we could not create a budget for these studies and had to leave, we would have abused all the children in the area. Therefore, when it was necessary to cooperate with institutions that we knew were permanent, we decided to work in AFAD's areas as well.

Ultimately, our goal was to reach the children there and give them the right direction. Like everyone else in the field, we wanted to work with great emotion and dedication and do something. However, many institutions were not aware that short-term work would cause various psychological problems and even traumas over time. I say this as someone who has actively worked in more than ninety areas.

At this stage, I would like to tell you about an example that we find problematic. We were going to take over the work of an institution that was working in an area where refugees were densely populated for a few days. Up until now, we have avoided conceptualizing our work as ‘art therapy’ and defining it as an area of expertise. A definition such as ‘assisting with psycho-social support through art’ would, in our opinion, be a more accurate expression of the work we were doing. However, work was being carried out in this area with such expert concepts. When we asked the employees of this institution how they communicated with the refugees, they said that there was an eight-year-old girl in the camp who knew both Turkish and Arabic and that she was the interpreter of the workshops. If this situation developed spontaneously and emerged at the child’s request, it may be normal. However, if that child is the person who is contacted every time there is a need for translation, that child becomes a worker and this situation turns into a problem where their knowledge is exploited. We witnessed that while such an important issue is being treated carelessly, on the other hand, using being in a disaster area for the visibility of their institution is a very problematic situation.

In our joint work with FISA, before starting the workshops, we would consult with our friends at the FISA Children’s Rights Center to see if we were doing each stage correctly. I remember asking Ezgi Koman in our first joint work whether there was a social worker working in the field who was known by the children. Because we did not want to work with children without a social worker who had regular contact with the children. As a result, we were strangers to the children. We had the opportunity to work comfortably with FISA CRC because they alleviated our concerns. We also experienced such positive collaborations with the Hatay Solidarity Association and the Karaçay Collective.

“During this time, we tried different methods to not leave our work dependent on our budget, to be able to go to the field continuously and to spread our work as much as we could.”

Our work in Nurhak was also interesting. There, a young man born in Nurhak who wanted to be the mayor of Nurhak in the future introduced us to all the children. All the children knew him and that young man brought all the children together for the workshop. We established such beautiful relationships throughout this process. There were also people in the field who were there with all their might.

During this time, we tried different methods to not leave our work dependent on our budget, to be able to go to the field continuously and to spread our work as much as we could. We determined four cities affected by the earthquake: Adıyaman, Maraş, Hatay and Diyarbakır. We aimed to strengthen the field by providing training on art works that will help psycho-social support to psychologists, social workers, civil society workers and teachers in these cities.

It didn't make much sense for someone from outside to constantly come to the field as an 'expert'. Based on situations like the 'translator' example I gave above, we shared the issues that could be problematic and our concerns in these trainings. After we left, people might think, "They have also appointed psychologists to our charge", but we had to explain to each individual working with children in these trainings as much as we could how different dimensions of abuse could be and how children should be approached. Even an assistant in our team who would go to the field to do any work would not start working without completing all that training. This aspect of the work was an important point for us.

Over time, we realized the relevance of our work and how useful it was. In response to the concern of "How will we transfer this knowledge if such a disaster occurs again in the future and there is no place like Mordem?", we continued our trainer training program regularly in these four cities. In 2024, we provided various trainings on drama-based music, fairy tale therapy, movement therapy, puppet making workshop and visual arts to eighty-two people in these four cities as the Mordem team. We provided trainer trainings on awareness and workshops with children, especially individuals with special development, to the ATTA Festival group. We prepared a joint project with the Troupe Courage team from the Netherlands to strengthen the field. Another partner of this project was the Psychology and Theater departments of Kadir Has University. All of the workshop modules we created were evaluated step by step by two psychologists - one as a workshop participant and the other as an external observer - under the supervision of theater teachers and were approved by the university. The experiences we gained were transformed into workshop modules with a flexible structure, from the construction of the psychological background of the study to the feedback forms prepared for each section, that can be easily applied by people interested in art and psychology or those who have adopted this profession.

“Over time, we realized the relevance of our work and how useful it was. In response to the concern of “How will we transfer this knowledge if such a disaster occurs again in the future and there is no place like Mordem?”

When we first started the process, we focused on doing the right and healthy things, but now we have a guide of approximately two hundred and fifty pages on how a workshop module should be designed and its psychosocial support dimension. "What do you want to get from a community, what are your expectations from the community? How do you design your work and workshops according to these expectations? Is there anything you want to discover in that community, a situation you want to direct the community to?" By quickly applying those techniques, we created a guide that could answer many questions like these and identify various problems of that community. This guide was actually the experience we gained throughout the process. I would like to give an example of this. While working in the field, we noticed a problem with a girl. We were not psychologists, clinical psychologists or social workers. But since we worked with children a lot in our studies, when we observed all the behaviors of the child, we realized that there was a problem. However, we could not determine what the problem was. We do not have such competence, so to speak, it is not our place. We did not go into the field for such a purpose. For these reasons, we were constantly working with different experts, from clinical psychologists to social workers.

When we were stuck, we would somehow reach out to them and express the problems. We told them that there was such a situation. What we saw was that this eight-year-old girl was actively participating in all the workshops. However, she was not behaving like a child, but like an adult, and at some points she was blocking communication. We explained our observations and our concerns that there might be an abuse situation or something else to our expert friends in detail and asked for help on this issue. Our friends first prepared a survey for us that included detailed questions about the family. We somehow applied this survey to two or three families in that tent city. We did not announce the situation to anyone so that it would not be noticed.

Our friends then asked us to draw a picture for that child. We had this picture drawn during the workshop and sent it to our expert friends. The women friends who conducted the survey sent the notes they took during their interviews with the mother and father. All of this was happening in four or five hours and we had sent all the data. The next morning, the two institutions we wanted to get their opinions from came to the field and said that there was nothing left for us. Because there were very serious signs that the girl child might have been abused. This was an unforgettable incident for me in that field. Perhaps it was one of the dozens of situations that we had not noticed. Then the process of taking the child under protection and removing her from the family began. You can also come across problems that are not as traumatic in the field. When we observed that a child was being subjected to violence, we would inform the social workers in the field that there was such a problem and make referrals for the family to be interviewed or for the necessary steps to be taken.

“We learned many things during this process and incorporated the practices we did into the curriculum by collaborating with the university.”

These situations actually showed us how critically important our work was. We may not have the ability to psychologically analyze a picture or determine the situation with a survey. But the methods and observations we used in our work were effective in determining that there was a problem. Such studies emerged as a result of new information we learned in training. We learned many things during this process and incorporated the practices we did into the curriculum by collaborating with the university. Now we have a curriculum that can be applied after a disaster.

When I think about what happened during these two years, so many images come to my mind. You experience everything very intensely in the field or you witness many things and naturally this affects you. Especially in the early days when many negative things could happen at any time, the lack of security in the tent areas set up independently worried us. I have a little girl and we also experienced the earthquake in Diyarbakır seriously, although it was not like Adıyaman or Maraş, and there was some destruction.

In the first weeks, we witnessed people being pulled out from under the rubble. After a while, every time I fell asleep, I had dreams that I was under the rubble of a house in Adıyaman and waiting to be rescued. There were times when I received professional support on this issue. Sometimes, telling can cause you to relive that trauma.

These were emotional states that negatively affected me and our team, but on the other hand, when we visited the same field several times, we were overjoyed to observe the positive transformations we mediated. When we held the first workshop with FISA Children's Rights Center in K11, we worked with approximately one hundred and ten children. At first, we only went there to do a puppet workshop. We went to each workshop with at least six or seven people, and each of us had a different task. We had not yet moved on to the process of having the children play with their own puppets. Therefore, at the end of the puppet workshop, we expected each child to produce their own puppet and leave. Our aim was for the children to better express themselves, their experiences, stories and testimonies through those puppets.

The children were initially tense due to the trauma they had experienced. Especially the children aged twelve and thirteen saw themselves as adults. Because they were either taking care of their siblings or taking on a responsibility. This is often the tendency of that age group at such a time. We observed this in the refugees who came after the Yazidi Massacre.

While we were finishing the puppet making workshop in K11 and packing up, the children came to us and said, "No, you can't go, we prepared a play. You will watch this play." We adjusted the lighting and created a stage by spreading a cloth on a table. The children staged a few plays with their puppets in groups, supporting each other, and we watched all the plays together with the children. This was an unexpected moment and made us very happy.

“A puppet is a personality that the child can portray by pouring out his/her inner thoughts, a space of thoughts and feelings that the puppet tells instead of the child telling them. We were making simple puppets, our puppets were actually wooden spoons made of one eyebrow, two eyes, hair and a dress.”

A puppet is a personality that the child can portray by pouring out his/her inner thoughts, a space of thoughts and feelings that the puppet tells instead of the child telling them. We were making simple puppets, our puppets were actually wooden spoons made of one eyebrow, two eyes, hair and a dress. But their function was very important. The children were assigning a meaning to it and were making the puppet say what they could not say based on the meaning they assigned.

Our friends who provide psychosocial support services could reach the child's world through the puppet's conversations and could figure out a method for intervening in the problems. We had also learned this from the feedback from the FISA CRC team. The child who had never spoken at all was suddenly making the puppet talk in such a way that he started to pour out everything he had inside through the puppet. These were very nice moments and motivated us. We were learning everything from the field. After the earthquake, we had also started to prepare a gender policy document. After creating a certain draft, we shared this document with our team. An LGBTI+ individual from the team suggested adding an article to this document stating that we do not have the right to assign gender to anyone inside or outside the institution. We liked this suggestion very much and we completed this policy document together. Then we continued our work in the earthquake zone.

Our friend, who suggested adding this article to the gender policy document, witnessed two children arguing about the gender of the puppets while she was taking care of the children in the puppet making workshop in the field and was eagerly waiting for the outcome of the discussion. After a while, the children came to our friend and asked her about the subject they had been arguing about. Our friend gave the puppets a gender so that the children would end the discussion and start playing with the puppets, and the children ended the discussion and started playing. Then our friend criticized herself: "I made a mistake. I could have said that it was just a puppet."

**“When we had the children make the puppets,
it didn't matter to us whether they were human or
gendered. That puppet could be an alien or an animal.
Therefore, there are unlimited possibilities.”**

When we had the children make the puppets, it didn't matter to us whether they were human or gendered. That puppet could be an alien or an animal. Therefore, there are unlimited possibilities. What was valuable was how the child portrayed them in the world. Because they determined and made everything about the puppet themselves. The children asked us about the gender of the puppets in every workshop. We would say, "It's a puppet and your puppet. You decide what it is. It can take on whatever character you want." Our friend later wrote a long article in which he described in detail the situation he experienced and where he made a mistake, even though he had suggested the rule himself. We gained many different experiences like this, and each one was more valuable than the other.

When the workshops were over, we would often take a photo in almost the same style. Each child would hold their own puppet to their face and pose like that. Therefore, the puppets were visible, not the children. We had also discovered this method in a workshop we held in a village in Adıyaman. In fact, the important thing was the process, not finishing something. Like continuing to move forward no matter what...

“There are many robberies here, thieves, people who do bad things. I want these to decrease. If people harm nature in the future, bad things can happen. People are not organized and tidy, they throw garbage on the ground. If we treat nature well, the world and Adiyaman can be very beautiful.” Hüseyin (10)

YASİR AKTOPRAK

Art Instructor

I am from Adiyaman. I am also an earthquake victim, we were able to get out of the demolitions. We had to leave the city shortly after and went to Bodrum. It was very difficult for us to do something in Adiyaman at that time. We stayed in areas created by public institutions and the people of Bodrum for solidarity purposes. Artists were coming to where we were and working with us. While I was participating in these works, I decided that we needed to do these kinds of workshops with children in Adiyaman. For this reason, when I returned to Adiyaman, I started to do art workshops with children.

I have witnessed my father's work with civil society organizations since I was little. My father was the president of some associations in Adiyaman. After the earthquake, all civil society organizations in Adiyaman carried out solidarity activities. We organized the first aid truck to go to Adiyaman in the civil society organization my father was the president of. Therefore, I have always been familiar with civil society activities.

We have overcome these processes together with the children. After the acute period after the earthquake in Adiyaman, we are in a phase where we, as adults, need to support the children affected by this disaster. My friends and I graduated from the art department of the university and we were aware that art production was important to us and that we could share what we knew with children and spread it. Therefore, we were looking for channels to work with children. After the earthquake in Adiyaman, areas were created for this work to be done. Thus, as a team, we first started to organize art workshops with children in the villages.

“We have overcome these processes together with the children. After the acute period after the earthquake in Adiyaman, we are in a phase where we, as adults, need to support the children affected by this disaster.”

In our working method, we did not have a program such as going somewhere once. We took care to carry out all these studies within an educational program. We went to a village at least four times a week and organized workshops with children to express their experiences, thoughts, feelings through art and to feel better. For this reason, art is also a special communication and self-expression tool for us.

We aimed to use this feature of art with my friends and as a support tool that everyone adds something from themselves. Art is a very subjective means of expression. That's why I love art. Since I could work on my own and not be dependent on anyone, art production was good for me. But when I started working with children, I could no longer draw pictures on my own. Drawing with children and seeing that this work has a special contribution to the children makes me very happy.

Children are not like adults. They are more withdrawn than adults and cannot express themselves in such times of disaster. Even if they express their feelings by crying at that moment, they may continue to experience that trauma later. We designed our workshops by combining art and play. For this reason, our workshops were diverse; such as clay sculpture, face painting, drawing and game workshops... Our aim was to transform negative emotions by experiencing the post-disaster process with children through these workshops. At first, children came to the workshops with hesitation. They approached the communities with suspicion and some fear. Because everywhere was crowded and children did not know many people in these new crowds. This was a problem we had to overcome at the first stage. But when they witnessed the fun atmosphere in the workshops, their joy was restored and children can adapt to life more easily when they are happy. Our work was a bit challenging for us at first. In the workshops we held, children were constantly talking about the destruction, the ruins were drawn, the dates of the earthquake were written on the drawings and those days were commemorated. We thought we had to transform these painful memories in the children's emotions and minds.

“Over time, these dates were erased from the pictures, instead of ruined buildings, solid buildings and positive moments of nature began to be depicted, and colors were used more and more carefully.”

Making sculptures and objects from clay was also one of our art workshops. The clay workshop also allowed children to touch the soil more, and we observed that it was better for them to make a sculpture or a functional object. For some children, instead of painting - because paintings often reminded them of earthquakes - it was more fun to make a teapot from clay. Shaping the soil also allowed children to transfer their physical energy.

As these workshops continued, games and acquaintances with the children began to develop. We began to observe that the children's outlook on life became more positive and the date 06.02.2023 was no longer seen in the pictures. Over time, these dates were erased from the pictures, instead of ruined buildings, solid buildings and positive moments of nature began to be depicted, and colors were used more and more carefully. The children were now talking less about the earthquake and what happened afterwards. This transformation of feelings and thoughts that we witnessed in them emerged when we did the work continuously and regularly. We were also witnessing the children's bond with us getting stronger. One day, we saw that they had started to write the names of all our friends on those fabrics and papers in colorful colors. While we had initially invited them to the workshop, now they were calling us and asking, "When will you come again?" Witnessing this transformation made us very happy.

There were children running with us from the entrance of the village to the area where we would hold the activity. During this process, we understood that places needed to be touched. For this reason, we preferred to work in the villages instead of the city center at first. We revealed the value of this work together with the children. At first, we were holding workshops in villages with the Diyarbakır-based ÇocukÇA Association. The association was working with children, women and humanitarian aid in the rural areas of Adıyaman with a project it carried out with an institution from the Netherlands. After these studies, a reporting workshop was held in İzmir with the participation of many associations working in the field. Seeing the work of many associations there made us take off our blinders in the field. I met Ezgi Koman from the FISA team at this workshop and learned that they also held art workshops for children in Adıyaman. Later, we met Dilan Dursun from FISA's Children's Rights Center in Adıyaman and started to create workshop programs for making clay sculptures and objects according to the demands of the children. I am currently contributing regularly to some of the art activities of the associations working in Adıyaman and I go to every event with excitement.

“Providing feedback on each drawing and approving the children’s work was good for the children. Applauding each drawing with the children was one of the feedback methods we used in this study.”

Every child naturally has a different character and their perspective on life is also different. Some were more introverted and shy. We would call them through their close friends to reach them and this worked. Normally, when a student draws a horse, for example, we would evaluate how similar the drawing is to the horse and give feedback. Here, instead of giving feedback like “Does it look like it or not?”, it was more important to ask the children who were drawing questions like “Did you like this drawing, did you like it?” Providing feedback on each drawing and approving the children’s work was good for the children. Applauding each drawing with the children was one of the feedback methods we used in this study. For the children, receiving such approvals and having both adults and the group notice that they were noticed and did something good was as valuable as painting or making a clay sculpture.

While the children worked individually, we also worked collaboratively, such as one child continuing a clay sculpture that another child had made up to a certain point. For this reason, the children were active individually or in groups in the workshops and they learned many things from each other.

I am currently staying in the house where I experienced the earthquake. Our house is solid, we can live in it. In fact, I can still see the remains of the debris in front of my window. But these do not destroy us. Because our life was like this anyway. I was an introvert, a person who lived everything inside. Everything was very difficult for me in the first months after the earthquake. But I also knew this about myself; I become happy when I give and share certain things. When I share what I know or when I give away certain things I have, what I get for me is peace.

We went through difficult times, everyone did. There may not be a house left in Adiyaman and the entire earthquake region without condolences. Sometimes it can be difficult to even talk about these things. However, it is important to set out on the road instead of sitting at home and constantly thinking about what happened. For me, the adventure started when I left here and went to Bodrum. When I started working with children there and came back here, my interactions with my friends, continuing and meeting people who do such work here were important. I am also aware that all this work and new acquaintances and collaborations were very good for me and that is how I got back on my feet. If something like this happens from now on, we know better what we can do now.

“From now on, we will continue to be stronger and more crowded in solidarity and cooperation. Some teachings are painful. We will overcome these pains and embark on new journeys.”

The experiences I gained in all these workshops were great to share with the children, the hard times are behind us. We shared our pain with the children here. They shared it with us. We got through this process with the children and now I am trying to continue with them. Maybe I will open an art studio in the near future to work with children. This process contributed to me both materially and spiritually and showed me the area I should focus on. That is why, although I am sad about what I experienced during the earthquake, I am also happy about the things we did together afterwards. All the emotions are intertwined.

All these experiences have taught us a lot and given us experience. Maybe these studies contain answers about what we can do when we experience such difficult times in the future. From now on, we will continue to be stronger and more crowded in solidarity and cooperation. Some teachings are painful. We will overcome these pains and embark on new journeys.

While doing workshops with children at K15 Container City, some scenes never leave my mind. There was a student with special needs in the workshop. He had never had the opportunity to participate in any art activity in his life. We played hide and seek with him, we made pictures together. He could not hold his hands and he could not walk, but I was able to be a second hand to him in the workshops. And whenever he came with his mother, they would find me there. Their smiles were one of the most permanent images in my life. In such cases, it is a very nice thing for us that there is still a center here as a sign of togetherness, that people still make an effort to do something here.

“I want to be a teacher in the future. I want to teach children something. Teaching something is a great feeling. For example, my teacher treats everyone well and shows everyone something. I also loved and liked the teaching profession very much... I want there to be no containers in the future, I want there to always be a house. I want the sun to always shine.” Elifsu (8)

AÇELYA SAKARYA & MELTEM ERGEZEN

FA Child

Meltem Ergezen: The suggestion to hold workshops with children in Adıyaman came from Ezgi Koman at the FISA Children's Rights Center, and we had the opportunity to be a part of all these efforts. When I remember the February 6, 2023 Earthquakes, the first thing that comes to mind is the moment I came across that news. People can say "we felt it" even though they were not in the disaster area, in order to romanticize what they experienced. I really experienced a similar feeling that day. I had woken up early to go to school, got ready, and while waiting for the school bus, I looked at my phone and saw the earthquake news. I was trying to understand the magnitude of the earthquake, and it doesn't come to mind at first that such a big disaster has happened. The more I read and came across the images, the more I realized how big the earthquake was. During that period, I was working as a teacher at Renkli Orman Okulu, a cooperative school in İzmir. Therefore, I did not have the chance to visit the cities where the earthquake occurred and to get in touch with people. We came to Adıyaman two years after the earthquake, but it still felt good to be involved in this process and to be able to contact those people and children.

After the earthquake, we accepted students from Hatay even though our quota was full at the school I worked at. At that time, I did not have the opportunity to work one-on-one with children from the region. But I remember that we held meetings beforehand, informed the adults, and discussed how we should approach both the process and the children. It was not a good experience, of course, but having experienced the İzmir earthquake a year ago and having gone through similar processes made our minds clearer about how we should approach children and how we should handle the earthquake.

“We are an earthquake country, a difficult country where people work hard and struggle to exist. I still have a great rebellion against the collapse of the order that people have established before our eyes and the greatness of this destruction.”

Açelya Sakarya: The feeling I felt after the earthquake was anger and rebellion when I thought about the precautions that were not taken. We are an earthquake country, a difficult country where people work hard and struggle to exist. I still have a great rebellion against the collapse of the order that people have established before our eyes and the greatness of this destruction. That is why the process we experienced in Adıyaman was good for me. I am a bit of a “selfish” person. We were going to Adıyaman to be with the children, but I was actually doing this for myself.

While working with those children, young people, and parents, I also wanted to heal myself. The existence of children gives me incredible strength. It was like this before Adıyaman. We do not learn from what we have experienced since the 1999 Earthquake, we do not try to learn, we do not share our experiences. We cannot even build buildings that have become property, bought and sold. People are struggling to own a house, to have a better life, and the fact that everything is gone in a few seconds makes people rebel. For this reason, I was very angry. It has been two years since the earthquake, my life savings continue. But I can talk about the things that remain constant: Rebellion and anger. I was in Ayvalık when the earthquake happened, I was working. We showed solidarity when we could. We sent various aid materials, clothes, shoes. Still, we were far away, we couldn't go to them. I also felt rebellious about not being able to go there. Life had stopped for those people, we had to be with them, but we also had a process to continue.

Meltem Ergezen: Generally, the aid was for adults. We had heard from a friend that children's shoes were one of the biggest needs.

Açelya Sakarya: Then we tried to find out if this aid had reached us and if it was any good. We were not thinking very clearly. I remember a kind of helplessness, a sense of not being able to do anything, and the anxiety and sadness that came with not being there. It was a process that we had a hard time overcoming. Maybe for these reasons, what we experienced in Adıyaman was good for me.

“I remember a kind of helplessness, a sense of not being able to do anything, and the anxiety and sadness that came with not being there. It was a process that we had a hard time overcoming.”

Meltem Ergezen: The neighborhood where Açelya grew up was destroyed in the İzmir Earthquake (2020) and that earthquake had also destroyed many people's minds. This was also partly why we wanted to get away from the city. Most people usually have the idea of living in coastal towns in their minds. However, one of the things that pushed us to live in Ayvalık was the need to live in a safe place after the destruction. These concerns and the need for security have also turned into a collective consciousness that we all feel as a society. Açelya feels what happened with rebellion. When I think about the lives that still haven't healed, the wounds that haven't healed, I mourn that process.

Açelya Sakarya: What was different about me? Why am I alive? Why am I lucky? Why was I able to escape? Those people decided to stay where they had been living until now. There are still many people in Adıyaman who want to continue their lives and support each other. I went through a period where I questioned all of these things, and I still continue to feel these feelings.

Meltem Ergezen: People there had lost their basic needs. For us, the meaning of many things we did here had diminished. While children in the cities where the earthquake occurred were trying to somehow survive in tent cities, we were thinking about what we could do better for children in our own safe areas, in school. All thoughts and feelings were intertwined.

Açelya Sakarya: I also taught music at the Renkli Orman Okulu in Izmir. When we went to Adıyaman, the idea we had in mind was to create a workshop that would provide children with a space to express themselves. Since my branch is music, the idea we had in mind was to write lyrics, vocalize, and compose by editing these recordings on the computer, thus continuing the workshop process. The children in Adıyaman were very professional, very prepared and clear. I may have learned much more from them during the workshop. We are still continuing this workshop with some children, albeit remotely, via the internet. The workshops were not a very structured process. We thought we would work with three groups. We had story dice with a word written on each side. These were methods that could be used not only in music but also in theater and other branches of art. We were a bit meticulous when using these dice at first. For example, one dice had a house written on it. We did not use that dice. We were worried about creating trauma or reminding us of difficult times when discussing any concept or object.

Meltem Ergezen: Since we work with children in Izmir and Ayvalık whose living conditions are relatively better, we can structure some things a lot to attract their attention. Maybe that's why we first thought of these story dice to attract their attention and create a limited structure for the workshop content before saying, "Let's write lyrics." But the children in Adıyaman were so different and motivated that after a while we didn't need those dice.

"The children determined their own topics without dice and let their creativity flow. They were like Sezen Aksu. They wrote and composed lyrics in a continuous circulation."

Açelya Sakarya: The children determined their own topics without dice and let their creativity flow. They were like Sezen Aksu. They wrote and composed lyrics in a continuous circulation. On the other hand, since we were in the festival area, other sounds were constantly coming, but they did not care at all. There were sounds that I could not distinguish in the noisy recordings, but none of them cared. Everyone was there with us, focused on making that workshop enjoyable. It was an incredible experience for me.

Meltem Ergezen: We were not in a closed area, and the weather was hot and noisy. Despite all this, we did not have to limit them in any way. Because they were very focused: "What is this workshop about? Okay, I want to write lyrics too," they would say quickly. We planned to do three rounds of workshops at most, but we did four, and the kids kept coming to ask, "When will our tour start?"

Parents were curious about what we were doing in the workshop. They were focused on getting the children to participate. Some of the children were interested in other things due to their age in the workshop. Their parents would come and encourage the children to participate more.

Açelya Sakarya: On the one hand, these kinds of encouragements were not typical parental behavior. They knew that we came to Adıyaman for the children. They were encouraging the children with a sense of gratitude. In my previous work, I emphasized working one-on-one with children and young people throughout the workshop process. Therefore, I usually prefer not to include parents in the workshop.

Meltem Ergezen: On the other hand, parents generally constantly evaluate the adults who conduct the workshop: “What are they doing? Is the content rich? Do they teach anything?” You see parents who look at the adults conducting the workshop with a bit of a judgmental look. Instead, we came across parents in Adiyaman who were grateful to us and cared about their child’s participation. I actually didn’t want such a feeling of gratitude. We should have been there before. This is not something that only applies to Adiyaman. Therefore, there was nothing to be grateful for in the work we did.

When you go to Adiyaman, you break everything you have learned so far or your approach patterns towards children at one point. Because there is another child there in a very different situation. In fact, communication with every child should be like this at one point, it should be specific to him/her and the place. Normally, I do not say “It is beautiful” to the work a child does. Because not everything can be measured by beauty or ugliness. I try to transform that perception of beauty with questions like “Did you enjoy doing this? How did you feel when you used these colors?” But here, I could also find myself saying “It is beautiful!” Because the child wants to hear that too. When working with children, it is essential to try not to direct them too much. In order to bring out their creativity, as an adult, you try not to transform their production with your own concerns. For example, you might not say, “You can put a comma here.” But I was able to put forward an idea there, like, “Should we repeat the chorus twice?”... This idea came out involuntarily and I did not blame myself in that moment. The children also accepted this idea. I wondered whether I was directing them there. Because children can easily accept all kinds of suggestions from adults. But then I reassured myself like this: As long as I wanted to make a contribution, the child accepted it. Of course, I would not force it if he did not accept it, but he accepted it and it went on like that.

“When you go to Adiyaman, you break everything you have learned so far or your approach patterns towards children at one point. Because there is another child there in a very different situation.”

Açelya Sakarya: We were actually equal to the children during that festival and workshop in Adiyaman. That's why there was a need to contribute to the creative process.

Meltem Ergezen: I couldn't see myself as someone who only accompanied them pedagogically in those workshops. I sometimes said, "Let me add this here."

Açelya Sakarya: Therefore, the learning process was equivalent. In our studies at school, I was conducting music workshops with a child from the age of three to eighteen. The first meeting and the workshop in Adiyaman lasted three to four hours in total. We spent equal time together. I remember asking the participating children, “Did you like this workshop?” I wanted to hear if the children enjoyed us and if they found our work beautiful. The children were also curious about whether we liked their work. I guess this is the exact equivalent of being equivalent. These shared feelings, which were not hierarchical, made me feel very comfortable.

Meltem Ergezen: One of the scenes that remained in my mind throughout the workshop was this. Normally, children worry about a pencil not writing or having a bad tip. During the workshop, I gave a different pencil to a child whose pencil was writing badly. The pencil I changed to did not write well either, so I brought another pencil. It also wrote badly. I kept saying, "I guess that pencil doesn't write. Try this one." For him, it didn't matter that the pencil wrote badly. They always used the papers with both sides. The back of one group's worksheet was used by the other group. They didn't worry about this at all while producing.

"In a sense, these studies were for me. As they always say, "For children, for young people"... This is also about me, my concerns and fears."

Açelya Sakarya: I guess that's why I started working with children and young people. In a sense, these studies were for me. As they always say, "For children, for young people"... This is also about me, my concerns and fears. In other words, I was always looking for myself in them.

When I returned from Adıyaman, an anecdote remained in my mind. I had learned the following from the study conducted with children living in container cities: The only thing most children want is to have a bakery nearby. Even trying to interpret this gives me goosebumps. Longing for the old life, returning to the old ritual... Even if you eat the best food in the world, you still look for the taste of the food your father, mother or whoever cooks at home, the taste you are used to, and if they are not around and cannot make that food for you, you cannot find it. I still have difficulty expressing it. But whenever I eat, that desire for an bakery that reminds me of the community and the healing effect of eating together comes to mind.

Meltem Ergezen: The image that remained in my mind about Adıyaman was this. We went to a single-story café with a garden. Then they told the story of that café. When the whole city was destroyed, it was the only one left standing. Knowing this affected me very much. While drinking tea in that garden, it was as if I had relived that state of the city...

“I think art is something that people care about. A picture on the wall can also be art. I like drawing. Making clay sculptures is also a type of art. I went to a theater play. Its name was ‘Candy Girl and Her Friends’. It was fun, I laughed a lot while watching it. The pictures in the containers below and the statue in the market are other works of art that I saw.” Ecrin (9)

GÖKHAN KAZAK (BOYAYANADAM)

Graffiti Artist

When we witnessed the February 6th earthquake, we were with a friend from Hatay. Our friend had immediately returned to his hometown. I think the whole of Turkey shared the same feelings in the process that followed. We felt like we were “alone” for a while. At that time, I also wanted to go to the cities affected by the earthquake, but there was no opportunity. A few months after the earthquake, we were very excited when Esin Koman from the FISA Children’s Rights Center invited us to conduct a study in Adıyaman. I had worked with children before, but I had no experience working in such a place and under such conditions. In my previous studies, we were often in a joyful environment with children. However, there was a different situation here. At first, I could not fully predict how I would act. My wife Deniz is also a children’s rights advocate and had conducted many studies with children. She helped. There was also a professional team in the field and they supported us a lot. It was not a study that I could handle alone.

“The children painted as much as they could. I observed that when the children took the spray paint in their hands, they painted as if they had forgotten everything.”

I worked in three different places in Adıyaman. In one of them, I worked entirely with children and drew Miyazaki characters. In the other places, we worked with friends from the FISA Children’s Rights Center, so I was only interested in the design to be drawn on the wall and the paints. My wife and the FISA CRC team organized the work with the children. Therefore, I was in the most joyful part of the work. The children painted as much as they could. I observed that when the children took the spray paint in their hands, they painted as if they had forgotten everything. I was very happy to see their excitement and joy. We were also working in a place where the ruins were in the background.

First, I would draw the outlines of a picture on the container walls and the children would paint inside these lines. The children loved painting, they lined up and were having a lot of fun. When I saw what was happening there and met the children, I thought of the characters in Miyazaki movies. When we do graffiti work individually or in groups, we can think of other characters depending on the location or the team we work with. However, I had told my wife that we should draw Miyazaki characters there. My wife agreed with me by saying that the soft patterns that were far from violence in the designs of those characters would be suitable for this area.

Even these thoughts actually changed the work we did there a lot according to our production style. I was amazed by the self-confidence in the children. Maybe if I left the children there on their own, they would produce incredible works. Picasso has a saying: “Every child is an artist. The important thing is to remain a child and an artist.” But this time, maybe the parents would be a little angry, because there would probably be paint everywhere. I was very cautious before coming. Up until now, I had mostly done graffiti work at fun events. This would be the first time I would do this work in a disaster area. I was also a little anxious, I couldn’t fully understand the emotional state of the children. But it didn’t turn out as I feared. When a child feels good, they can always remain a child everywhere. When we talk to adults, we understand the effects of the earthquake much better. They were in a completely different situation. But when children feel safe compared to adults, they can be more in tune with the flow of life. When we talk to children, we witness their traumas and fears of earthquakes. I was caught in the 1999 Earthquake in Istanbul, I was a child. However, I definitely did not experience an earthquake like the children I met in Adiyaman.

Graffiti is based on a bit of a rebellious culture. Maybe some examples can even go to vandalism and you can observe a rebellious stance in some graffiti artists. The work we did in Adiyaman was much beyond this culture and stance I mentioned. Graffiti art has both a legal and an illegal side. You can see this under bridges or in train wagon drawings. Therefore, artists sometimes want to do their work without announcing it and quietly.

“Our work in Adiyaman was like a completely public event. I have never witnessed such a warm welcome before. Neighborhood residents coming from the surrounding area were trying to share whatever they had while we were working.”

Our work in Adiyaman was like a completely public event. I have never witnessed such a warm welcome before. Neighborhood residents coming from the surrounding area were trying to share whatever they had while we were working. People bringing biscuits, people brewing tea... We were working in the summer. Therefore, we would all rest under the air conditioning in the containers at noon and start working when the weather cooled down. I can’t forget the parents who would constantly come and thank us for working with their children. One of the moments I can’t forget was when we were walking around the K11 Container City after dark and an adult who had seen us working came up to us and asked me to draw a roof on the edge of the container. That roof was a very strong metaphor there. It contained a strong longing for their lost homes. I said, “Let’s try to do something as much as we can,” and drew a roof on the edge of the container. The process is definitely very important there. Rather than what I did, how much I could touch the people there, or did I? Was I able to get the children out of their negative moods a little bit and think about something else? These questions always remained in my mind when I returned. We went to Adiyaman twice and stayed for ten days in total. When the work was over in the evening, we would drink tea and chat in the container areas of the FISA Children’s Rights Center, sometimes until the morning. Those stories touched me so much that I questioned many things about life and our efforts in daily life.

An adult's story stayed in my mind. He told me that they had bought a house with the money they had saved for a long time, furnished the house from top to bottom, and that everything had suddenly disappeared with the earthquake. "We are now at zero, there is nothing. It was all for nothing," he said. But at the same time, he was saying that what he had experienced was insignificant compared to what happened to others. He had finished his speech by saying, "You managed to save yourself, that's enough for you."

"We saw everything about the earthquake through the media. Unless you go there, you can't fully understand what happened."

We saw everything about the earthquake through the media. Unless you go there, you can't fully understand what happened. When we went to Adiyaman, I remember eating at a restaurant that was still intact among the debris in the city. Even now, I have a hard time describing what I felt at that moment. Afterwards, I tried to let myself go with the flow of that process. Everyone there, children, adults, volunteers working in the field, experts were trying to help us. Sometimes, the adults and children at K11 helped us. Still, we didn't stay in Adiyaman for long. But if it helped even one person there, it means that our work, all our efforts, were more than rewarded.

“One evening my father came home from work and it was raining and dark. We looked and saw a sparrow was injured and standing under the car. We took it home. We gave it food and water. We tried to dry its feathers. After drying it, it flew around the house. Then it went out the window and went away. We had two more birds. One of them ran away after the earthquake.” İklim Ceren (11)

EZGİ KOMAN

FİSA Children's Right Center

We are a team that has been working in the field of children's rights for a very long time. In the Gündem Çocuk Association, which was closed down by a Statutory Decree in 2016, we had experiences and reflexes in coming together with children in situations that turned into a children's rights crisis, revealing what they were going through, making it visible, and at the same time making their voices heard during those processes, and working to strengthen them. I think these reflexes worked again during the February 6th Earthquakes. We had previous experiences working with children and parents one-on-one, both during and after the Van Erciş earthquake in 2011 or in regions where conflict was intense. From the moment we learned about the February 6th earthquakes, we were able to act quickly with the knowledge we gained from all those processes and the past. This action had two reflexes. One was a need we foresaw from previous experiences. That was to come together with civil society organizations working in the field of children's rights as soon as possible, to think together and to establish coordination. That is why we quickly made calls to organizations and individuals working in the field of children in the evening of the earthquake day.

“This action had two reflexes. One was a need we foresaw from previous experiences. That was to come together with civil society organizations working in the field of children's rights as soon as possible, to think together and to establish coordination.”

After this call, a civil society coordination emerged on children and disasters and many coordination studies were carried out. We had foreseen this; because coordination was very useful in such crisis situations. Our second reflex, which we had also learned from human rights organizations, was to quickly go to the field with human rights organizations and understand what was going on and to obtain information about what needed to be done both to the public, to the public administration, but also to civil society, that is, to ourselves. Four or five days after the earthquake, we went to all the provinces affected by the earthquake except Diyarbakır. Because Diyarbakır was already a city that worked in coordination. We conducted a monitoring and needs assessment study in groups in all the provinces from İskenderun to Adana, from Antakya to Maraş.

In the needs assessment study, the difficulties that the children experienced and would experience were obvious. This was also some information from the Van Erciş earthquake. Temporary shelters had not yet been established at that time, but they would be. The children's needs and voices would not be visible there. Therefore, it was wise to create some programs for this, and at the same time, the earthquake really created a very traumatic experience and the children witnessed its effects.

People lost their closest ones. They had to move cities or homes. The neighborhoods they knew, the schools they went to, the parks they played in disappeared. Their teachers may never be seen again, many children lost their friends, if not their own lives... Therefore, it was necessary to eliminate the effect of this situation and make their voices heard. Because in such situations, the voices of children are not heard even in normal times, but they are not heard at all in those times.

FISA Children's Rights Center is actually an organization that does more monitoring, reporting, and suggesting policies. It perhaps does less meeting with children than other organizations. But again, we know from the Van Erciş earthquake that it is very necessary for rights-based organizations like us to be in the field and produce something together with children. That's why we thought we needed to be there and we thought about where and how we could work.

“We had much less difficulty in Adiyaman than we thought. Because the solidarity networks we were in contact with provided the opportunity to work with local organizations. Therefore, we were able to communicate with local organizations very easily and started working together.”

In fact, we had never thought about Adiyaman. On the other hand, Adiyaman was probably a place we had reservations about. Most of us had not been to Adiyaman before and had not conducted any work there. We had prejudices that it was a somewhat closed place. Many organizations were working in Antakya. On the other hand, we thought we could work in İskenderun. However, later on, our friends working with joint teams from Diyarbakır and İzmir called us to work in Adiyaman. Of course, we found this call very justified and went to Adiyaman as of March 2023 and first tried to establish a common work infrastructure in order to find answers to questions such as “In which areas should we work there, what kind of work should be carried out to share the needs analyses and establish connections, and what is needed to do this work?” While doing this, we started from the working method of FISA Children's Rights Center, its previous knowledge, and the networks it has created and in which we are a part of.

We had much less difficulty in Adiyaman than we thought. Because the solidarity networks we were in contact with provided the opportunity to work with local organizations. Therefore, we were able to communicate with local organizations very easily and started working together. We jointly produced solutions on the conditions and possibilities of working with children. The next time I face such a crisis, this is probably the thing I will say the most to a civil society organization, especially one like us that works at a more central and national policy level: If you don't have local connections, these things are really hard.

With your local connections, you can do something permanent there and only in this way can these efforts be effective. If it were not for the contributions of KESK, Eğitim-SEN, TTB and other organizations in Adıyaman, FİSA Children's Rights Center would have had a very hard time in Adıyaman. The people there, the representatives of these local organizations I mentioned, were people who had experienced the February 6th earthquakes firsthand. That's why they did something extraordinary. While they were so deeply affected, and perhaps had lost many loved ones, they were working with great strength for the entire Adıyaman community. We were also able to be there for them. At times, they made our work much easier. So what does this experience tell us? Definitely continue on your path by establishing connections with the locals... There were certainly places where we had difficulty and changed tactics and methods. We develop many opinions from the past. Sometimes these are very useful to us, but sometimes they create very big obstacles for us. For example, thinking that we cannot work in Adıyaman was a belief that actually stopped us, slowed us down, and rendered us ineffective. This was one of the most important things that changed in this process.

My work there was mostly about managing relations with local organizations and providing a bit more coordination in planning such as creating a venue for the program we would be conducting in Adıyaman. I was mostly with adults during this whole process. After the Van Erciş Earthquake, I worked more with children. We started working with children as a result of the request of the AFAD director in the container city where we were conducting the initiation and introduction activities. The method or tactic we created during this process was the network we developed and were a part of. Many people would be able to come there for the children through this network. This was a power and we may have used this power a lot, especially in relations with the public administration. For example, if we are going to work in a container city, you have to act very quickly and make decisions when it comes to painting the warehouses there. When an AFAD official asks you, "Would you paint these warehouses?" you do not have the luxury of saying, "Let's think about it." You will say, "Of course we can," and you will. Since we felt the power to do these things, it was important for us to never turn down such requests, gain trust, and show that we could do this. Our practical and solution-oriented work in collaborating with both professional organizations and state institutions was effective in developing collaborations.

"When an AFAD official asks you, "Would you paint these warehouses?" you do not have the luxury of saying, "Let's think about it." You will say, "Of course we can," and you will."

We are actually a small organization. Yes, we have strength. But for example, in times of crisis, organizations working on humanitarian aid may have more financial resources. FİSA Children's Rights Center was not an organization that benefited from large amounts of support. However, the general impression was that all organizations had a lot of financial resources. In addition to the institution's resources, we often had to use our personal resources. Our presence in Adıyaman is not about us. We were there with this feeling and thought from the very beginning. That is why one of the most important things was the community there. This community can have demands from children, civil society organizations, parents, hundreds of people we do not know, and all of them were very important.

The purpose of our being in Adıyaman was to make the lives of children and their parents easier, to re-empower them and to make the children's voices heard. Therefore, our subjectivity was not a critical thing there.

FISA Children's Rights Center has always been an organization that prepares reports in the field of children's rights. We prepared a report on the situation of children in Adıyaman in the first year of the earthquake. However, it is not easy to work so closely with public administration or other civil society organizations and professional organizations in the field and prepare a report about them. It needs to be a report that reminds of responsibilities and emphasizes obligations in that balance of language. Because we are preparing a human rights report. On the other hand, after your report is published the next day, you will continue to work with the people whose practices you evaluated and turned into data in the reports. This was not an easy thing to do, but I think we were able to do it. We were able to both maintain our independence and maintain our impartiality. This was most likely related to the trust we provided. The fact that the public administration also trusted us was very much related to the professional organizations in Adıyaman, the Adıyaman community, parents and children taking ownership of this work. There were also things we could not do during the Adıyaman process. Part of this work was to empower children. We had planned to be here for a very long time. In such crisis situations, it is necessary to do empowerment work with children for a long time and to deepen it. Longer-term work rather than one or two months really creates an impact. We were able to do that. But on the other hand, we also had a goal of bringing the voices and experiences of the children there to the public sphere. I think we could not do that fully.

“The fact that the new media language did not create a safe space for children and the climate of pressure that could come from all sides against any visibility in the media sometimes made it difficult for us to ensure media visibility of children's work.”

When we compare the Van Erciş earthquake in 2011 with the 2023-2025 period, there have been significant transformations in the forms of media coverage and the pressures the media is exposed to in Türkiye. We have an obligation to protect children from all of this. You plan a study where no child will be harmed in any way, and this can sometimes prevent you from taking any steps and making their voices heard through media tools. In fact, we could have done this very easily. With our media and communication networks, we could have announced everything the children produced there, day by day, just like we did during the Van Erciş earthquake, and we could have raised their voices. Journalists could not enter the tent city where we worked during the Van Erciş earthquake. The children had made news that revealed the truth by being there, and this news had spread widely. However, the fact that the new media language did not create a safe space for children and the climate of pressure that could come from all sides against any visibility in the media sometimes made it difficult for us to ensure media visibility of children's work. It may not be easy to repeat the present with the experience of the past. Because the periods are not the same, the children are not the same, the city and Turkey are not the same. Therefore, we are not the same either, and for this reason, we look at this media work, the issue of bringing children's voices to the public sphere, in different ways. There is a lot of change in this area.

There are many things I will never forget during this two-year period. The first year walk was very difficult for everyone, of course. The people there remembering what happened, the fact that everything was almost as difficult as the first day even though a year had passed, and the anger on one hand... It was a day when many emotions were experienced. It was very important to be with the Adiyaman community in that crowd. I said, "It's good that we are here" and it's good that we have established connections that could happen there. Witnessing that historic moment there, the feeling, anger and resistance of that community, because they resisted for a year, were unforgettable times. They resisted against the bureaucracy that made conditions difficult, the non-existent public services, all those threats to human rights, everything, and being with those who resisted was really impressive.

“Witnessing that historic moment there, the feeling, anger and resistance of that community, because they resisted for a year, were unforgettable times.”

Another unforgettable process was the İslas Hotel Case. In addition to the work done with children in Adiyaman, we followed the cases that were opened and ongoing. The İslas Hotel Case, where twenty-six children lost their lives, was one of the most important of these. During the march on February 6, we wanted to come together at the ruins of the İslas Hotel and commemorate the children. We thought we would probably do this commemoration among ourselves. However, many people came and did not leave for minutes. It was as if they provided an opportunity to mourn. It was very valuable to be able to be together with everyone there. On the other hand, you are in a place where children died and no one wanted to leave to mourn them together. That image of the anger of the children, the youth, and the resisters will probably never leave my memory.

“I like math the most. Some kids don't know how to multiply, add, or subtract. I want to be a math teacher to teach these to kids. There was garbage and containers everywhere because of the earthquake. I don't think there will be any containers in the future. Adiyaman will be very beautiful in the future. The streets will be green and there will be flowers. The houses will be more beautiful and standing. I hope they don't make it big this time. I don't want the earthquake to harm anything in the future. I don't want my family to be harmed at all. I want to protect my friends and love them. It's best to love children.” Cansu (11)

ZEYNEL POLAT

Eğitim-SEN Adiyaman Branch

We say that people need to talk a little, and we are also included in the word ‘people’. We all need to talk, share our troubles, and pour out our hearts from time to time. While visiting schools and meeting with teachers and other components of Adiyaman Disaster Coordination, everyone's basic problem was this: “I don't have a place to pour out my heart, I need someone who will listen to me unconditionally and not judge me when I pour out my heart.” This is truly very important and valuable.

About a year has passed since the earthquake. The word earthquake itself is negative. But despite these negativities, there are also positive values that earthquakes and disasters bring to people. We have seen how valuable solidarity between societies is in these times. In an environment where people are so politically polarized in the country, coming together with a disaster has a different meaning.

I am from Adiyaman, a guidance counselor. I am about to complete my nineteenth year in teaching. I worked in Siirt Kurtalan for the first three years, but other than that I spent my entire career in Adiyaman. I continued to work as an activist in Eğitim-SEN since 2008-09. I was a manager in the Human Rights Association for a while. I carried out work in the Association for Combating Global Warming here. Throughout my education and teaching career, I have always paid attention to the following: When evaluating a person, I did not evaluate them with their grades in mathematics, for example. Up until now, we have done our work to help children add something to life and create meaning in their daily lives.

“We say that people need to talk a little, and we are also included in the word ‘people’. We all need to talk, share our troubles, and pour out our hearts from time to time.”

Until the earthquake, our lives were ordinary and not very different. The most well-known earthquake in Türkiye before was the 1999 earthquake. Then in 2004, there was an earthquake in Bingöl, where I was also a first teacher. We had students who died at YİBO. I had just started teaching at that time.

The last time we started a solidarity campaign here was during the 2011 Van Erciş Earthquake and we collected three trucks of aid and sent them to Van. But, to be honest, it had never crossed our minds to work in Van or Elazığ for a week. Going there to share your solidarity with people, to understand their troubles, is as important as sending aid.

This earthquake is a milestone for both the Turkish society and for us living in Adıyaman. The lives of people in Hatay, Maraş, Malatya, Adıyaman, and other cities that felt the earthquake strongly, changed after February 6, 2023. Both our perspective on life and our interpretation of life have changed significantly. I am currently a manager at Eğitim-SEN. Like Beşiktaş Çarşı, which objects to everything, with its slogan “Çarşı is Against Everything”, we, as Eğitim-SEN and KESK, express our reflexes on many issues in the country, and we are also a Çarşı group of this city.

On the night of February 6, 2023, when the earthquake first hit, I fell asleep on the couch in front of the TV. At that moment, I fell, I thought I was dreaming. The electricity had gone out. I turned on the phone light, the ground was shaking. Those eighty-seven seconds were a very long time. At some point, you say, “Enough, if it’s going to end, let it end!” Maybe it was the helplessness of man in the face of death or nature, there are no words to describe it. Because you can’t get up. The ground is slipping away under your feet. We went out in desperation; we went down three or four flights of stairs. We hadn’t realized how big the earthquake was until we saw the stairwells and the building across the street collapse with the light of our phones. Shortly after, KESK Co-Chairman Mehmet Bozgeyik called. “Dude, there was an earthquake, how is Adıyaman?” From the rubble and the people running around, I could tell that the earthquake was very big. People were panicking and trying to get their cars out. That chaos and cold... Some went down barefoot, some had their children in their arms, some had their children with them... It was the lowest point of desperation.

“We were able to drive a few hundred meters, but then we couldn’t move forward because of the destruction and walked to the city center. Everyone was running around, there was nothing to do.”

At that moment, we saw the buildings collapsing around us, but when we arrived at the city center, we witnessed everything that the earthquake had caused. I was in the Altınşehir district of Adıyaman. On the other hand, it was not the most affected place by the earthquake. It took us two and a half hours to get to the city center, which was normally five minutes away. We were able to drive a few hundred meters, but then we couldn’t move forward because of the destruction and walked to the city center. Everyone was running around, there was nothing to do. An eight-story building was like a sandwich, layers had collapsed on top of each other. I had seen my friend who is currently teaching at Democracy Primary School, he lost one of his legs in the earthquake. Half of his body was under the rubble. I can’t describe the shock I felt when I saw the teacher. The first day, it was as if everything was unreal. You say there shouldn’t be so much destruction. There was no construction equipment or search and rescue team. People stopped a police car that was passing by. The police said, “I’m like you, what can I do?” We don’t find them strange either. It’s not possible to do anything with bare hands.

In that case, we thought: “We are truly poor people.” Think about it, your child, your mother, your father, your sibling are under the rubble and there is nothing to do. There is no electricity anyway. The phones do not have very good signal. You can reach them by text message. Although the epicenter of the first earthquake was Pazarcık and the epicenter of the second earthquake was Elbistan, the places where the most destruction was actually Hatay, and Adıyaman. The boulevards in the cities were completely destroyed. When we got back in the car, we were caught in the second earthquake. We barely managed to get out. The second earthquake caused more casualties. Government officials also said, “We couldn’t come to the region for two or three days.” They couldn’t come, didn’t they, of course, this is a bit problematic...The Director of the Kandilli Observatory said the following at the symposium organized by TMMOB. “There should be a search and rescue team of thirty people per building.” When you think about this, it is very difficult to do this work at the central level. But could local governments and local administrators do anything about it? The reason for not being able to come was that the roads, bridges, tunnels and airports were destroyed. When you think about all these negativities, disaster preparedness units should have organized locally and worked with the people there. When you look at the risk ranking in the world, Turkey is in the top five. But such great loss of life should not have occurred.

“We had to establish an organization so that those who got out of the rubble could somehow continue their lives. Previously, there was a Labor and Democracy Platform in Adıyaman. There was an earthquake on Monday, we called the platform components to a meeting on Tuesday.”

Consider an example, twenty-seven people, including the family of the Adıyaman MP, were under the rubble. They couldn’t even get them out at first. Everyone tried to get their own relatives out. We had to establish an organization so that those who got out of the rubble could somehow continue their lives. Previously, there was a Labor and Democracy Platform in Adıyaman. There was an earthquake on Monday, we called the platform components to a meeting on Tuesday. We gathered and established coordination. At first, we established a center in the Adıyaman Cemevi. However, the capacity of the organization we thought of and the Cemevi did not match each other. News was coming from the districts of Adıyaman. Almost everywhere had collapsed. Especially because it was winter, there were problems with transportation to many villages in the north of Adıyaman. We started using the warehouses of a few friends’ factories in the Adıyaman Organized Industrial Zone for coordination.

On Tuesday, a group from Diyarbakır and Mardin KESK, TMMOB and other democratic mass organizations came. The friends who came from Mardin also brought two trucks of materials. We emptied some of it into the cemevi and put the rest in the warehouses in the Organized Industrial Zone. Thus, the coordination efforts had begun. When KESK started sharing this coordination on social media, many people from all over Türkiye called. Friends from nearby cities continued to come for solidarity. We started distributing food and basic necessities. Some of those who came volunteered to participate in the search and rescue efforts. Especially the friends who came from TMMOB and knew the technical aspects of search and rescue took part in these efforts.

This time, a shelter problem emerged. The people who took the bodies out of the rubble and took them to their villages also had a shelter problem. AFAD and official institutions had separate coordination. The coordination we were carrying out was more of a public initiative. At first, we distributed tents in the villages. We had bought some, and volunteers had brought some. We were particularly concerned about children, the elderly, and the sick reaching the tents. From time to time, there were problems and disruptions. Although the situation was a bit chaotic for the first fifteen days, coordination began to settle into order. As the work became more organized, the contribution of the volunteers also increased. It is a good thing to be able to give people confidence and make them feel it. Later, we established a tent city in Narlıkuyu with friends. There was also a refugee population of around thirty to thirty-five thousand in Adiyaman. A tent city was also established by AFAD for the refugees. There were also refugees in Narlıkuyu who did not want to go there and stayed in our tent city.

Along with the food aid, our components, the Health Workers Union and the Turkish Medical Association, started health screening studies for those who had problems accessing health services both in the city and in the tent cities. They provided health services to people in villages, towns, districts and the city center at certain periods. The children's hospital in Adiyaman was already badly damaged. The children's hospital was evacuated and we moved to a four-hundred-bed hospital. The Chamber of Pharmacists opened drug stores in the gardens of the health centers. Dentist friends carried out a separate study. These were serious examples of strength and solidarity. Local administrators saw the work we were doing and how comprehensive an organization we were trying to create. But they had difficulty in consulting.

“After the tent city process, when a friend told me that he sent twelve containers through KESK and SES, we tried to create a container city and common living area here at the end of March.”

Tents were a necessity at first. However, after a while it started to rain. A tent city in Karapınar, a district of Adiyaman, was flooded. Approximately two hundred or two hundred and fifty tents were rendered unusable. Thankfully, there were no casualties, but it was also a financial loss. You do not have such a luxury at a time when tents are so desperately needed. If you are going to do something in this city, you need to do it with people who know this city. The area where the tent city was set up was a stream bed and that area had been flooded several times in recent years. Our request from the administrators was this: Invite us to do their work. This city has been destroyed. We must build it together. We could all talk together about what could be done from now on without making accusations. Frankly, I did not see this very often during that period. Even the tents were initially seized by AFAD. Because the state of emergency had been declared. They had the authority to seize everything during the state of emergency. From time to time, aid trucks were seized. After the tent city process, when a friend told me that he sent twelve containers through KESK and SES, we tried to create a container city and common living area here at the end of March. This was actually an area where rubble was dumped. With the contribution of friends from TTB, we fixed the area where we are now. We put the containers here. We also purchased items that would solve the accommodation problem of the friends who came to work.

The friends who come to work will have a chance to rest a little so that they can work more refreshed and relaxed the next day. Let me give you an example. On the sixth day of the earthquake, friends came from Urfa. They brought three tents that they made themselves. While everyone was talking about the tent needs in the villages, I said: “Three tents do not meet the needs of Adiyaman. But right now, the volunteer friends who work from seven in the morning to twelve at night need six or seven hours of rest. Let’s set up these tents here, and the volunteer friends can stay.” We set up two of the tents there. My friends criticized me a lot in those days. I liken it to this example: When you get on a plane, there is an announcement that says, “In case of emergency, put the mask on yourself first, then on the person next to you.” Because if you are not well, you have no chance of helping or showing solidarity with the person next to you. Later, the volunteer friends stayed in the containers brought by the Adiyaman Medical Chamber. We carried out the work in this way.

On March 27, schools were opened in five districts of Adiyaman, and on April 24, in Adiyaman city center and other settlements. The opening of schools was very important for life to normalize, for people to overcome this trauma and return to normal life. However, there were serious deficiencies and difficulties in creating an infrastructure for students who would go to schools that were not seriously damaged. In the February 6 Earthquakes, one thousand six hundred and two of our students lost their lives. We lost one hundred and eighty one education worker friends. There are many friends who lost their lives in other areas as well. We remember them again with respect and gratitude.

Adiyaman High School was the first high school in Adiyaman, from which almost two out of three people graduated, and it was demolished. One of the things that hurt me was that a bazaar was built immediately in place of the demolished high school. It was an educational center, at least it could have been left empty or a temporary prefabricated school could have been built. Our hearts ached when we, the graduates of Adiyaman High School, passed by there.

“At that time, we were taking notes of the friends who participated in the work here and returned. So far, one thousand one hundred and eighty volunteer friends have come and taken part in our solidarity network.”

These are the difficulties we have experienced so far related to the earthquake. After the earthquake, the number of people in my phone book increased by over a thousand. This is actually a great reason to hold on to life. You say, “A thousand people called me, came and showed solidarity!” This is very valuable... At that time, we were taking notes of the friends who participated in the work here and returned. If we met one day, we wanted to thank them at least as a debt of gratitude. So far, one thousand one hundred and eighty volunteer friends have come and taken part in our solidarity network. A person we did not know from Artvin called and said that all he could do was send a truck of wood and sent us wood. We dumped that wood in the garden of a school. Those who needed it at that moment took it. The Diyarbakır Chamber of Commerce and Industry sent a mobile phone charging station. A busload of friends came from Istanbul through Eğitim-SEN and worked here for a week.

When I saw those friends at the last Eğitim-SEN Congress, I thought I saw someone from the family. Because they came during the most difficult times and stood side by side with you. We saw once again how valuable solidarity between peoples is. If we can show this to the people of Türkiye, many problems can be solved on their own. This disaster, this earthquake, is perhaps a starting point for us. We must spread this culture of solidarity in a period when divisions are so sharp even in sports.

I am against the word help. The word help contains a hierarchy. Like the strong helping the weak... This is not right. Sharing and solidarity are very valuable to us. We should adopt the motto, "It is not what you save, but what you share" as a principle. Because you see the other person as your equal. It is easier to get along and live together among equals.

"I am against the word help. The word help contains a hierarchy. Like the strong helping the weak... This is not right. Sharing and solidarity are very valuable to us."

The idea of building a monument to remember what happened was discussed. However, when we see the earthquake monument, we will always experience this trauma. If we are going to create a memory and culture beyond the monument, perhaps the memory of an earthquake museum is needed. There was the Ulu Mosque, which was associated with the history of Adıyaman, but it was destroyed. I think the main purpose of this museum should be to not let us forget what we experienced and to pass it on to the next generations. It will probably take at least five or ten years for Adıyaman to become a city again. Adıyaman is a multilingual, multicultural, multifaith, multicommunal city. Urbanization should be done in line with this.

In the past, everyone knew each other in the neighborhoods and there were no security problems for children. Everyone took care of each other's children. With the growth of cities, neighborhood culture disappeared. There is no neighborhood culture in the TOKİ buildings built after the earthquake and there is no possibility that those single-type houses would fit the geography and culture of Adıyaman. The people of Adıyaman live on their balconies for six months of the year. In a country where the temperature is forty-five degrees in the summer, most people sleep on their balconies at night. But in the single-type houses built by TOKİ, the balconies are three and five square meters. Decisions taken from the center without considering the unique climate of this place can create problems. There are still significant problems in urbanization, the infrastructure of container cities, and schools.

As Eğitim-SEN, we conducted a survey with teachers. We asked the following question. "Do you think your students have overcome the trauma?" We gave three options: Yes, no, partially. In this survey, we reached the conclusion that approximately sixty-five percent of the students have not fully overcome the earthquake trauma. When we asked the teachers, "Do you think you have overcome this trauma yourself?", we received the answer that most of them have not overcome this trauma. When we asked, "What would you like or what are your demands for overcoming this trauma?", we saw that the majority requested "someone to listen to you unconditionally, psychological support and a change of location."

At that time, the Ministry of National Education granted the right to be transferred out of the province. It was a correct practice. At first, approximately one thousand five hundred education workers in Adıyaman requested a transfer and left. Some returned, while some still live in the city they were transferred to. Most of those who left are not happy where they left.

After the earthquake, my father moved to the village. We had an old house there. With the opening of schools in September, we rented a house in the center of Adıyaman. My father did not want to come, he said, “We will not see this city become a city again.” This city was actually the childhood, youth, and middle age of many of us, and they are all gone. Sometimes when you get in the car, you drive down a street, you don’t know where you are, you guess.

All of this is equally difficult for children. Up until now, they have moved to other places. Children have left their neighborhood friends or school friends here or they have passed away. That is why the mental shock caused by the earthquake lasts much longer. Most people in container cities are troubled. They miss their old lives, and they have somehow started to get used to the new life. My aunt’s children have passed away. My aunt lives in the village and cries every day she is alone. She has only one grandchild left. She hugs her. Despite this, she has not yet been able to tell them what she has experienced.

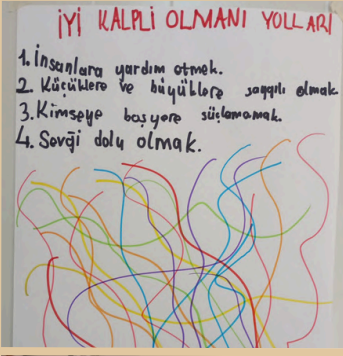
Most of the bodies buried in the first week in Adıyaman were without shrouds. Most of the bodies were not washed. They were laid side by side in the pits dug by the excavators and covered with soil. Remembering this makes one’s heart ache. There is a life in Adıyaman that is squeezed from two hundred square meter houses into twenty one square meter containers. It is really very difficult to expect normal behavior from these people all the time.

“All of this is equally difficult for children. Up until now, they have moved to other places. Children have left their neighborhood friends or school friends here or they have passed away. That is why the mental shock caused by the earthquake lasts much longer.”

The Adıyaman Municipality recently opened a boulevard in the city. They named the boulevard Fourth Murat. As Eğitim-SEN, KESK and SES, we tweeted and shared our demand with the public and Adıyaman Municipality: The first people who came to our aid during the earthquake were the people of Siverek and Urfa. There is no equivalent of the Fourth Murat among our people. In fact, most of the street names of the boulevards in Adıyaman have nothing to do with the local culture, geography, nature and history of Adıyaman. We made our call by writing, “Come, let’s name this boulevard ‘Siverekler Boulevard’ to thank the people of Siverek who first came to Adıyaman during the February 6 Earthquakes and stood by us for a long time and showed solidarity.” If we are going to thank something, it may not be right to memorialize it or make a statue of it. When you memorialize memory, you are also removing it from daily life in a way. But if you put memory into life, its meaning becomes much different. If that boulevard had been named ‘Siverek Boulevard’, children would have asked; “Why is this boulevard called Siverek Boulevard?” And we would have told our experiences with the beautiful feelings of solidarity.

We saw the sparkle in the eyes of our friends who came here in solidarity. We saw how valuable it is to lift a box together, how people came to show solidarity without looking at the type of material, without thinking, “Can I lift this?” We need to thank all the people of this country, you and everyone who came to show solidarity with us.

“We need to thank all the people of this country, you and everyone who came to show solidarity with us.”



İsias Oteli Davası'nın 4. duruşması
22 Ekim 2024 saat 10.00'da
Adıyaman 3. Ağır Ceza
Mahkemesi'nde görülecek.

