



**PERMANENT SOLUTION TO
INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT?**

An Assessment of the Van Action Plan for IDPs

Deniz Yüksekler Dilek Kurban



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VAN ACTION PLAN FOR IDPs**

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Demokratikleşme Programı

Democratization Program

Bankalar Cad. Minerva Han No: 2 Kat: 3

Karaköy 34420, İstanbul

Tel: +90 212 292 89 03 PBX

Fax: +90 212 292 90 46

info@tesev.org.tr

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List of Abbreviations

CSO	Civil Society Organization
ÇAREM	Center for Research, Rehabilitation and Education for Children (<i>Çocuk Araştırma, Rehabilitasyon ve Eğitim Merkezi</i>)
ÇOGEM	Children and Youth Center (<i>Çocuk ve Gençlik Merkezi</i>)
DAKP	Eastern Anatolia Development Project (<i>Doğu Anadolu Kalkınma Projesi</i>)
DTP	Democratic Society Party (<i>Demokratik Toplum Partisi</i>)
EC	European Commission
ECtHR	European Court of Human Rights
Eğitim-Bir-Sen	Trade Union of Educators (<i>Eğitim Birliği Sendikası</i>)
Eğitim-Sen	Trade Union of Education and Science Employees (<i>Eğitim ve Bilim Emekçileri Sendikası</i>)
EU	European Union
Göç-Der	Migrants' Association for Social Solidarity and Culture (<i>Göç Edenler Sosyal Yardımlaşma ve Kültür Derneği</i>)
HIPS	Hacettepe University Institute of Population Studies (<i>Hacettepe Üniversitesi Nüfus Etütleri Enstitüsü</i>)
HRA	Human Rights Association
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
İŞGEM	Business Development Center (<i>İş Geliştirme Merkezi</i>)
İŞKUR	General Directorate of Labor (<i>Türkiye İş Kurumu Genel Müdürlüğü</i>)
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
PKK	Kurdistan Workers' Party (<i>Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan</i>)
RSG	Representative of the United Nations Secretary General on (Human Rights of) Internally Displaced Persons
RVRP	Return to Villages and Rehabilitation Project
SRAP	Social Risk Mitigation Project (<i>Sosyal Riski Azaltma Projesi</i>)
SYDV	Social Aid and Solidarity Foundation (<i>Sosyal Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışma Vakfı</i>)
TESEV	Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation
TGYONA	Turkey Migration and Internally Displaced Population Survey (<i>Türkiye Göç ve Yerinden Olmuş Nüfus Araştırması</i>)
TMMOB	Union of Chambers of Engineers and Architects in Turkey (<i>Türkiye Mühendisler ve Mimarlar Odaları Birliği</i>)
TOKİ	Housing Development Administration of Turkey (<i>Toplu Konut İdaresi</i>)
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UXO	Unexploded Ordnance
VAKAD	Van Women's Association (<i>Van Kadın Derneği</i>)
VASİAD	Van Active Industrialists and Businessmen Association (<i>Van Aktif Sanayici ve İşadamları Derneği</i>)
VATSO	Van Chamber of Trade and Industry (<i>Van Ticaret ve Sanayi Odası</i>)
YAKA-KOOP	Life, Women, Environment, Culture and Entrepreneurship Cooperative (<i>Yaşam, Kadın, Çevre, Kültür ve İşletme Kooperatifi</i>)

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Deniz Yüksekler and Dilek Kurban

Executive Summary

BACKGROUND TO THIS REPORT

On 29 September 2006, the Van Governorship disclosed the “Van Province Action Plan for Service Delivery to Internally Displaced Persons” (the Van Action Plan or the Plan). Prepared with the technical support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and owned by the governorship, the Action Plan outlines the basic principles on which future services for internally displaced persons (IDPs) during their integration, resettlement or return processes will be based. Van was selected as a pilot province for the development of a plan of action as part of the cooperation between the Government of Turkey and the UNDP on the issue of displacement. This cooperation was initiated in the wake of the 2002 mission by Francis Deng, then Representative of the United Nations Secretary General on Internally Displaced Persons (RSG) in Turkey. The choice of Van was appropriate since it has greatly been affected by the displacement of more than one million Kurds during the 1990s in eastern and southeastern Turkey in the course of the armed conflict between the Turkish security forces and the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan – PKK*). The provincial center of Van hosts IDPs not only from the rural areas of its own districts but also from provinces to its south.

At the launch on 29 September 2006 in Van, then Governor of Van Mehmet Niyazi Tanılır emphasized that the Action Plan was prepared in a participatory and transparent manner. He also underlined that the governorship would cooperate with the civil society during the implementation stage. Walter Kälin, the current RSG, welcomed the Action Plan in his remarks at the same meeting. However, in a press release following his visit to Turkey between 28 September and 1 October 2007, Kälin warned the government about potential problems that it might face at the implementation stage. In addressing the governorship, he emphasized the importance of the monitoring progress and coordination among all stakeholders to identify possible hurdles in implementation. He also called on the civil society in Turkey to participate actively in the implementation and be constructive but critical observers.

This report is an assessment of the Van Action Plan. It was researched and written in the spirit of RSG Kälin’s call to the civil society. The report evaluates the effectiveness of the preparatory work undertaken by the UNDP and the governorship during the drafting of the Action Plan as well as the content and ongoing implementation of the Plan.

The report is based on interviews with various stakeholders, ranging from governorship and municipal officials, representatives of civil society organizations (CSOs) and IDPs in Van to UNDP and Ministry of the Interior officials in Ankara and on an analysis of all relevant documents. Deniz Yüksek and Dilek Kurban, the authors of the report, bring their previous research experience on internal displacement in Turkey to the analysis of the Van Action Plan.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

Prior to drafting the Action Plan, a series of workshops were organized in Van at the initiative of the UNDP office in Ankara which brought together the local CSOs and private sector for a discussion concerning the shape the Action Plan should take. This report’s assessment is that civil society’s contributions during the preparatory stage have to a significant extent not been incorporated in the final Action Plan. CSOs were not part of the drafting process. Furthermore, although discussions on political and socio-economic aspects of displacement took place at the workshops, many of the CSO’s views were not reflected in the Action Plan.

The Action Plan is a “blueprint” document that outlines the general principles of service delivery to IDPs in Van. It emphasizes freedom of movement and choice regarding integration, return and resettlement, and, as such, is

in agreement with the United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. It both addresses the right of return to original rural homes and the integration of urban IDPs. It also underlines the importance of civil society participation in implementation. However, the Action Plan suffers from a lack of focus and prioritization of outlined activities. No mention is made about the criteria for selection of service-delivery projects. There is no definition of IDPs and no criteria of eligibility for the beneficiaries of planned services. Particularly, the Action Plan does not address the fact that a significant proportion of IDPs in Van are from the neighboring Hakkâri and Şırnak provinces. Also, scant mention is made about funding sources.

The Action Plan does not address certain issues that pertain to national-level politics and policies concerning the Kurdish question, issues which have a direct bearing on the choices open to IDPs. Issues such as cessation of the armed conflict, abolishment of the provisional village guard system and the clearing of landmines and unexploded ordnances (UXOs), all of which would positively influence the safety of returns to original rural homes, are ignored in the Plan. These lacunae in the Action Plan have been the focus of criticism from some of the CSOs that participated in the preparatory process. The 'official' and 'technical' language used in the Plan, and the absence of any mention of the Kurdish language and ethnicity have also drawn criticism from civil society.

The implementation stage has been marked by the overwhelming predominance of projects prepared by public agencies in Van both in number and budgetary scale. Some of these are urban projects, such as the planned building of housing for IDPs and sewage systems in IDP neighborhoods. There are also projects pertaining to health, education and counseling. Rural-based projects pertain especially to the revitalization of agriculture and animal husbandry. As it stands, it seems that the public sector is out-competing the civil society with projects many of which actually fall under its official mandate and for which regular budget allocations should already exist.

Projects submitted by CSOs mostly pertain to skills-training and educational and cultural centers for IDP women, children and youth. At the time of this writing, out of 84 projects submitted by either public bodies or CSOs, 44 had either been approved by relevant government ministries or agencies or were still being negotiated. Only a fraction of these were allocated the requisite budgets and were already underway. Out of a total of 23 CSO projects, only two – both prepared by business groups for on-the-job training for IDPs – were allocated budgets for implementation.

The authority for the approval of projects and budget allocation rests with the government. However, the criteria for selection of projects and prioritization of budget allocation are not transparent. It is also unclear how the performance and effectiveness of these projects would be assessed. In particular, there are no assessment measures regarding whether implemented public and CSO projects actually benefit IDPs and other vulnerable groups in the province. These issues pertaining to transparency and coordination that emerged during the implementation of the Plan have contributed to the existing feelings of mistrust between CSOs and public agencies in Van.

Permanent Solution to Internal Displacement? An Assessment of the Van Action Plan for IDPs

1. INTRODUCTION

The root cause of conflict-induced internal displacement in Turkey in the past two decades is the Kurdish question, and more specifically the 25 years of armed conflict between the Kurdistan Workers' Party (*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan- PKK*) and the Turkish security forces in the eastern and southeastern regions of the country.

In the course of the conflict, more than one million Kurds were displaced from their rural homes, especially at its height in the early 1990s.¹ A significant proportion of displacement was caused by the eviction of villagers from their homes by security forces. According to a 1998 report by a parliamentary commission, the inhabitants of nearly 4,000 villages and hamlets were evicted. Evictions by the PKK, loss of security due to armed clashes, food embargoes and bans on using pastures imposed by the security forces, along with the resultant collapse of the rural economy, were the other reasons for displacement.² The "Turkey Migration and Internally Displaced Population Survey" (*Türkiye Göç ve Yerinden Olmuş Nüfus Araştırması - TGYONA*), commissioned by the government and carried out by Hacettepe University's Institute of Population Studies (HIPS), shows that displacement took place in 14 provinces (Adıyaman, Ağrı, Batman, Bingöl, Bitlis, Diyarbakır, Elazığ, Hakkâri, Mardin, Muş, Siirt, Şırnak, Tunceli, Van). About half of the population displaced from the rural areas of these provinces migrated to urban areas within the same region; the rest migrated to 10 provinces elsewhere in Turkey (İstanbul, Ankara, İzmir, Adana, Mersin, Bursa, Antalya, Malatya, Manisa, Kocaeli).³

It was only in the 2000s that the government started developing tangible policies for addressing the plight of the displaced. Several initiatives taking shape since the 1990s served as catalysts in this outcome. On the one hand, starting with its landmark 1996 decision in the case of *Akdivar and Others v. Turkey*, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) issued more than thirty judgments and approved several friendly settlements in which Turkey was made to pay compensation to the plaintiffs for violation of their rights in the course of displacement.⁴ Meanwhile, Turkey's 1987 application for candidacy to European Union (EU) membership was accepted in 1999. The EU made Turkey's accession conditional to its fulfillment of a number of political criteria, including addressing the plight of the displaced Kurdish population. As a result of these developments, the government made several commitments to the EU in the "Turkish National Programme for the Adoption of the Acquis."⁵ These commitments to the EU also led to United Nations' (UN) involvement in the development of policies and programs targeting the displaced in Turkey. Francis Deng, the then Representative of the UN Secretary General on Internally Displaced Persons (RSG), conducted a fact-finding mission in Turkey in 2002 to observe the situation on the ground.⁶ As a result of this mission, Deng authored a report where he made several recommendations to the government to alleviate the plight of the displaced,

1 There are conflicting figures on the extent of displacement in Turkey. While some civil society groups claim that up to four million people were evicted from their homes, the Ministry of the Interior maintained for many years that this figure was around 350,000. For a discussion about the controversy on figures, see Dilek Kurban, Deniz Yüksek, Ayşe Betül Çelik, Turgay Ünal and A. Tamer Aker, *Coming to Terms with Forced Migration: Post-Displacement Restitution of Citizenship Rights in Turkey*, TESEV, 2007. A government-commissioned nationally representative survey carried out by Hacettepe University's Institute of Population Studies (HIPS) estimates that around 950,000 to 1.2 million people were internally displaced in the course of the conflict. HIPS, *Türkiye Göç ve Yerinden Olmuş Nüfus Araştırması*, Hacettepe University, 6 December 2006.

2 See Kurban et al., *Coming to Terms* for a discussion on the reasons behind internal displacement in the 1990s.

3 HIPS, *Türkiye Göç Araştırması*.

4 European Court of Human Rights, *Akdivar and Others v. Turkey*, No. 99/1995/605/693, 27 April, 21 May and 30 August 1996. For an analysis of the Court's case law on internal displacement in Turkey, see Kurban et al., *Coming to Terms*.

5 "Turkish National Programme for the Adoption of the Acquis," (http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/turkey/npaa_full_en.pdf).

6 For an account of Deng's fact-finding mission to Turkey, see Francis Deng, opening and closing remarks at the conference entitled "Internal Displacement in Turkey and Abroad: International Principles, Experiences and Policy Proposals," TESEV, 4-5 December 2006.

including “clarification and dissemination of government policy on internal displacement,” “addressing the current conditions of the displaced” and “cooperation with international agencies.”⁷

To implement the RSG’s recommendations, the government initiated collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) towards developing a policy on internal displacement. This initiative culminated in several significant outcomes:⁸ the conducting of an independent survey on internally displaced persons (IDPs) by HIPS;⁹ the training of public officials from the Ministry of the Interior and governorships in eastern and southeastern Turkey; the translation into Turkish and the dissemination of the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement; and the adoption in 2005 by the Council of Ministers of a Strategy Document outlining the principles of a national strategy on IDPs.¹⁰ In addition, a law¹¹ (the Compensation Law) was enacted and put into effect in 2004 to compensate IDPs and other persons who had sustained material damages due to the armed conflict since 1987, the year that a state of emergency was declared in the region. The General Directorate of Provincial Administration of the Ministry of the Interior coordinates all government activities pertaining to IDPs, including the implementation of the “Return to Villages and Rehabilitation Project” (RVRP) and the Compensation Law.

Despite the enactment of these policies, it must be noted that the government never formally acknowledged its responsibility for forcibly evicting its citizens from their homes and for the human rights violations committed by its security forces during the displacement.

Walter Kälin, who succeeded Francis Deng as the new RSG, welcomed these policies and initiatives but pointed out that Turkey needs to do more. In a 2006 letter addressed to the government, Kälin recommended that “the Ministry of the Interior, in conjunction with other pertinent parts of Government and in consultation with civil society and internally displaced persons themselves, (...) develop a specific Plan of Action in order to turn the framework of the Integrated Strategy Document into concrete, practical measures of implementation.”¹²

The “Van Province Action Plan for Service Delivery to Internally Displaced Persons” (the Van Action Plan or the Plan) was disclosed in 2006 in response to Kälin’s call. The objective of this report is to offer a critical analysis of the preparation, content and implementation of this Action Plan. The report is a continuation of earlier collaborative research by the authors on the politics, legal framework, and socio-economic consequences of, and the policies for solving problems arising from, internal displacement as well as the current conditions of the displaced in Turkey.¹³

2. METHODOLOGY

This report is based predominantly on field research conducted in Van and Ankara between November 2007 and July 2008. Two separate visits were made to Van in November 2007 and July 2008, and research was conducted in Ankara in November 2007, May 2008 and April 2009.¹⁴ The authors conducted interviews with officials of the UNDP in Ankara, officials from the Governorship and the Municipality in Van, and representatives of 14 civil society organizations¹⁵ (CSOs)¹⁶ as well as a number of IDPs in Van. The fieldwork in Van remained limited to the provincial center. Therefore, district governorships, district municipalities and CSOs located in districts were not contacted. In the aftermath of the completion of the fieldwork, follow-up research was conducted through e-mail, telephone and fax to update

7 *Specific Groups and Individuals Mass Exoduses and Displaced Persons*, Report of the Representative of the Secretary-General on Internally Displaced Persons, Francis Deng, visit to Turkey, submitted pursuant to Commission on Human Rights resolution 2002/56, E/CN.4/2003/86/Add.2, 27 November 2002, Executive Summary. For an analysis of the progress made by the Government of Turkey with regard to putting into practice Deng’s recommendations, see Dilek Kurban, Ayşe Betül Çelik and Deniz Yüksek, *Overcoming a Legacy of Mistrust: Towards Reconciliation between the State and the Displaced*, TESEV-IDMC/NRC, June 2006.

8 For more on these outcomes, see Kurban et. al., *Overcoming a Legacy*, pp. 13-16 and 40-43.

9 HIPS, *Türkiye Göç Araştırması*. For a critical review of this survey, see Kurban et al., *Coming to Terms*.

10 Ministry of the Interior, *Measures on the Issue of Internally Displaced Persons and the Return to Villages and Rehabilitation Project in Turkey*, 17 August 2005.

11 “*Terör ve Terörle Mücadeleden Doğan Zararların Karşılmasına Dair Kanun*” [Law for Compensating Losses from Terror and the Fight against Terror], No. 5233, 17 July 2004, *Official Gazette* No. 25535, 27 July 2004 (Compensation Law).

12 Walter Kälin, Letter sent to the Permanent Mission of Turkey to the United Nations, 31 March 2006 (on file with the authors).

13 See Kurban et al. *Overcoming a Legacy* and Kurban et al. *Coming to Terms*.

14 As is evident from the time gap between the completion of the fieldwork and the date of publication of this report, there was a considerable delay in the release of the report. This was caused by health problems concerning one of the authors.

15 These 14 were selected from among the more than 40 associations, professional organizations, chambers and trade unions cited in the list of stakeholders in the annex of the Van Action Plan.

16 This report uses the term “civil society organization” (CSO), which is also the term cited in government and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) documents on this issue, rather than “non-governmental organization” (NGO), a term more commonly used in English. The preference is based on the fact that CSOs in Turkey cover a wide range of organizations including those that conduct advocacy on behalf of certain groups, semi-public bodies such as professional organizations and trade chambers, interest groups such as those representing business companies as well as some organizations having an independent legal existence but with organic links to public authorities in terms of funding and decision-making.

information from the same sources, and a final interview was conducted with officials at the General Directorate of Provincial Administration of the Ministry of the Interior in Ankara. CSOs were selected from lists provided by the governorship containing the names of organizations that participated in the preparatory workshops culminating in the adoption of the Van Action Plan and/or organizations that submitted projects for funding under the Plan. An effort was made to have a fair representation of CSOs with different perspectives and mandates.

3. BACKGROUND TO THE VAN ACTION PLAN

3.1. INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT IN VAN

The largest regional center in eastern Turkey, Van is one of the provinces in the RVRP region that have received the highest number of IDPs. The urban population of the provincial center (Van Municipality) increased from around 155,000 in 1990 to around 285,000 in 2000, the period covering the height of displacement in the region. According to official figures, the population reached 353,355 in 2008.¹⁷ However, then Mayor of Van Burhan Yenigün thought that the actual population may be closer to 600,000 (Interview 8).

According to the governorship, 35 villages and 137 hamlets in four districts of Van were affected by displacement.¹⁸ The local branch of the Human Rights Association (HRA), however, claims to have identified 284 villages and hamlets within the borders of Van whose residents have been evicted (Interview 2, Bozbay). It should be noted that the actual number of IDPs in the Van provincial center is likely to be much higher than the number of people evicted from their rural homes within Van province, since a significant proportion of IDPs are originally from the rural areas of Hakkâri and Şırnak provinces, as indicated by the Mayor of Van and representatives of several CSOs.

According to a survey conducted among IDPs in Van commissioned by the UNDP to a team of academics at Van Yüzüncü Yıl University,¹⁹ the most reported “reason for migration” is “forced evacuation of villages” (66.6 percent) and “terror and violence” (38 percent);²⁰ 52.7 percent of the urban respondents said they have never even visited their villages since the time of displacement. Among the respondents who have returned to their villages, 39.6 percent reported remaining in the village year-round; the rest reported dividing their time between their rural homes and the city. Another important finding is that 42.1 percent of the respondents wish to return to their villages even if the government does not provide any support, whereas this rate increases to a total of 57.3 percent if the government provides economic support (33.9 percent) or rebuilds villages (23.4 percent). Since the survey does not specify the provincial origins of IDPs in Van and hence does not indicate the destination of return, it is not possible to predict to what extent village visits, actual returns and intention to return are affected by obstacles such as security concerns (e.g. landmines and village guards) and the ongoing armed conflict.²¹

Of overall survey respondents, 53.5 percent are illiterate; this figure climbs to 69.2 percent among women. The survey shows that the level of unemployment is alarming in Van. Only 7 percent of the population has regular employment (of which 4.5 percent are village guards and 3.5 percent are unskilled workers, seasonal workers and civil servants), whereas 45.1 percent reported themselves as unemployed. Among the rest, 31 percent reported being “self-employed,” a term which the survey team interpreted as meaning having irregular or odd jobs, and 5.5 percent were students (others did not answer this question).²² 30 percent of the respondents reported to have at least one working child in their households; 91.2 percent have green cards, which refers to the free health care program for the poor in Turkey. The high rate of green card holders indicates that the poor in Van have wide access to free health care, but it also

17 Calculated from figures on the Van Governorship web site (<http://www.van.gov.tr/nufus/nufus.php>).

18 Van Valiliği, *Van İli Köye Dönüş ve Rehabilitasyon Projesi* [Van Governorship, Return to Villages and Rehabilitation Project in Van Province] undated document (on file with the authors). While the governorship does not necessarily identify these villages and hamlets as “places affected by internal displacement” but rather as areas that fall within the scope of the Return to Villages and Rehabilitation Project (RVRP), one can surmise that these are the villages and hamlets which were evacuated since the RVRP is a program for assisting internally displaced persons (IDPs) wishing to return to their villages.

19 The survey, conducted in July and August 2006 both in neighborhoods in the city where IDPs have settled and in villages where IDPs have returned, was filled out by 581 respondents of both sexes and different age groups. Emin Yaşar Demirci (in cooperation with Ahmet Zeki Ünal and Hasan Hüseyin Tekin), *Place of Displaceds: Choices and Preferences of Internally Displaced Persons in Van, 2006* (on file with the authors).

20 More than one option could be marked by the respondents.

21 Although Van province has not been a stage for intensive clashes between the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan- PKK*) and the Turkish security forces, Hakkâri and Şırnak are within the primary zones of PKK attacks and army operations therefore, return to the rural areas of these provinces is still either not allowed or unsafe. The declaration by the Turkish security forces of a ‘security zone’ in an area bordering the provinces of Siirt, Hakkâri and Şırnak in June 2007 has made returns practically impossible.

22 The definition of occupational categories in the questionnaire is unclear and the gender breakdown is unavailable; therefore these findings should be interpreted with caution. However, these figures give a general idea about the scale of poverty in Van province.

confirms the extent of poverty and the absence of formal social security in the province.²³ The survey shows that the vast majority of houses where IDPs live lack basic facilities (e.g. 79.5 percent of houses do not have a sewage system, 52.4 percent have no indoor plumbing). More strikingly, 75.5 percent of IDP houses in the city are not connected to the sewage system. However, Mayor Yenigün pointed out that when he came to office in 2004, 60 percent of urban households were not connected to the sewage system and 25 percent did not have piped water, but that by 2007, these rates had declined to 30 percent and 5 percent respectively as a result of infrastructural investments (Interview 8). These figures suggest that the peripheral neighborhoods where IDPs live are last to receive public services, and in many cases they still lacked even basic access at the time of this study. The authors observed in November 2007 that two thirds of the Yalim Erez neighborhood, which houses an IDP population, was not connected to the city's sewage system, whereas the other third became connected only in fall 2007, 11 years after the neighborhood's establishment (Interview 11, Kaya).

While not directly related to the issue of internal displacement, the current economic situation in Van merits attention since poverty and unemployment in the city add to the economic problems of the displaced. A combination of various factors has left Van economically behind during the last few decades.²⁴ The influx of IDPs in the 1990s, the prolonged armed conflict, and the ill-designed and short-sighted government policies in the region have left Van deeply impoverished. The sudden and unplanned arrival of tens of thousands of displaced has put a considerable strain on the infrastructure and resources of the city and adversely affected the industrial sector. For example, as Zahir Kandaşoğlu, the President of the Van Chamber of Trade and Industry (*Van Ticaret ve Sanayi Odası – VATSO*), points out, because of the excessive demand on Van's limited power supply due to migration, businesses in the organized industrial district receive only low-voltage electricity (Interview 4, Kandaşoğlu). The 'security measures' taken by the state since the late 1980s with the stated goal of controlling the PKK have had serious repercussions on trade in Van. The control and curbing of the border trade between Iran and Turkey through the Özalp border gate has also adversely affected Van's economy (Interview 4, Kandaşoğlu). Pointing out that Turkey's borders with Greece and Bulgaria are open to trade despite allegations of corruption in border provinces in the west of the country, the VATSO Chairman believes that Van is being "discriminated" against as a result of the severe limitations on border trade (Interview 4, Kandaşoğlu). Business leaders in Van also point out that the privatization of state economic enterprises in the 2000s has had more adverse consequences in Van and other eastern and southeastern provinces compared to the rest of Turkey, since the private sector is very weak in the region. Therefore, they call for the restructuring of government economic incentives not only based on the GNP per capita in each province, but also on a region by region basis (Interview 4, Kandaşoğlu).

3.2. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT IN VAN

Until just a few years ago, the only government policy tool on internal displacement was the RVRP, which started to be implemented around the turn of the decade in the 14 provinces where displacement had taken place. Van is one of these provinces. Under the RVRP, villagers returning to their homes were entitled to receive monetary or in-kind aid from the government to rebuild their homes and restart agricultural activities. However, the RVRP has been highly criticized due to lack of transparency of the eligibility criteria, the paucity of aid and its failure to alleviate IDPs' concerns about personal safety due to the presence of landmines²⁵ and the continuation of the village guard system as well as about the sustainability of rural life in the areas where return took place. The RVRP has not been effective at all in solving the problems of the displaced, since not only have returns to villages remained rather limited, but it has also completely disregarded the living conditions of urban IDPs.²⁶

In Van, the governorship has undertaken activities such as building/paving roads, laying water pipes, distributing monetary and in-kind aid (building materials), building/repairing schools and building housing within the purview of the RVRP, which was implemented in the districts of Başkale, Çatak, Gevaş and Gürpınar, all of which have been affected by displacement. The budget for most of this work came from the general budget allocated by the government to Van

23 As of 6 April 2009, there were 542,426 green card holders in Van province (<http://ykart.saglik.gov.tr/ykbs/ykbs.ilaktif.jsp>). This figure is very high given that the total population of the province was 979,671 in 2007. In Turkey, formal employment entitles employees to social security which covers both health insurance and retirement benefits, whereas the green card is a means-tested entitlement to free health care services for poor citizens who have no formal social security.

24 Van province was ranked 67th among 76 provinces in terms of socio-economic development in 1996. It dropped to the 75th rank among 81 provinces in 2007. Van's human development index was 616 in 2004, whereas the same index figure for Turkey was 750. As such, Van's human development level was below that of both Bolivia (687) and Equatorial Guinea (655). See, TESEV, *Doğu ve Güneydoğu Anadolu'da Sosyal ve Ekonomik Öncelikler*, 2006, pp. 13, 16.

25 According to the government, there are 920,000 landmines laid across the eastern and southeastern regions. NGOs point out that these landmines have been laid by both the security forces and the PKK. For more on the landmines, see Kurban et al., *Coming to Terms*.

26 For a thorough critique of the RVRP, see Kurban et al., *Coming to Terms*.

province, whereas some of the in-kind and monetary aid came from the Provincial Special Administration (*İl Özel İdaresi*) and the Social Aid and Solidarity Foundation (*Sosyal Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışma Vakfı – SYDV*).²⁷ In 2005, the Governorship of Van integrated the RVRP activities in these four districts under the umbrella of the “South Van Rural Development Project” (*Güney Van Kırsal Kalkınma Projesi*).

The most well-known government initiative targeting IDPs in Van under the RVRP is the “Konalga Village Town Project” (*Konalga Köy Kent Projesi*) in Çatak district. Within the scope of this project, 383 houses, one village clinic, one elementary school, one community and occupational center (*toplum ve iş merkezi*) and one gendarmerie station were built for an estimated population of 3,200.²⁸ Completed in 2000, this “model village” is part of a controversial government policy whereby villages are rebuilt in accessible central plains and various incentives are provided to IDPs to relocate to these new settlements rather than return to their original villages or hamlets, often located in remote and mountainous terrains. The government claims that centralized villages facilitate the provision of public services such as education, health and security; whereas some CSOs claim that the real purpose is to maintain control over the rural population by keeping them away from mountainous areas where PKK militants operate.

The Van Governorship argues that the Konalga Project is in accordance with the principle of “voluntary return” which constitutes the basis of government policy on internal displacement, and that 346 families and 2,365 IDPs have returned to Konalga.²⁹ However, officials at the Bureau for Monitoring and Coordination of RVRP (the RVRP Bureau) of the governorship admitted that some members of the community did not move into Konalga (Interview 10). A CSO representative argued that the project is a failure, on the grounds that it “is not appropriate for the lifestyle of the Kurds” because the houses are too close to each other,³⁰ there are no grazing areas in the vicinity and the village is located in an area prone to landslides (Interview 2, Gültepe).

Another significant government undertaking was the establishment of an entirely new neighborhood outside the city center of Van for displaced village guards who were obliged in 1995 to leave Uzundere, Hakkâri due to intensive fighting between the PKK and the Turkish security forces. The government at the time relocated the displaced to various places in Van, and provided them with temporary accommodation, daily meals and in-kind aid (Interview 11, Kaya). To provide permanent accommodation for this population, the governorship, with the assistance of civil society, built 258 houses on state land, a primary school, a primary health care clinic, a community and work center and a carpet atelier. In summer 1996, the displaced were resettled to this neighborhood, named Yalım Erez Mahallesi.³¹

The conditions of this group of IDPs initially presented a contrast to the situation of the majority of the displaced who received no financial assistance or humanitarian aid from the state.³² Several CSO representatives in Van commented on the ‘privileged’ position of IDPs in Yalım Erez, who they believed were receiving salaries from the government on account of being former village guards. In fact, the state discontinued payment of salaries to village guards from Uzundere once they were displaced and disarmed. Furthermore, while IDPs from Uzundere have indeed received government assistance in the early years of their displacement, the aid decreased following their resettlement in Yalım Erez and ceased in 2000: “They told us ‘you have now become natives of Van.’ They started giving us heating aid [coal] just like they give to the other poor in Van. But after 2003 they have not even treated us the same as the poor natives of Van. They treat us as if we live in another province” (Interview 11, Kaya).

Yalım Erez, which currently consists of 375 houses, does appear to have been abandoned by the state. When the authors visited the neighborhood in November 2007, ten years after its construction, a proper sewage system had been just recently built in only one third of the neighborhood; there were no paved roads, the area was largely covered in mud, residents still lacked title deeds to their houses, there was only one primary school and one local health clinic. Residents complained of power outages and foul odors in the remaining two thirds of the neighborhood not connected to the sewage system.

27 Van Valiliği, *Köye Dönüş Projesi*.

28 *Ibid.*

29 *Ibid.*

30 In Konalga, houses for families displaced from several outlying hamlets were built side by side in one location. Not only does this make it difficult for families to access grazing land in higher altitudes, but also has the potential of intensifying previously existing inter-family conflicts due to too much proximity.

31 Van Valiliği, *Köye Dönüş Projesi*.

32 IDPs endured severe poverty and destitution particularly during the initial years of displacement due to complete lack of humanitarian assistance. During the 1990s, the government did not allow national or international humanitarian agencies to access IDPs nor did it provide any assistance itself. For more on the failure of the state to provide for the displaced, see Kurban et al., *Coming to Terms*.

In addition to the activities under the RVRP described above, there have been a number of other government initiatives in Van directly or indirectly targeting IDPs. In January 2003, a center for the rehabilitation of children working in the streets (*Çocuk Araştırma, Rehabilitasyon ve Eğitim Merkezi – ÇAREM*) was established by the governorship as part of the Social Risk Mitigation Project (*Sosyal Riski Azaltma Projesi – SRAP*) (Interview 7). In March 2008, the center was renamed (as *Çocuk ve Gençlik Merkezi – ÇOGEM*) and its administration was transferred to the Provincial Directorate of Social Services (*İl Sosyal Hizmetler Müdürlüğü*).

Although it is not directly related to IDPs, another program targeting the poor inhabitants of Van is a microcredit project run by the governorship. It was initiated at the end of 2005 with funds allocated from the Provincial Special Administration budget as well as with donations from businesspeople in Van. By 2008, more than 600 women had received loans ranging between 100 and 700 YTL,³³ which they are required to repay in 46 weeks. The project is administered by the Association for the Support of Women's Entrepreneurship (*Kadın Girişimciliğini Destekleme Derneği*), which operates under the governorship. Members of this association say that the majority of microcredit recipients are IDPs (Interview 5).

4. THE VAN ACTION PLAN

4.1. BACKGROUND TO THE ACTION PLAN

The Van Action Plan is the product of cooperation between the Governorship of Van and the UNDP Turkey Office. As the UN agency with the mandate to monitor Turkey's fulfillment of the RSG's recommendations to the government, the UNDP has been assisting the government and the governorships of RVRP provinces in designing their policies on IDPs. Following the selection of Van as the pilot province for developing an action plan to provide services to urban IDPs, the UNDP Turkey Office designated Leyla Şen as the program manager. Şen worked closely with the governorship and CSOs in Van to bring stakeholders together at a series of workshops and focus group meetings over the course of six months to produce a document outlining the roadmap of government policies on IDPs in the province. The Plan was launched on 29 September 2006 at a public event in Van with the participation of RSG Walter Kälin, then Minister of the Interior Abdülkadir Aksu, the governors of all 14 provinces that fall within the scope of the RVRP, CSOs in Van, and the local and national media.

The government and the Van Governorship as well as the UNDP and the RSG attribute great significance to the Van Action Plan, which they feel sets an example for other countries that have problems of internal displacement. According to Özdemir Çakacak, the Governor of Van, the Plan is "the only comprehensive project on IDPs. It is the only example both in Turkey and in the world. It will perhaps set an example in other places" (Interview 7).

The government's goal is to replicate this action plan in the remaining 13 provinces that fall within the scope of the RVRP. Ali Fidan, Department Director at the General Directorate of Provincial Administration of the Ministry of the Interior said that the preparatory work for similar action plans in those provinces is ongoing and that the UNDP is participating in this process by giving technical support. He pointed out that the Van Action Plan sets a methodological example for those provinces, for instance in terms of participation by CSOs and IDPs themselves in the preparatory workshops. However, each province will develop its own plan of action, since each province might have different issues and priorities; for instance the conditions of IDPs living in cities may be different from that of IDPs who have returned to their villages. According to Ali Fidan, the goal is to disclose these provincial action plans towards the end of 2009 (Interview 22).

According to UNDP representatives, the governors of the remaining 13 provinces are "very eager to replicate the action plan" (Interview 1, Şen) and have "in principle agreed to go ahead" (Interview 1, Richardson-Golinski). The UNDP began its preparatory work in the remaining provinces in summer 2008.

Department Director Fidan said that the Ministry of the Interior would like to disclose a "National Action Plan" on internal displacement by the end of 2009 at the latest; however, the preparatory work in the provinces and the provincial action plans would have to be completed first, since the national plan will be built on the said work. Fidan also said some activities were planned for the purpose of soliciting views regarding the preparation of the national plan (Interview 22).

33 At the beginning of 2009, the Turkish currency became TL (Turkish Lira), but remained at the same rate as the YTL (New Turkish Lira). As of 22 April 2009, the exchange rate was 1 USD = 1.6 TL, and 1 Euro = 2.1 TL.

UNDP officials also said that they intend to cooperate with the government in the development of a national strategy on internal displacement which will rest upon the provincial action plans once they are completed. At a meeting in November 2007, UNDP officials and senior government officials reached a consensus to develop the national strategy through a bottom-up approach (Interview 1, Richardson-Golinski). Although the UNDP would like to have a monitoring role, the content of its involvement is not clear since the state considers internal displacement to be a “sensitive topic” (Interview 1, Richardson-Golinski).

On the other hand, the government has not announced any intention to develop similar action plans in large urban centers such as İstanbul, İzmir, Bursa, Ankara, Adana and Mersin in western and southern Turkey which host a large number of IDPs suffering from poverty, unemployment, discrimination and incomplete access to public services.

4.2. CONTENT OF THE ACTION PLAN

The Van Action Plan is very important since it is the first official document that outlines the general principles for service delivery to IDPs; as such, it indicates the good will of the government in working towards the solution of the problems of the displaced. However, it also suffers from certain weaknesses, many of which have been the target of criticism by CSOs in Van. This and the following five sections provide a summary and general assessment of the content of the Action Plan, an analysis of its drafting process, a detailed discussion of CSO criticisms, the governorship’s response to these, as well as an account of budgetary issues in the Plan.

In the Introduction, the Action Plan is described as a “blueprint” that the Van Governorship can follow in its strategies towards the IDPs and that aims at complementing, rather than replacing, existing programs targeting them. In the Preface, then Van Governor Mehmet Niyazi Tanılır says that the Plan was shaped in consultation with the municipality, CSOs, the private sector and the displaced within the framework of finding a permanent solution to IDPs’ problems.³⁴

The Action Plan is owned by the governorship. Municipalities in Van province and the Provincial Special Administration are defined as stakeholders; CSOs are considered “supporters” of the Plan in terms of delivering services, data-gathering and designing and implementing relevant measures; and the role of the private sector is described as providing ideas as well as physical and financial resources.³⁵ The Plan, acknowledging the desirability of continued contribution by the international community, also calls for the mobilization of bilateral and multilateral international funds for the implementation of various projects.³⁶

The Action Plan, seeking to conform to both “international standards” (namely, the UN Guiding Principles) and government policies, aims at improving the living conditions of IDPs in Van. At the outset, the Plan emphasizes the importance of the following principles: freedom of movement; freedom and voluntary-ness of choice; ensuring the security of IDPs; sensitivity to the viewpoints of beneficiaries of the services; promotion of active support from and participation of CSOs, the private sector and the international community; empowering women and youth in decision-making processes; environmental sustainability; respecting cultural heritage and tradition as well as generational differences; distinguishing between rural and urban needs in designing and implementing service delivery; emphasizing a “holistic” approach; emphasizing the participation of IDPs in shaping the manner and quality of services; sustainability of services, resources and the living conditions of IDPs; emphasis on dynamic planning and implementation of services; and coordination with and conformity to the implementation of the Compensation Law.³⁷

The Action Plan consists of two main sections: strategic measures and policy proposals. Strategic measures are discussed under several headings as follows: integration and resettlement, infrastructure and social aid, socio-economic development, awareness-raising and communication, and cooperation and partnership. The Plan states that conditions will be created for the voluntary and safe return of those who want to return to their former places of residence. For this purpose, land cadastration and property rights issues in rural areas will be resolved; a database about the living conditions of IDPs will be prepared; “model” villages will be built through a holistic approach as part of the South Van Rural Development Project already underway; material will be provided for those returning IDPs who want to build their own houses; work will be undertaken for building “model” urban settlements in the Van provincial

34 Van Valiliği, *Van İli Yerinden Olmuş Kişiler Hizmet Sunumuna Dair Eylem Planı* [Van Governorship, Action Plan for Service Delivery to Internally Displaced Persons], September 2006, Van.

35 *Ibid.*, p. 16.

36 *Ibid.*

37 *Ibid.*, pp. 2-5.

center under the framework of “urban transformation projects”³⁸ for those IDPs who want to remain in the city.³⁹ Regarding social aid, the Action Plan calls for increasing the number of psychologists and social service workers, acquisition of mobile healthcare units, expanding existing social aid programs such as the “Food Bank,” the “Green Network,” the microcredit project and the rehabilitation center for children working in the streets.⁴⁰ Regarding socio-economic development, the Action Plan proposes possible projects such as promoting tourism in Van, encouraging the cultivation of high value-added vegetables and fruit trees, promoting microcredit projects, expanding small-scale entrepreneurship following the existing model of incubators under the Van Business Development Center (*İş Geliştirme Merkezi – İŞGEM*),⁴¹ and developing skills and occupational training programs, particularly for women and youth.⁴² The Action Plan also considers issues of consciousness-raising of and communication with IDPs. It proposes the publication of brochures on services for IDPs and the participation of service users, including CSOs and IDPs, in gathering and disseminating knowledge. Regarding cooperation and participation, the Plan emphasizes consultation and dialogue with all local stakeholders on issues of concern for both IDPs and other vulnerable groups. It foresees twice-yearly training workshops for CSOs. The Plan specifically points out the importance of CSO participation in projects for socio-economic development, education, healthcare services and income-earning activities, and underlines that CSO participation would not only contribute to the building of their capacity and competence, but also help make services more efficient and targeted. In the same vein, the importance of training CSOs for capacity-building and public-CSO partnership projects are emphasized. For evaluation of the progress of the Action Plan, participatory methods and analysis models, along with regular meetings with the participation of a broad range of stakeholders, are recommended.⁴³

The Action Plan also contains proposals focusing on a set of suggestions at the national level. These pertain to several areas as follows: national-level incentives for retaining teachers and healthcare personnel in the province; raising the quality of human resources for the purpose of improving the quality of basic services by public agencies; financial strengthening of local government (municipalities) in districts that have received high numbers of migrants; prioritizing urban renewal projects for the purpose of providing free or subsidized shelter for IDPs and other vulnerable groups; and creating financial incentives for the private sector to either offer training programs for IDPs in areas where there are manpower needs, or employing IDPs who complete training programs to be offered by CSOs. The Plan also addresses the need for creating mechanisms for improving market access for the products of rural producers and urban entrepreneurs, including public-private partnerships and the carrying out of market research.⁴⁴

4.3. ASSESSMENT OF THE ACTION PLAN

The Action Plan is congruent with the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement on the issue of voluntariness and freedom of choice regarding return, integration and resettlement. This is significant since one of the recommendations of RSG Kâlin was that any action plan should emphasize freedom of movement and choice for IDPs.⁴⁵ It is a welcome act that the Plan foresees participation by CSOs and IDPs themselves in the shaping and implementation of projects. Especially noteworthy is acknowledgment of the need for participatory planning of rural services for returnees according to their demands, and moving away from the building of centralized villages (*toplulaştırılmış köy*) such as Konağa. It is also significant that the Action Plan implicitly recognizes the psychological trauma caused by displacement and foresees the provision of psychological counseling to IDPs.

However, there are a number of weaknesses or lacunae in the Action Plan that compromise its overall strengths. The Plan covers a broad range of topics, but does not offer detail on any of them. While this provides considerable flexibility for developing projects, it also results in a lack of focus. Thus, setting aside the issue of returns and resettlement, none of the “strategic measures” described in the plan are specific to IDPs. This can only be partially justified when

38 Urban renewal refers to building housing for lower and middle income groups in urban areas. Municipalities have the authority to plan and carry out urban renewal (*kentsel dönüşüm*) projects under “Büyükşehir Belediyesi Kanunu” [Law on Metropolitan Municipalities], No. 5216, 10 July 2004, *Official Gazette* No. 25531, 23 July 2004 and “Belediye Kanunu” [Law on Municipalities], No. 5393, 3 July 2005, *Official Gazette* No. 25874, 13 July 2005.

39 Van Valiliği, *Van Eylem Planı*, pp. 6-7.

40 *Ibid.*, p.8. These are existing programs that, respectively, distribute food and clothing to the poor, centralize the information on the recipients of various types of social aid, distribute microcredit to poor women, and provide rehabilitation and training for children working on the streets (See Section 3.2 of this report).

41 Van Business Development Center (*İş Geliştirme Merkezi - İŞGEM*) is one of 12 business incubator programs operating under a World Bank loan program in various provinces.

42 Van Valiliği, *Van Eylem Planı*, pp. 9-10.

43 *Ibid.*, pp. 10-12.

44 *Ibid.*, pp. 13-15.

45 Kâlin, Letter.

one remembers that other “vulnerable groups” (i.e., migrants, the poor, the unemployed, youth, women and children) also have pressing and comparable needs in Van. The lack of focus and the generality of the Plan also make it look overambitious, and therefore unrealistic in terms of financing and implementation. For instance, no prioritization or concrete description of the various types of activities that would fall under the categories of “strategic measures” is spelled out.

Although the Plan recognizes the freedom of choice regarding returns or urban integration, it actually goes little beyond the framework of the RVRP on the issue of rebuilding rural livelihoods (specifically the South Van Rural Development Project initiated in 2005), and relies completely on future “urban renewal projects” regarding resettlement in the provincial center. For instance, no consideration is given to the reality that many IDPs who settled in the provincial center of Van were displaced from the provinces of Şırnak and Hakkâri where similar action plans have not yet been designed and where more importantly PKK attacks and security forces’ operations are ongoing, making return practically impossible for those displaced individuals. Also, there is no mention of the needs of IDPs who remain in the Van provincial center and commute seasonally to their villages for farming.

Regarding returns, the Action Plan also does not give due consideration to the Kurdish question, the political issue that constitutes the root cause of internal displacement in Turkey. The Plan is silent on the issue of physical security preventing returns, such as the danger posed by landmines and unexploded ordnances (UXOs) as well as potential conflicts between provisional village guards who have remained in rural areas and returning IDPs, many of whom had refused to yield to pressure from security forces to become village guards and had therefore been displaced. It should be remembered that RSG Kâlin noted that “the exercise of the right to freedom of movement and to choice of residence depends in substantial measure on the security of affected persons ... [and] there is need to reconcile ensuring personal safety for persons wishing to return with the need for ensuring State security.”⁴⁶

Although civil society participation is emphasized in the Action Plan, the mechanisms through which such participation will be achieved and rendered effective is not clarified. Of equal importance, the Plan never mentions how eligibility for services will be decided, such as determining who the IDPs and other eligible vulnerable groups are.

There is no mention in the Action Plan about how various projects will be financed. The document acknowledges that its implementation will require significant financial resources, but does not concretely address potential sources of funding except to mention possible private sector financing and the need for mobilizing international support.

4.4. THE DRAFTING PROCESS

The Van Action Plan is the outcome of a consultation process. This is very significant, since the consultation process preceding the authoring of the Plan was the first time where the government, UNDP and civil society came together to produce a document.

A total of seven workshops were organized by the Governorship of Van between April and July 2006 with representatives of the following stakeholders on the following dates: public institutions (18 and 20 April); public institutions and municipalities (22 May); CSOs (23 May); the private sector (24 May); professional organizations (25 May); chambers of craftsmen and artisans (6 July).⁴⁷ At these workshops, participants identified the problems of IDPs living in Van and discussed possible solutions to enable their return and integration. Simultaneous with the workshops, a UNDP-commissioned survey was carried out by a team from Van Yüzüncü Yıl University among a group of IDPs in Van. However, while the survey provides important data on the current situation, needs and demands of IDPs, it is not clear whether or how its findings were reflected in the Action Plan (for findings of the survey, see section 3.1. above).

The UNDP played an important role in the drafting of the Plan. In addition to providing logistical support for the organization of the workshops, it lent technical support to the governorship in the authoring of the Plan and to CSOs in the preparation of projects within the scope of the Plan. However, the extent to which the UNDP was involved in the actual authoring of the Plan is not very clear. Although UNDP officials emphasized that their involvement was merely to provide technical support upon demand (Interview 1), they also suggested that they co-authored the Plan with the governorship. Deputy Governor Ömer Özcan, on the other hand, said that the UNDP’s contribution was limited to technical support and that the Plan was authored by the governorship (Interview 3).

Various CSOs, particularly human rights groups and advocates for the rights of the displaced that were involved in the preparatory stage, are highly critical of the UNDP and the governorship for the manner in which they handled the

⁴⁶ Kâlin, Letter.

⁴⁷ Document provided by the Governorship of Van outlining the schedule of meetings on RVRP (on file with the authors).

preparatory process. Their objections are based on a number of issues such as lack of transparency; the exclusion of a number of CSOs from the consultation process; the involvement of government-oriented organizations in the workshops under the guise of ‘civil society’; the exclusion from the substance of the Plan of the voice of some CSOs, particularly human rights groups, women’s organizations and CSOs representing IDPs; the nature of the Plan which rests in spirit on state rhetoric and policies; and prevention of CSOs from speaking at the launch of the Plan.

Despite arguments by the governorship and the UNDP to the contrary, a few CSOs insist that they were never invited to participate in the workshops and that they were not even made aware of the process. Representatives of the Union of Chambers of Engineers and Architects in Turkey (*Türkiye Mühendisler ve Mimarlar Odaları Birliği – TMMOB*), for example, said that while the Chamber of Architects, which is one of their member organizations, was invited and did take part in the process, TMMOB itself was never invited. They emphasized that the Chamber of Architects does not represent the views of TMMOB. And yet, TMMOB is listed in the annex of the Plan among the stakeholders that participated in the workshops. Similarly, a representative of the Trade Union of Education and Science Workers (*Eğitim ve Bilim Emekçileri Sendikası – Eğitim-Sen*), said that they were not invited to the workshops although the name of their organization is also listed in the annex (Interview 6, Gündüz). While a member of Eğitim-Sen did attend the information meeting organized by the governorship and the UNDP before the initiation of the consultation process, the union did not participate in the workshops held afterwards.

In the view of the same CSOs, one of the most controversial aspects of the Plan is the gap between the discussions that took place during the consultation process and the final text that was launched in September 2006. Representatives of the Van Migrants’ Association for Social Solidarity and Culture (*Van Göç Edenler Sosyal Yardımlaşma ve Kültür Derneği – Van Göç-Der*), Van HRA, Van Women’s Association (*Van Kadın Derneği – VAKAD*) and Eğitim-Sen argue that the Plan does not reflect their views and opinions despite the firm commitments to the contrary they were given by the UNDP and the governorship at the outset. In the words of a HRA representative: “We participated in every stage of the work, expressed our views. We said ‘if you will not include our opinions, we will not take part in this.’ We realized that we were deceived the day the Action Plan was launched because none of our views were included” (Interview 2, Bozbay).

The language used in the Plan is another major point of contention for CSOs in Van.⁴⁸ Undoubtedly, the single most controversial issue in this regard is the title of the Plan, which, in line with previous government and UNDP documents on internal displacement, uses the official translation of the term IDP (*ülke içinde yerinden olmuş kişiler*) and internal displacement (*ülke içinde yerinden olmak*) as opposed to the version used by the majority of CSOs and academics⁴⁹ working on internal displacement (*ülke içinde yerinden edilmiş kişiler* and *ülke içinde yerinden edilmek*, respectively).⁵⁰ In Turkish, *yerinden olmak* does not demonstrate that there is a subject who carried out the act of displacing. On the contrary, *yerinden edilmek* alludes to a subject who carried out the act of displacing.⁵¹ Here, CSOs’ criticism is based on the understanding that the majority of displacement occurred as a result of the security forces’ eviction of villagers from their homes.⁵²

CSOs also criticize the imbalance between the representation of the public sector and civil society at the workshops, stating that the process was dominated by the former (Interview 2, Özgökçe). VATSO, which sent three representatives to two meetings held at the preparatory phase of the Action Plan, echoed this view: “We did not have a role in the concretization of the Action Plan. The weight of the public institutions was evident in that process” (Interview 4, Takva). In addition, human rights groups argued that, although some CSOs acted at the workshops as if they were independent, they were known to be close to the governorship or to have been established at its initiative (Interview 2, Canbay).

Failure of the UNDP to share the final text of the Plan before its release is another criticism raised by CSOs. None of the civil society representatives interviewed had a chance to review, discuss and provide feedback on the Plan. They saw the Plan for the first time the day before (Interview 2, Canbay) or on the day (Interview 2, Bozbay) it was released.

48 For a more detailed discussion of the language of the Action Plan, see section 4.5 of this report.

49 The authors, both in this report and in their earlier work, also prefer to use the Turkish term “yerinden edilmek” which points to the presence of culpables of displacement.

50 On the other hand, IDPs and the Kurdish-dominated Democratic Society Party (*Demokratik Toplum Partisi – DTP*) have continued to use the term “forced migration” (*zorunlu göç*).

51 See “Birinci Baskı için Giriş” in Kurban et al., *Zorunlu Göç ile Yüzleşme: Türkiye’de Yerinden Edilme Sonrası Vatandaşlığın İnşası*, Second Edition, TESEV, 2008, p. 20, for a discussion about the meanings of these terms and how they relate to the UN Guiding Principles.

52 See Kurban et al., *Coming to Terms*.

CSOs are also critical of the way in which the Plan was launched to the public. As observed by the authors of this report who were also present at the launch of the Plan, public authorities were highly represented at the event not only through government officials who delivered speeches but also through the presence of 13 governors and their staff who participated as invitees. The speakers at the event were limited to Mahmood Ayub, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Representative in Turkey, then Minister of Interior Abdülkadir Aksu, then Governor of Van Mehmet Niyazi Tanılır, RSG Walter Kälin, Ambassador Hasan Göğüş of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and UNDP representative Leyla Şen. Some CSOs were disappointed that the civil society was not invited to speak at the event. “In my opinion, it was a security meeting. It was like another State of Emergency meeting...” (Interview 2, Gültepe).

Disappointed with the drafting process and the launching of the Action Plan, some CSOs and sub-level municipalities subsequently got together to discuss developing a response to the governorship and the UNDP. Representatives of 12 institutions including Eğitim-Sen, HRA, Van Göç-Der, the Municipality of Bostaniçi (a town (*belde*) within the provincial center of Van), TMMOB and the Chamber of Agriculture held a series of meetings but never took any action on the issue since they believed that they could no longer do anything to change the outcome (Interview 2, Bozbay).

The authors of this report conveyed to the governorship and the UNDP the criticisms of the CSOs. Officials from both institutions disagreed with the CSOs’ claims that invitation to the workshops was selective and lacked transparency. Leyla Şen, who acted as the focal point between the government and the civil society at the local level, said that all CSOs registered with the governorship were invited separately by the UNDP and the governorship (Interview 1, Şen). Officials from the RVRP Bureau said that all relevant CSOs the governorship could reach were invited to participate in the workshops. Şen said that IDPs were also invited, but that they did not attend and were instead represented in a *de facto* fashion by *muhtars* of their neighborhoods (Interview 1, Şen). UNDP officials said that in similar meetings to be held in the remaining 13 provinces, they will make an effort to incorporate IDPs through their own representatives rather than *muhtars* (Interview 1, Richardson-Golinski).

Regarding the same issue, the Department Director of the General Directorate of Provincial Administration Fidan stressed that the Ministry of the Interior makes every effort to facilitate CSO participation on IDP-related processes. Pointing out that CSO participation was also emphasized in the 2005 decision by the Council of Ministers (the Strategy Document), Ali Fidan rejected any notion that there was a bias against certain CSOs during the preparation of the Action Plan (Interview 22).

The CSOs’ claims that the views they had expressed at the workshops were censored during the writing of the Plan were refuted both by the governorship and the UNDP. Governor Özdemir Çakacak said that the Action Plan “was prepared in accordance with the suggestions of CSOs” (Interview 7). An official from the RVRP Bureau said that the Plan “is absolutely the result of the workshops, absolutely... This is absolutely a common product” (Interview 10). He noted that in some instances, when some CSOs objected to their presence, governorship officials did not participate in the workshops to enable CSOs to speak freely. In his opinion, CSOs that criticized the process “are taking a political stance” (Interview 10).

Leyla Şen also refuted the CSOs’ claims about the censorship of their views in the writing of the Plan, saying: “that none of [the CSOs’] opinions was reflected is an exaggeration.” Yet, Şen did acknowledge that there was a discrepancy between the action plan that the CSOs believed was developing and the final text. Şen said this was due to the governor’s stating that it was not possible to incorporate some of the suggestions of the CSOs because “the issues go beyond the governorship and concern the national government” (Interview 1, Şen). UNDP’s Deputy Representative Ulrika Richardson-Golinski, who was appointed to Turkey after the entry into force of the Van Action Plan, was more receptive towards the criticisms voiced by CSOs. She stated that while the UNDP does not adopt the position of the government or civil society, it has “a responsibility to make sure that the view of civil society is taken into account” (Interview 1, Richardson-Golinski). For Leyla Şen, on the other hand, while the concerns of CSOs are very important, “what is more important is solving the problems of people.” In that sense, Şen said she is “very satisfied with the outcome whatever the criticisms are” and that she believes that “whatever the deficiencies [of the Plan], it is still worthwhile to continue” (Interview 1, Şen).

The heavy criticisms leveled at the UNDP from local CSOs in Van and other provinces in the RVRP region have led senior officials of the UNDP to draw lessons from their initial experience. Richardson-Golinski stated that in the remaining provinces they will “make sure to tell the Ministry of the Interior and governors that in inviting people they need to be open to incorporate their feedback” (Interview 1, Richardson-Golinski). Richardson- believes that the delays encountered in the implementation of the plan has also fed into the disappointment of the CSOs and led them to be more critical about the plan.

4.5. CSOS' PERSPECTIVES ON THE ACTION PLAN

While some CSOs in Van have positive views about the Action Plan, many others are critical of the final document, in addition to their criticisms of the drafting process. In what follows, both the positive perspectives and the criticisms in terms of the Plan's intentions, language and content are discussed.

Some CSOs expressed positive views on the Action Plan. For example, a member of the Van Active Industrialists and Businessmen Association (*Van Aktif Sanayici ve İşadamları Derneği- VASİAD*), which represents a segment of the business community in Van, described the Action Plan as "a good piece of work" (Interview 18). He said that VASİAD supports the development of IDPs and that the Action Plan would serve that purpose. A human rights representative said that the Plan had some positive aspects "if viewed independently" from the whole, however "without a proper infrastructure, these elements hang in the air" (Interview 2, Bozbay).

On the other hand, some thought affirmatively about the Action Plan and yet had concerns about its feasibility and effectiveness. A member of the Municipal Assembly (*Belediye Meclisi*), also a worker in the Municipality of Van, expressed concern about several factors such as the high cost of implementing the Action Plan and the constant changes (such as population increase) in urban life that makes planning extremely difficult (Interview 9, Baş).

There were also significant criticisms towards the Action Plan. Some of the criticisms pertained to its intentions. For instance, several CSOs considered the Plan to be a strategic move by the government to drop the IDP issue from the agenda of the international and national community. One CSO representative, who is himself an IDP, claimed that the actual goal was to manipulate public opinion by appearing to be doing something about the issue (Interview 6, Abi). In the opinion of another, the government "sought to show the world that the Ministry of the Interior is working with CSOs" (Interview 2, Gültepe).

While criticizing the Action Plan, these CSOs especially emphasized the unwillingness of the government to acknowledge the political nature of internal displacement in Turkey and its connection to the Kurdish question. These CSO representatives think that the Plan is incapable of producing sustainable solutions to the plight of the IDPs. They believe that neither the return nor the urban integration of IDPs will be feasible with this project under current political, economic and social circumstances. Pointing out the continuation of the armed conflict in eastern and southeastern Turkey, these critics said that the Plan's commitment to the principle of voluntary return was unrealistic. Saying that the fighting has been escalating since 2006, a CSO representative voiced his skepticism as follows: "Let's assume that the Plan was successful and that people had already returned to their villages last summer. What would have happened by now? There would be a second wave of [forced] migration" (Interview 2, Canbay). Another representative supported this view, saying that many people would have returned had the Action Plan been prepared between 1999 and 2005 (Interview 2, Bozbay), the period during which the armed conflict had subsided.

Another set of critiques concerns the language of the Action Plan. First, as already discussed above, several CSOs were dismayed by the use of the terms *yerinden olmuş kişiler* (displaced persons) and *yerinden olmak* (displacement) in the final document, despite the concerns they had raised during the preparatory workshops (Interview 2, Özgökçe; Bozbay; Gültepe).

Second, the same CSOs also had serious concerns about the use of the term "terror" in the Action Plan (Interview 2, Gültepe), which is considered to be politically derogatory toward the Kurdish population. Actually, in the Action Plan, the terms "terror" and "terrorism" are only used when the full title of the Compensation Law⁵³ is cited; nevertheless, it is also the case that the title of the Compensation Law had also raised opposition after its enactment in 2004 among CSOs and lawyers on the grounds that it conceals the responsibility of the state in evicting people from their homes and labeling the people of the region as "terrorists."

Third, Kurdish language and ethnicity were never mentioned in the Plan: "No mention of the word Kurd ... nothing about the [Kurdish] language..." (Interview 2, Özgökçe). In addition, the representative of a women's cooperative said that during the preparatory workshops they had suggested that Kurdish-speaking translators be made available in health clinics and other public agencies because many migrant and IDP women speak Kurdish exclusively, but no mention was made of this need in the Action Plan (Interview 13).

Fourth, the term "integration" (which appears in a subtitle in the Action Plan as "Integration and Resettlement") also raised concern among CSOs. One CSO representative pointed out that integration brings to mind "assimilation"

(Interview 2, Özgökçe), that is, the longstanding idea that the Turkish state wants to assimilate Kurds into Turkish language and ethnicity. “I would never say ‘the Kurds should integrate.’ This is not my language...When they say ‘integrate,’ they actually mean ‘assimilate, become urban, speak Turkish,’ but people do not want this” (Interview 2, Özgökçe). Other CSO representatives also criticized this notion and pointed out the difficulty of expecting IDPs to integrate economically and socially into urban life, given that there are no job opportunities in Van (Interview 2, Gültepe). It must be noted that the Action Plan uses this term in the context of the “integration and resettlement” of IDPs, variously referring to “social” and “urban” integration. This is in line with the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, which posits the various routes for the solution of displacement situations as return, integration and resettlement. Therefore, the language used in the Action Plan seeks to be in congruence with the Guiding Principles, and not necessarily posit a politically-motivated social engineering project.

A fifth criticism was that the language used in the Action Plan was “top-down” and official (Interview 2, Özgökçe), rather than reflective of the concerns and issues raised by CSOs during the workshops. Indeed, the Action Plan uses an ‘expert’ language which refers to concepts such as participation, integration, gender sensitivity, vulnerable groups, urban transformation projects, environmental impact assessment etc. which makes sense for UN and government officials specialized in development studies, but may be quite alienating for the non-experts working on the ground with IDPs and other groups. So, the grievances about the language of the Action Plan are caused partly by its technicality and partly by the mistrust CSOs have towards the governorship, reflective of the general relationship of mistrust between Kurdish civil society and the state stemming from the negative political environment created by the Kurdish conflict.

Finally, CSOs thought that the following important issues should have been but were not included in the Plan: the need to dissolve the provisional village guard system; the importance of bringing the armed conflict to an end for the purpose of solving the displacement problem (in terms of facilitating safe returns to villages and eliminating the possibility of more displacement); and the need for landmine clearance in order to allow safe returns.⁵⁴ One human rights activist said: “As the HRA, our *sine qua non* was the landmine issue. We had said that there should absolutely be something [in the Plan] about the landmines” (Interview 2, Bozbay). Furthermore, the Action Plan did not take into account the needs of IDPs living in Van provincial center who were displaced from their homes in Hakkâri and Şırnak provinces (Interview 2, Gültepe; Bozbay).

Some CSO representatives also said that the Plan did not include concrete projects for creating employment for IDPs, noting that Van suffers from high employment and an unskilled labor force (Interview 4, Takva). Voicing their criticism that the Action Plan includes social aid programs such as the Food Bank, some CSO representatives pointed out that social aid turns people into consumers, and therefore the emphasis should have been on turning IDPs back into producers: either by creating incentives for the revitalization of farming and animal husbandry in rural areas or by facilitating the building of factories in the city (Interview 2, Gültepe).

Some of the aforementioned lacunae in the Plan appear to be simply perceptions on the part of some CSOs, while others are real. For instance, the Plan *does* mention that generational differences in choices regarding return should be respected; it *does* address the need for skills-training for IDPs and the desirability of employment-generating training programs; likewise it *does* address revitalization of farming and the need for urban housing. Nevertheless, these are discussed at very general levels and using technical terminology in the manner of a wish list rather than of concrete projects. While this may be acceptable in a “blueprint” document, it certainly has resulted in disappointment for the civil society in Van that was expecting concrete proposals on the longstanding and pressing needs faced by the province. On the other hand, the Action Plan does not at all refer to the root causes of displacement, namely, the Kurdish question and the armed conflict; it does not address the broader conditions for the resolution of the IDP problem; and it makes no mention of issues such as provisional village guards, landmines and UXOs which may constitute significant obstacles to voluntary return – a principle endorsed by the Plan.⁵⁵

54 Mines and unexploded ordnances (UXOs) and the ongoing tensions between provisional village guards in the region, who are armed state employees, are among the most important hurdles preventing IDPs’ safe return to rural places of residence. For a discussion of these issues, see Kurban et al., *Overcoming a Legacy*, and Kurban et al., *Coming to Terms*, especially the chapters on Diyarbakır, Hakkâri and Batman.

55 Representative of the United Nations Secretary General on Internally Displaced Persons (RSG) Walter Kälin had also pointed at landmines and the presence of village guards as a potential source of insecurity that could impede the return of IDPs as one possible difficulty during the implementation of the Action Plan. Press release, *Working Visit by the UN Secretary General’s Special Representative for the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons: 28 September-1 October 2006*, Ankara, 1 October 2006 (on file with the authors).

4.6. THE GOVERNORSHIP'S PERSPECTIVE ON THE ACTION PLAN

As noted earlier, Governor Özdemir Çakacak portrays the Action Plan as the first and only holistic project for IDPs in Turkey. In his words, “there may be some shortcomings in implementation, but still, the Action Plan is a good start” (Interview 7). Regarding the viewpoint that failing to mention landmines is a weakness in the Plan, the governor said that there was no need for this since there are no landmines in Van.⁵⁶ On the diversity of the provincial origins of IDPs in Van (such as those from Hakkâri and Şırnak), the governor argued that there was no need for special consideration of this in the Action Plan, since, according to him, there are no hurdles preventing IDPs from returning to their rural homes in Van province. However, in his view, IDPs who are originally from Hakkâri would rather stay in the city of Van than go back (Interview 7).

Regarding the issue of the safety of return to villages, the Department Director of the General Directorate of Provincial Administration Fidan said that he does not consider the provisional village guard system to be a hurdle to returns. He pointed out that the most significant hurdle to return in rural areas was “the continuation of security concerns stemming from the terrorist organization” (Interview 22).

Governor Çakacak and the Deputy Governor Ömer Özcan praised the components mentioned in the Plan, such as the Food Bank, the rehabilitation center for children, and the microcredit project. Deputy Governor Özcan described the role of the governorship as coordinating the work conducted under the Action Plan and emphasized the importance of civil society participation (Interview 3). In addition, governorship officials working in the RVRP Bureau insisted that the Plan was the outcome of discussions from the workshops. They gave the following as an example: the representative of the Van Chamber of Architects said during one of the preparatory workshop discussions that the construction of housing in rural areas for returning IDPs should take into account shelter for animals and warehousing of fodder in addition to houses. According to the officials, this suggestion was incorporated into the Action Plan (respecting the preferences of returnees for type of housing) and was conveyed to district governorships which are undertaking construction work for returning IDPs (Interview 10).

4.7. BUDGETARY ISSUES

The effective implementation of the Action Plan depends, among other considerations, on the allocation of the necessary budget by the government and the prioritization of activities. Following the launch of the Action Plan in September 2006, RSG Walter Kälin warned that, while the Plan had many positive aspects, it may run into difficulty as a result of the insufficiency of resources. Therefore, he recommended the Van Governorship to phase the implementation of the Plan and determine priorities. He called on the government to allocate additional budgetary resources and seek the financial support of the international community and on donors to help support implementation of the Action Plan.⁵⁸

As stated above in Section 4.3, the Action Plan itself draws attention to the importance of financial resources for its implementation. There is no set budget for the Action Plan; budget allocation takes place on a project-by-project basis.

RVRP, ÇAREM, the Food Bank and the microcredit project, all of which existed prior to the Action Plan, have now been brought under the Plan, but their budgets are separate. The Food Bank is run by SYDV, RVRP is funded by the Ministry of the Interior, and the microcredit project is financed through contributions from the Provincial Special Administration as well as local businesspeople. Officials at the RVRP Bureau emphasized that the governorship does not make decisions about the selection of projects, but that it merely transmits projects to the relevant ministries. They also said that all public institutions have been informed by the government of the need to give priority to projects submitted under the Action Plan for budget allocation (Interview 10).

Funding for projects developed within the scope of the Van Action Plan are not exclusively sought from government agencies. The Ministry of the Interior has submitted to the Delegation of the European Commission (EC) in Ankara a project in the amount of 9 million Euros prepared by the Governorship of Van with “*de facto* technical advice”

56 Landmines and UXOs are a consequence of the more than two decades-old armed conflict and have affected rural regions of eastern and southeastern Turkey to varying degrees. While the authors of this report could not gather during their fieldwork specific data about casualties associated with mine and UXO explosions in Van, a municipality official who is also a local journalist said that injuries caused by such explosions are reported only once or twice year (Interview 9, Baş). However, the Initiative for a Mine-free Turkey reported two child casualties in 2006 in Van, but no information on adult casualties was provided (<http://www.mayinsizbirturkiye.org>).

57 The authors of this report were unable to obtain independent information on this issue since the field research was limited to Van provincial center.

58 Kälin, Press Release.

provided by the UNDP (Interview 1, Şen). UNDP officials suggested that the Governorship should consult IDPs themselves regarding what the planned activities under this project should entail. For this, the UNDP suggested the carrying out of a “market-oriented labor force analysis,” because vocational training and other programs may not be effective without knowing the needs of the IDPs and the demands of the labor market (Interview 1, Şen). Deputy Governor Özcan said this project, prepared by the governorship with the assistance of the EC, was going to be revised by the General Directorate of Provincial Administration before being resubmitted to the EC. The aim of the revision is to lower personnel costs and to increase the budget for activities. The project entails the building and establishment of up to eight community centers in the Van provincial center and three districts, and the conducting of field research for needs analysis (Interview 19). EC officials contacted by the authors of this report said that the Ministry of the Interior had to revise the project three times upon demand of the EC Delegation. The EC has not yet made its final decision on the funding of the project.

5. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE VAN ACTION PLAN

Since the Action Plan went into effect, a considerable number of public projects targeting urban and rural areas have been developed; some of them have started to be implemented while many are still being reviewed by government ministries. In contrast, project proposals by CSOs are fewer in number, and only two have so far started to be implemented. In this process, significant concerns have been raised about the Action Plan’s effective implementation regarding the coordination, selection and prioritization of projects, and the participation of CSOs. Indeed, RSG Kâlin had emphasized “weak coordination of implementation” as one of the potential difficulties that the Action Plan might face.⁵⁹ The next four sections provide an assessment of the implementation process, particularly focusing on the selection of projects and CSO participation.

5.1. DATA ON IMPLEMENTATION

As of December 2007, 84 projects with a total budget of 91,764,246 TL were submitted to the governorship’s office (Interview 3). 44 of these projects, with a total budget of 55,088,172 TL, were either still being negotiated or had already secured approval (around a dozen of these were prepared by CSOs).⁶⁰ The vast majority of projects submitted under the Plan were prepared by government institutions such as governorships (at the central and district level), municipalities (again, at the central and district level), and various other public agencies in the province such as the Community Education Directorate (*Halk Eğitimi Müdürlüğü*) and the Social Risk Mitigation Project. 61 of the 84 projects belong to the public sector; of these, 49 were submitted by public bodies and 12 by municipalities. In contrast, the number of projects submitted by CSOs was merely 23. Furthermore, while the total budget of 23 projects submitted by CSOs was 6,932,916 TL, that of the 61 original projects submitted by municipalities and public institutions amounted to 86,663,998 TL.⁶¹

Many of the public projects pertain to the building of infrastructure or housing in urban areas and the revitalization of farming in rural areas, as well as providing training and educational programs. One of the largest projects submitted under the Action Plan is an urban renewal project which was approved by the Housing Development Administration of Turkey (*Toplu Konut İdaresi – TOKİ*).⁶² Deputy Governor Özcan said that the Governorship, Van Municipality and TOKİ signed a protocol for this project and they were looking for a suitable location for construction (Interview 19). 600 housing units are to be constructed, half of which will be allocated for IDPs and the other half will be sold to public employees and small entrepreneurs in the city (Interview 19). The urban transformation project is listed under the ownership of Van Municipality among public projects submitted, and is in the amount of 42,287,270 TL.⁶³ TOKİ approved another project submitted by the Gürpınar Municipality for the “rehabilitation of buildings that did not fit the urban fabric” with a budget of 150,000 TL.

The State Ministry Responsible for Women and the Family received 18 project submissions, many of which were for the establishment of counseling and rehabilitation centers and for the education of women and mothers. The total budget for these projects was 25,963,422 TL. The Ministry of Agriculture received 15 project submissions with a total budget of

59 *Ibid.*

60 It should be noted that “approval” does not mean actual financing of a project, as discussed in the paragraphs below.

61 Van Valiliği, *Eylem Planıyla İlgili Faaliyetler* [Van Governorship, Activities Regarding the Action Plan] (on file with the authors).

62 The Housing Development Administration of Turkey (*Toplu Konut İdaresi – TOKİ*), established in 1986, is a government body that builds housing complexes for middle to lower income groups using government loans. Since the adoption of new municipality laws in 2004 and 2005 that foresee the development and implementation of urban transformation projects, TOKİ has become one of the largest contractors in Turkey, although it is a public agency.

63 Van Valiliği, *Eylem Planı Faaliyetleri*.

8,771,727 TL. Many of these projects pertained to the revitalization of farming and animal husbandry activities. The Ministry of National Education also received a high number of project submissions (Interview 12). It approved 13 projects (eight of which were by CSOs), and these projects were awaiting financing for a total budget of 2,331,662 TL.⁶⁴ The Ministry of Health reviewed 12 projects – many for the building of health clinics – submitted under the Van Action Plan, with a total budget of 2,366,182 TL. Twelve projects with a total budget of 3,466,740 TL were evaluated by the General Directorate of Labor (*Türkiye İş Kurumu Genel Müdürlüğü* – İŞKUR). These projects were predominantly for the training of and employment-generation for IDPs. The Ministry of the Interior approved and put into effect 14 projects, all submitted by district governorships, from its own budget, with a total allocation of 7,880,054 TL.⁶⁵

The government has not allocated a pre-set budget for the implementation of the Van Action Plan. According to Deputy Governor Özcan, in the summer of 2008, the first slice of the budget allocated to the Action Plan arrived from the Ministry of the Interior. He said that the governorship would ask for budget for a total number of 44 projects on a gradual basis, and the overall amount would be approximately 50,000,000 TL (Interview 19).

Department Director of Provincial Administration Fidan pointed out that the Council of Ministers Decision (the Strategy Document) especially emphasizes the prioritization of projects targeting IDPs by relevant government ministries and public agencies, and so, submitted projects “are prioritized” accordingly. However, Fidan stressed, resources are not unlimited and therefore submitted projects are evaluated in accordance with both the objectives of the Action Plan and budgetary considerations (Interview 22).

5.2. THE PROJECT SELECTION PROCESS

The RVRP Bureau coordinates the preparation of projects for submission under the Action Plan. CSOs prepare their projects under the guidance and direction of this bureau, which forwards submitted projects to relevant ministries for evaluation and to the General Directorate of Provincial Administration of the Ministry of the Interior for information. The UNDP has no say in the selection of projects. Still, it is in regular contact with the Ministry of the Interior and is fairly informed about the process. According to UNDP officials, the government selects eligible projects for funding on the basis of three criteria: 1) the project must fall within the scope of the Van Action Plan; 2) the main beneficiaries must be IDP communities; and 3) the budget must be realistic (Interview 1, Şen).

Once they receive projects, government ministries evaluate the projects and inform the General Directorate of Provincial Administration, as well as the Van Governorship, on the projects selected for funding. The relevant offices at the governorship are then tasked with follow-up. The RVRP Bureau is in charge of keeping the applicants informed about the status of their submitted projects (Interview 10). The General Directorate of Provincial Administration says that in making funding decisions on the projects, government ministries perform a cost-benefit analysis: thus, a project must both be beneficial for the targeted group and have a realistic budget (Interview 22).

A “monitoring committee” established by the governorship holds regular meetings to keep track of the process of implementation. Presided by a deputy governor, the committee consists of representatives of relevant public institutions, municipalities, professional organizations, CSOs, universities and the private sector, as well as *muhtars*. The committee held its first meeting on 28 June 2007 and the second on 17 December 2007. The process of the establishment of the committee appears to be rather arbitrary and lacks transparency. No prior public announcement was made to relevant institutions and members of the committee were selected by the governorship, which informed the selected organizations after the fact.

There is a problem of miscommunication between the governorship and CSOs on the submission process. The governorship has not fully facilitated a transparent and accessible application process that provides equal and timely access to public institutions and CSOs. Many CSOs complained that they were not duly informed that they could submit projects for funding under the Action Plan. For example, VATSO was unaware of the availability of funds until they were invited to take part in the monitoring process: “We were told that we could submit projects for the first time at that meeting. We did not know that beforehand. They told us that the application deadline had passed” (Interview 4, Kandaşoğlu). Officials from the RVRP Bureau refuted these criticisms on the grounds that the submission process was still underway and that participation in the preparatory workshops was not a prerequisite for applying for funds (Interview 10).

64 *Ibid.*

65 *Ibid.*

The governorship's delay in providing public information on the application process has caused some CSOs to question the government's stated commitment to ensuring the equal access and participation of civil society. A VATSO representative said that his organization "told [the governorship] two months [prior] that we wanted to submit a project but they said that they are not accepting projects...the governorship wants public institutions to do the projects" (Interview 4, Kandaşoğlu). To support his claim that the process is partial and biased, he said that at the first monitoring committee meeting, district governorships demanded additional funding to distribute cattle to villagers in Çatak and to plant trees in villages in Gürpınar, claiming that residents of these areas are not IDPs: "In other words, public institutions find resources under the Action Plan for investments they are supposed to make anyhow" (Interview 4, Takva).

5.3. CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION

Civil society participation in the implementation of the Action Plan has been beset by mutual mistrust and conflict. While some CSOs have refused to submit projects, others have reluctantly done so and some complain about the stringent conditions for acceptance of project proposals or claim their projects were unjustly rejected.

Women's organizations VAKAD, and Life, Women, Environment, Culture and Entrepreneurship Cooperative (*Yaşam, Kadın, Çevre ve Kültür ve İşletme Kooperatifi - YAKA-Koop*) refused to submit proposals due to their disappointment with the drafting and the content of the Action Plan (Interview 2, Özgökçe; Interview 13). Van Göç-Der, likewise, did not want to develop a proposal because of its criticism of the same process, but its members said that the UNDP representative insisted that it was important for a CSO specifically working on IDPs to prepare one (Interview 2, Gültepe; Canbay). Eventually, Göç-Der submitted a proposal, but its members claim that their project was rejected for no reason (Interview 20). In a diametrically opposed case, the Vangölü Folklore, Tourism and Sports Club Association (the Folklore Association) submitted several projects for consideration, which were accepted by the Ministry of National Education, but the association was dissatisfied with the funding conditions and therefore refused to sign a protocol with the governorship (Interview 15). Van Teachers' Association submitted a project and signed a protocol with the governorship since they were not concerned by the terms of partnership with the governorship. However, the project was not funded. VASİAD and İŞGEM submitted projects, both of which were subsequently accepted by İŞKUR and started to be implemented, whereas VATSO did not prepare a proposal, because, as discussed above, its officials claim that they were not sufficiently informed about the procedure.

Van Göç-Der prepared, in consultation with the UNDP, a project for starting a training and rehabilitation program for IDP mothers and children in five neighborhoods of Van⁶⁶ and submitted it in March 2007. Göç-Der members say that the governorship informed them by telephone sometime in 2008 that the Ministry of the Interior and the State Planning Organization (SPO) had rejected their project, but that they never received a written notice. Göç-Der considers this rejection to be "ideologically" motivated (Interview 2, Gültepe; Canbay), meaning that they felt that it was due to their association's politics about the Kurdish question.

The Folklore Association, established in 2002 and offering folk dance and music training to youth, subsequently broadened its charter and was able to compete for and receive a project grant under the Eastern Anatolia Development Project (*Doğu Anadolu Kalkınma Projesi - DAKP*), which was funded by the EU. The Folklore Association prepared five projects (four of which were for occupational training such as bakery work and cloth weaving and one was for mothers' education) for consideration under the purview of the Action Plan,⁶⁷ which got preliminary approval from the governorship. At a meeting with CSOs, the then Deputy Governor explained that CSOs could only be "social partners" of projects and that projects would be owned by the governorship under the Plan. Accordingly, the budgets would be administered by the governorship and purchased inventory would have to be returned to the governorship after completion of the project. The Folklore Association did not want to accept these conditions and ultimately withdrew its proposals after a series of discussions (Interview 15). As a result of this debate, Şengül Dağtekin and Recep Biçek of the Folklore Association said that they had lost confidence in the idea of working with the public authorities in Van, a process, they say, that presents a stark contrast to the operation of the EU-funded DAKP. In the latter case, the EU leaves the administration of the budgeted funds and the ownership of inventories to CSOs, whereas in the former case, the governorship cannot allocate budget funds to CSOs on the grounds that the existing legal framework disallows it from doing so.

66 Van Göç-Der, *Geleceğe Umutla Bakıyoruz Projesi [We Have Hopes for the Future]* (on file with the authors).

67 Van Valiliği, *Sivil Toplum Kuruluşlarından Gelen Projeler [Van Governorship, Projects Submitted by Civil Society Organizations]* (on file with the authors).

Other CSOs did not mind the conditions of partnership with public authorities under the Action Plan. For instance, Van Teachers' Association was informed in May 2007 by the governorship of the preliminary approval of its project, which was for the launch of a cultural, educational and counseling center in a poor urban neighborhood. Accepting to be a social partner of the governorship, the Van Teachers' Association signed a protocol with it. This project was subsequently formally rejected by the General Directorate of Social Aid and Solidarity (to which it was submitted in Ankara) on the grounds that the majority of its budget was allocated for inventory (Interview 16). Cesur Karakaplan, the chairperson of the Van Teachers' Association said that his impression is that there was mutual distrust between the Governorship and the CSOs involved in the process, but added that, had they been selected for implementing their project, they would have worked in harmony with the governorship.

The Van branch of the Trade Union of Educators (*Eğitim Birliği Sendikası* – Eğitim-Bir-Sen) also submitted a proposal for the training of IDPs in wool blanket weaving, but the governorship asked them to incorporate an “employment guarantee” for the trainees in their proposal.⁶⁸ Eğitim Bir-Sen representatives said they were unable to offer such a guarantee because “we are a CSO. We cannot build a factory. We can only provide training” (Interview 14).

VASIAD submitted a project entitled “On-the-job Occupational Training for the Purpose of Employment” under the Action Plan.⁶⁹ The project, calling for a total budget of 497,750 TL, was approved by İŞKUR and was selected in summer 2008 for implementation. It entails the training of 63 individuals for skills ranging from marketing and accounting to office administration and sales while they work in various VASIAD member businesses. For 12 months, the minimum wages and social security fees of these individuals will be paid out of the project budget. After that, they will remain employed, and the employing firms will start paying their wages (Interview 18). According to Halim Gökçe, the general secretary of VASIAD, this project will both secure employment for these IDPs and meet the skilled personnel needs of their members. He said that they would seek candidates with middle or high school education for this training program, and that the candidates would be selected from among IDPs.

Another project that was accepted is the “Qualified Workforce Training Project with Employment Guarantee” developed by Van İŞGEM, with a total budget of 450,000 TL.⁷⁰ Van İŞGEM is one of the 12 similar İŞGEMs around Turkey, and is funded by a Privatization Social Support Project loan given by the World Bank. Van İŞGEM operates on the premises of the former shoe factory of the privatized state enterprise Sümerbank. It consists of 30 firms that receive rent and other subsidies for a period of three years. İŞGEM's project under the Action Plan entails on-the-job training of 60 persons in textile, food and shoe manufactories within the İŞGEM complex. Like the VASIAD project, the trainees' wages and social security payments for the first 12 months will be covered from the project budget. İŞGEM's project has no educational prerequisites for participation (Interview 21).

5.4. ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACTION PLAN

As stated above, the Van Governorship insists that it has no authority over the acceptance or rejection of projects and that the relevant government agencies or ministries decide these matters. Officials at the RVRP Bureau emphasize that the acceptance or rejection of a proposed project is a matter of budget allocation and thus depends on the availability of resources; therefore, no other interpretation (such as having political or ideological motivations) is warranted (Interview 10). In addition, the governorship explains that CSO participation in a publicly-funded program such as the Action Plan is constrained by Turkey's legal framework governing provincial budgets. Governor Çakacak mentioned that some CSOs in Van had gotten accustomed to receiving funds within the framework of DAKP, under which the EC leaves the administration of budgets to the grant-receiving organizations. However, under the Law on Provincial Administration, the spending of public funds has to be administered by public authorities, with the result that purchased inventories cannot be owned by a CSO (Interview 7). Under Clause 64 of the Law on Provincial Administration, a Provincial General Assembly (*İl Genel Meclisi*) can vote on the disbursement of official funds to various types of CSOs for the purpose of joint service projects. But inventory bought with these funds remains under the ownership of the Provincial Special Administration,⁷¹ although it can be assigned to or rented to

68 As a note, the Van chapter of the Trade Union of Education and Science Workers (*Eğitim ve Bilim Emekçileri Sendikası* – Eğitim-Sen) was neither involved in the preparatory workshops for the Action Plan, nor has it submitted any proposal (Interview 6, Gündüz). Eğitim-Sen and Trade Union of Educators (*Eğitim Birliği Sendikası* – Eğitim Bir-Sen) belong to two national trade union confederations with opposing political views.

69 Van Active Industrialists and Businessmen Association (*Van Aktif Sanayici ve İşadamları Derneği* – VASIAD), *İstihdam Amaçlı İş Başında Mesleki Eğitim Projesi* [On-the-job Occupational Training for the Purpose of Employment], 2007 (on file with the authors).

70 Van İŞGEM, *İstihdam Garantili Kalifiye İşgücü Eğitim Projesi* [Qualified Workforce Training Project with Employment Guarantee], 2007 (on file with the authors).

71 Provincial Special Administration refers to the public legal body with administrative and financial autonomy, whose decision-making entity is the Provincial General Assembly, whose members are elected by the voters in a province. Its mandate is to fulfill the common needs of a provincial population. See, *İl Özel İdaresi Kanunu* [Law on Provincial Special Administration], No. 5302, 22 February 2005, *Official Gazette* No. 25745, 4 March 2005.

CSOs.⁷² Deputy Governor Özcan explained that the funds allocated for the İŞGEM and VASIAD projects were accordingly approved by the Provincial General Assembly in June 2008 (Interview 19).

Officials claim that many of the 400 CSOs registered in Van have been established expressly for competing for EU and DAKP grants. According to them, “350 of those 400 associations are only fronts” (Interview 10). In fact, this was a sentiment shared by some civil society representatives as well, who argued that many CSOs in Van operate primarily for the purpose of gaining financial benefit from various projects (Interviews 14; 18).

The Van Governorship also insists that they want the cooperation and partnership of CSOs in the implementation of the Action Plan. As aforementioned, Deputy Governor Özcan said that the governorship wants to build community centers under a project for which they will seek EU funding. Within that project, they plan to get the support and cooperation of CSOs, especially in terms of human resources.

Based on the foregoing analysis, it may be argued that there are several reasons as to why civil society involvement in the implementation of the Action Plan has been quite limited and ridden with problems. First, the mutual mistrust between CSOs and the governorship from the very beginning has persisted in the implementation stage as well. Some CSOs have suspected political motivations (Interview 20) or a rigid public bureaucracy mentality (Interview 15) behind the hurdles encountered. Some of them also perceive that the governorship wants to prioritize projects developed by public agencies in the province and that it does not relish working with civil society (Interview 13) or that the governorship wants to work only with pro-government CSOs (Interview 4, Takva).

These perceptions are justified to a considerable extent, since the great majority of the submitted projects were indeed prepared by public agencies or municipalities in Van. This is to be expected since the government has the responsibility to alleviate the problems of IDPs and deliver services to citizens. However, it is also clear that a culture of cooperation between the public and civil society sectors is very weak. The environment of mistrust bred by years of armed conflict in this region also contributes to the difficulty of facilitating such collaboration.

Related to the above, the CSO projects selected for funding actually belong to business interest groups, not to organizations providing advocacy for IDPs or other groups. It appears that the CSOs involved, and not just the IDPs trained and employed, will also benefit from these projects (in terms of subsidizing their personnel costs). Also, it may be difficult to find IDPs with middle or high school education for participation in the VASIAD project, considering the high illiteracy and low education rates of the IDP population in Van (see the findings of the Van Yüzüncü Yıl University survey on IDPs above). Furthermore, the medium-term effectiveness of occupational training projects may be jeopardized due to economic vicissitudes, especially during the current period of economic crisis. Therefore, concerns may be raised about the selection of business groups over other types of CSOs as the first recipients of project funding under the Action Plan.

In addition, the low capacity of many of the CSOs in Van for developing and effectively implementing projects must also be recognized. Among the CSOs whose representatives were interviewed for this report, many did not have adequate human resources. It appears that projects previously funded under DAKP and many of the ones prepared for the Action Plan have relied on or would have to rely on personnel to be supplied by the Community Education Center (*Halk Eğitimi Merkezi*), which is a unit within the governorship. Therefore, regardless of whether they managed their own project budgets, CSOs would be dependent on the public sector for trainers, teachers, other skilled personnel, buildings and equipment. Nevertheless, a positive result of this would be capacity-building for the CSOs involved, which is one of the stated aims of the Plan. Another potential positive outcome could be the alleviation of feelings of mistrust between the governorship and the civil society in Van.

Last but not least, many of the projects submitted by the units of the governorship and the municipality for funding under the Action Plan appear to be activities that are already within its regular responsibilities and do not seem to be specifically designed with IDPs in mind. While it is correct that vulnerable groups in Van go beyond IDPs and include economically-motivated migrants and other segments of the population with low income, education and skills, the specificity of the implementation of the Action Plan is that it should particularly target the displaced.

Regarding this last issue, Department Director of Provincial Administration Fidan emphasized that projects implemented under the Van Action Plan were activities targeting IDPs and the solution of their problems first. Nevertheless, he said, projects in urban centers such as urban infrastructure development and social programs would naturally also benefit other groups who lived in the same neighborhoods. For instance, other low income groups in addition to IDPs can

72 *Ibid.*

benefit from the services offered in a community center built in an IDP-populated neighborhood. Ali Fidan said that he believes that it is neither possible nor would it be right to exclude such groups from these services (Interview 22).

Department director Ali Fidan also rejected the notion that public projects initiated under the Van Action Plan were ones that the governorship should have implemented anyway, and that therefore these projects would not offer additional benefits. Fidan reiterated that the Action Plan was developed with a participatory understanding through a process that included public agencies, local administrations, the university, CSOs and IDPs themselves. He said the Plan presented a holistic approach regarding service delivery to, and the solution of the problems of, the displaced (Interview 22).

6. CONCLUSION

Undoubtedly, the adoption of a provincial action plan specifically to address the needs of IDPs and to provide services to them is a positive measure in and of itself. It should be read as a sign of good will on the part of the government to alleviate the multifaceted and complex problems facing the displaced in the provinces of eastern and southeastern Turkey. The Van Action Plan also speaks to the government's ongoing commitment to fulfill the recommendations of RSGs Deng and Kâlin. The political will demonstrated by the Governorship of Van, in particular by former Governor Mehmet Niyazi Tanılır, in taking the leadership in developing a provincial action plan which will set a model for the remaining 13 provinces in the RVRP region is especially worthy of praise and recognition. In light of the politically sensitive nature of internal displacement in Turkey and the impossibility of addressing the issue without being entangled in the Kurdish question, which constitutes both the root cause and the obstacle to the resolution of internal displacement, the courage and willingness of Tanılır to take the lead is noteworthy. On another positive note, despite all the problems in the process, the efforts of the Governorship of Van and the UNDP Turkey Office to include CSOs in the preparation and, to a lesser extent, in the implementation of the Plan are worthy of acknowledgment in light of the deep rift and mistrust between the state and civil society in the entire region in general and Van province in particular.

Having said that, the Action Plan has failed to live up to its promises for several reasons. Most importantly, the Plan was adopted in a political vacuum in the absence of a clear, coherent, comprehensive and strong national policy on Turkey's Kurdish question in general and internal displacement in particular. In the absence of a national policy, the Van Governorship's taking on of the responsibility to adopt a provincial action plan on a politically contentious issue and making the commitment to work with CSOs, which both the government and governorships have hitherto avoided, was very bold but also quite risky. Conscious of the limits of its authority and the political constraints it is expected to bear in mind, the governorship was unwilling and/or unable to meaningfully incorporate the voices of the displaced and their civil society representatives into the Action Plan. Caught between its promise to work with CSOs and the limits of its official mandate, the governorship seems to have felt obliged to tip the balance in favor of the latter. This made it a misplaced target of criticism by CSOs which accused the governorship – and the UNDP – with censoring their views. The absence of concrete government action on ending the armed conflict, the ongoing attacks by the PKK, continued political debate about the Kurds' demands for recognition of their cultural rights such as native language education have overflowed into the discussion on the content and implementation of the Action Plan. Issues such as the abolishment of the provisional village guard system, the clearance of landmines and UXOs and ensuring the safety of rural areas to which IDPs wish to return cannot be handled by any governorship within the purview of a provincial action plan. They need to be addressed by the national government as part of a national policy.

The lack of a national policy has also been stressed by RSG Kâlin, who recommended the establishment of a government office "devoted to the issue of internal displacement" which "should have staff specifically focused on promoting solutions to internal displacement and have sufficient authority to provide leadership in implementing the policy and in coordinating and monitoring the activities of the various government offices involved."⁷³ Despite the adoption of a Strategy Document in 2005, the government has yet to create an office specifically tasked with working on the displaced. The absence of a comprehensive and coherent policy to be implemented by a responsible government office also causes tensions between various government measures on IDPs and its policies in other areas. To be specific, both the RVRP and the Van Action Plan seek to facilitate IDP returns; however the government does not have a demining policy (although it has ratified the Ottawa Convention), and the provisional village guard system is still in place.

73 Kâlin, Letter.

Apart from the problems caused by the absence of a clear national policy framework, other significant issues pertaining to transparency and coordination have emerged during the implementation of the Van Action Plan, which also contributed to the existing mistrust between CSOs and public agencies. For instance, the criteria and priorities of funding both public and civil society projects are not transparent. The long lists outlining the submitted and approved projects provided by the RVRP Bureau are not sufficient to alleviate concerns about eligibility and prioritization criteria. As it stands, it seems that the public sector is out-competing the civil society sector with projects many of which actually fall under its official mandate and for which regular budget allocations should already exist.

There are also issues about the assessment of the effectiveness of implemented projects regarding whether they really target IDPs and whether IDPs can actually benefit from them. Clear criteria and benchmarks should be defined in order to assist the assessment of both public and civil society projects.

A further concern pertains to the geographical scope of the Van Action Plan as well as similar action plans to be put in effect in the remaining RVRP provinces. If the urban integration of IDPs is equally important as their choice of returning to their rural homes, then plans of action for service delivery to IDPs should also be developed in migrant-receiving provinces, not only in the RVRP provinces. Indeed, the above-cited Hacettepe survey on migration and internal displacement shows that about half of IDPs have migrated to ten provinces in the south and west of Turkey, whereas the rest have remained in the 14 provinces. As such, service delivery to IDPs should be designed and planned at the regional and national level. Therefore, the proposed national plan of action should go beyond the mandate of the RVRP, namely, facilitating returns to villages in 14 provinces only, and develop instead a holistic perspective through addressing the diverse problems and needs of the displaced across the country.

Recommendations

To the Governorship of Van:

- The criteria for the selection and prioritization of projects should be clarified and made transparent.
- A clear definition of IDPs should be used for determining the beneficiaries of both public and civil society projects.
- The implementation of public projects directly targeting IDPs as beneficiaries should be expedited.
- Measures for assessing the effectiveness and performance of implemented projects should be developed and made public.
- Effort should be made to solicit meaningful participation by CSOs in the project preparation and implementation stages. Particularly, the monitoring meetings should continue to be held regularly and broad-based civil society participation should be encouraged.
- The governorship should demonstrate its impartiality towards CSOs with different mandates and orientations.
- Effort should be made to promote an environment of mutual trust between the governorship and CSOs. Particularly, communications about the approval or rejection of CSO projects should be in writing, transparent and prompt.

To civil society:

- CSOs, regardless of whether they have submitted projects, should continue to be critical observers of the process of implementation. Particularly, they should make an effort regularly to attend the monitoring meetings organized by the governorship.
- CSOs should actively engage in the Action Plan process in the spirit of constructive criticism rather than one of mistrust.
- In their involvement in the process as observers or participants in projects, CSOs should continue to remember that the primary objective of the Action Plan is to improve the conditions of and to assist the IDPs.
- CSOs in Van should make an effort to share their experiences with their counterparts in the remaining 13 RVRP provinces where the process of developing action plans are currently underway.

To the Government of Turkey:

- An office specifically designated to work on issues related to IDPs should be created within the Ministry of the Interior without further delay. The office should be provided with a strong mandate, and the requisite independence, budget and authority to enable it to design and effectively implement a comprehensive and coherent national policy on IDPs. The establishment of such an office would greatly reduce the uncertainties regarding the implementation of the Van Action Plan, as well as similar plans of action in other provinces.
- A national and comprehensive policy on IDPs should be developed that takes as its basis the “Strategy Document” adopted by the government in 2005 but which goes beyond it. The national policy should particularly address the following issues among possible others: the abolishment of the provisional village guard system; the impact of the continued armed conflict on returnees, would-be returnees and existing rural populations in the eastern and

southeastern regions; landmine and UXO clearance; a holistic rather than piecemeal approach on the revitalization of the rural and urban economy in the region.

- The national policy should include measures for improving the conditions of IDPs living not only in the eastern and southeastern regions, but also in the rest of Turkey.
- The government should ensure that the preparation of action plans in the remaining 13 RVRP provinces are informed by the criticisms directed at the Van Action Plan, especially by CSOs, so that the same mistakes are not repeated. The government should communicate to the governorships of these provinces a strong message that the CSOs should be meaningfully included in the preparation and implementation of action plans.

To the UNDP:

- The UNDP should make an assessment of its monitoring and technical support activities during the preparation of the Van Action Plan in order to avoid the repetition of similar mistakes in the remaining 13 provinces.
- It should make a special effort to communicate to the governorships that all CSOs in these provinces should be able to participate meaningfully at all stages of the action plans.
- It should make an effort to ensure transparency by communicating with all stakeholders at every stage of the process and sharing all the drafts and final texts of the action plans with all stakeholders, particularly the CSOs, before the plans are publicly launched.

To the RSG's office:

- In monitoring Turkey's fulfillment of its commitments to the international community, the RSG should make an effort to reach out to the civil society, particularly to local CSOs in eastern and southeastern Turkey, and should pay attention to their views and demands in his follow-up work.
- The RSG should make an effort to maintain regular communication with the civil society in Turkey in order to have access to diverse viewpoints on internal displacement.

List of Interviews

Interview No	Interviewee(s)	Location	Date
1	Ulrika Richardson-Golinski (Deputy Resident Representative, UNDP) Leyla Şen (Program Manager, UNDP)	Ankara	21.11.2007
2	Giyasettin Gültepe (Chair, Board of Directors, Van Göç-Der) İdris Canbay (Secretary, Board of Directors, Van Göç-Der) Cahit Bozbay (Accounting Officer, HRA Van Branch) Zozan Özgökçe (Member, VAKAD)	Van	22.11.2007
3	Ömer Özcan (Deputy Governor of Van)	Van	22.11.2007
4	Necdet Takva (General Secretary, Van Chamber of Trade and Industry) Zahir Kandaşoğlu (President, Van Chamber of Trade and Industry)	Van	23.11.2007
5	Sevnur Yaşlı (Member, Association for the Support of Women's Entrepreneurship) Çiğdem Kaya (Member, Association for the Support of Women's Entrepreneurship)	Van	23.11.2007
6	Şemsettin Abi (Member, Board of Directors, Van Göç-Der) Cahit Bozbay (Accounting Officer, HRA Van Branch) Cevat Boz (Member, TMMOB) Sinan Gündüz (Member, Board of Directors, Van Eğitim-Sen)	Van	23.11.2007
7	Özdemir Çakacak (Governor of Van)	Van	23.11.2007
8	Burhan Yenigün (Mayor of Van)	Van	23.11.2007
9	Ruşen Alparslan (Local Agenda 21 Office), Deniz Baş (Family Consultation Center, Van Municipality) Nuri Tanrıtanır (Deputy Mayor of Van) Sinan Bağlı (Directorate of Culture, Van Municipality)	Van	23.11.2007
10	Officials of the Bureau of Monitoring and Coordination of RVRP, Van Governorship	Van	23.11.2007
11	Ali Kaya (Muhtar, Yalım Erez Neighborhood) Ömer Tokat (Member, Association for Stability and Social Development)	Van	24.11.2007
12	Ulrika Richardson-Golinski (Deputy Resident Representative, UNDP) Leyla Şen (Program Manager, UNDP) Seher Alacacı (Project Associate, UNDP)	Ankara	14.05.2008
13	Gülmay Ertunç (Member, YAKA-Koop.)	Van	07.07.2008
14	Davut Okçu (Eğitim Bir-SEN)	Van	07.07.2008
15	Recep Biçek (Chair, Board of Directors, Van Folklore Association) Şengül Dağtekin (Vice Chair, Board of Directors, Van Folklore Association)	Van	07.07.2008
16	Cesur Karakaplan (Chair, Van Teachers' Association)	Van	07.07.2008
17	Mustafa Avcı (Member, Community Volunteers Foundation)	Van	08.07.2008
18	Halim Gökçe (General Secretary, VASIAD)	Van	08.07.2008
19	Ömer Özcan (Deputy Governor of Van)	Van	08.07.2008
20	Giyasettin Gültepe (Chair, Board of Directors, Van Göç-Der)	Van	08.07.2008
21	Mahmut Gedik (Coordinator, Van İŞGEM) (Phone interview)	Van	10.07.2008
22	Ali Fidan (Department Director, General Directorate of Provincial Administration, Ministry of the Interior)	Ankara	10.04.2009

About the Authors

DENİZ YÜKSEKER

She is a faculty member in the Sociology Department of Koç University. Yüksekser has conducted individual and collaborative research on the informal economy, transnational migration, the internal displacement of Kurds in Turkey and African migrants and asylum seekers in Istanbul. She has published books and articles based on these studies.

DİLEK KURBAN

She is the Program Officer at the Democratization Program at TESEV. Kurban received her bachelor's degree in Political Science and International Relations from Boğaziçi University, her master's degree in human rights from the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University and her juris doctor degree from Columbia Law School. Her areas of research are minority rights, internal displacement and the implementation of the European Court of Human Rights' case law in Turkey. She has published widely on these issues.



TESEV

Bankalar Caddesi
Minerva Han, No: 2, Kat: 3
34420 Karaköy İstanbul
T +90 212 292 89 03
F +90 212 292 90 46
E info@tese.org.tr
www.tesev.org.tr