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Combating Social Inequalities in Turkey through Conditional Cash Transfers (CCT)?*

ABSTRACT

Political parties of varying ideological positions all over the globe have started to implement the Conditional Cash Transfers (CCTs) including the centre-left Worker's Party (PT) of Brazil and centre-right conservative Justice and Development Party (AKP) of Turkey. In Brazil, the Bolsa Familia Program has become globally known as presenting an example for a highly effective short-term poverty alleviation mechanism. Up until today about one quarter of Brazil's population (about 11 million households) have been pulled out of extreme poverty and through that social participation for the most vulnerable members of Brazilian society was being increased remarkably. In Turkey, the Bolsa Familia program served as a model for the Social Risk Mitigation Project (SRMP) that was introduced as a World Bank project after the financial crisis in Turkey in 2001. Recent impact evaluations have shown that CCTs are particularly successful in terms of diminishing poverty and indigence levels among lower segments of the society in the developing world. This article focuses on the question in how far CCTs have helped to diminish social inequalities in Turkey by concentrating on three crucial areas of interest: gender inequalities, transition to labour market as well as regional imbalances.

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Introduction

In recent decades, many developing countries have begun to implement social welfare programs known as conditional cash transfers (hereafter CCTs). CCTs aim to reduce poverty by giving financial aid that is conditional upon the recipients performing certain actions. For example, mothers may receive money on the condition that they regularly send their children to school or take them to health centres for check-up visits. Political parties of varying ideological positions all around the globe have started to implement CCTs, including the centre-left Worker's Party (PT) of Brazil and the centre-right conservative Justice and Development Party (AKP) of Turkey. In Brazil, the *Bolsa Familia* Program has become globally known as an example of a highly effective short-term poverty alleviation mechanism. So far, about one quarter of Brazil's population (about eleven million households) have been pulled out of extreme poverty, and at the same time social participation by the most vulnerable members of Brazilian society has increased remarkably. CCT programs currently operate in at least forty-five countries and provide cash to around 110 million families. In Turkey, the *Bolsa Familia* program served as a model for the Social Risk Mitigation Project (SRMP) that was implemented as a World Bank project after the financial crisis in Turkey in 2001. Recent impact evaluations have shown that CCTs are particularly successful in terms of diminishing poverty and indigence levels among lower socio-economic segments of the society in the developing world. This article examines to what extent CCTs have helped diminish social inequalities in Turkey by concentrating on three main areas of interest: gender inequalities, the school-to-work transition, and regional imbalances in the distribution of CCTs. But before doing so we will start by giving a brief overview of the literature on CCTs as well as some general information on the implementation of CCT programs in Turkey.

The Literature on Conditional Cash Transfers

It is possible to divide the literature on CCTs into four main categories. The first category includes most of the existing work on CCTs. This literature examines the direct effects that CCTs have on recipients' lives in the realms of education, health, and economic success, and measures these effects using indicators of poverty, inequality, infant mortality, school enrolment rates, human capital formation, child labour, and access to health services (Ilahi, Sedlacek, and Wright 2000; Yap, Sedlacek, and Orazem 2001; Kandkher, Pitt, and Fuwa 2003; Ravallion 2003; Gertler 2004; Rawlings and Rubio 2005; Barrientos and DeJong 2006; Levy 2006; Glassman, Todd, and Gaarder 2007; Soares et al. 2007; Gee 2010). For example, several studies on Mexico's Education, Health, and Nutrition program (*Progresa*) have shown that it increases children's growth and decreases the probability of a child stunting. Furthermore, these studies have demonstrated that *Progresa* has also had a positive impact on school enrollment, as well as improving the health indicators of both children and adults (Behrman and Hoddinott 2000; Coady 2000; Gertler 2000; Hoddinott, Skoufias, and Washburn 2000; Schultz 2000a; Schultz 2000b; Schultz 2001; Skoufias 2001).

A second major category of literature on conditional cash transfers primarily investigates how the CCT programs affect politicians rather than recipients. These studies investigate the political ends served by CCTs, including the role they play in the re-election bids of incumbent politicians (Schady 2000; Menocal 2001; Díaz-Cayeros, Estévez, and Magaloni 2006; Hunter and Power 2007; Zucco 2008; Aaron and Mitchell 2011; Fried 2012). In other words, these studies explore CCTs from the perspective of politicians who wish to be re-elected.

A third group of scholars have examined how CCT funds are distributed and whether their design features have managed to circumvent the traditional mechanisms of clientelistic

allocations of social assistance schemes through party brokers. The general findings of these studies support the hypothesis that CCTs are new antipoverty programs insulated from traditional clientelistic politics (Stokes 2009). For instance, Ana de la O Torres' work on *Progresa* has shown that it is an example of a non-politicized and non-clientelistic social assistance scheme in Mexico (Torres 2007). In a similar vein, a recent study on Brazil's Family Grant (*Bolsa Família*) has demonstrated it to be successful in terms of circumventing deeply entrenched patron-client networks in the country (Sugiyama and Hunter 2013).

Last, a number of studies have explored whether conditional cash transfers have elevated the status of women and improved their bargaining power in spousal relations. Studies have examined different dimensions of women's empowerment: control over using contraception, autonomy in household purchases, status as consumers, and increased interactions with other actors such as teachers, nurses, and social workers. Overall, the findings bode well for the empowerment of women. For example, a recent International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) survey has demonstrated that *Bolsa Família* raises the share of women who report exclusive control over contraception and strengthens women's autonomy in making decisions regarding household purchases that affect the children and the household, including consumer durable items (de Brauw et al. 2012). Another study has shown that the program has helped women recipients interact more with various state actors such as teachers, doctors, and social workers, thereby enabling them to protect themselves from isolation (Suárez and Libardoni 2008). Similar work on *Progresa* in Mexico has demonstrated the program's positive impact on women's decision-making and bargaining power within the household (Skoufias 2001).

Within this paper we will discuss the question of how much CCTs have helped to diminish social inequalities in Turkey by concentrating on three crucial areas of interest: gender inequalities, the transition from school to the labour market, as well as regional imbalances in

the distribution of CCT assistance. But before doing so, we will first present an overview on the general evolution of CCT programs in Turkey.

The Turkish Conditional Cash Transfer Program

In this section, we briefly discuss the context that led to the implementation of the Turkish conditional cash transfer program, along with the objectives of the program. In the wake of the 2001 economic crisis, Turkey launched a Social Risk Mitigation Project (hereafter SRMP) in collaboration with the World Bank to weather the adverse effects of the severe financial meltdown. The SRMP agreement was signed on September 14, 2001, and put into force on November 28, 2001 (Ortakaya 2009, 33). The SRMP had two key portions: adjustment and investment. The adjustment portion allocated urgent support to the most vulnerable segments of society affected by the crisis. Meanwhile, the investment portion strengthened the capacity of state institutions in charge of delivering basic social services and social assistance to the poor, launched a conditional cash transfer program (*Şartlı Nakit Transferi*) targeting the poorest six percent of the population in order to avoid the intergenerational transmission of poverty, and aimed to enhance the income generation and employment opportunities of the vulnerable populations (World Bank 2001, 2). In other words, the Turkish CCT was one of the crucial components of the SRMP.

The program was pilot tested in six places (*Ankara-Keçiören, Çankırı-Merkez, Kahramanmaraş-Göksun, Zonguldak-Ereğli, Gaziantep-Yavuzeli, and Sinop-Durağan*) in 2003. Its countrywide implementation began in the second half of 2004 (Esenyel 2009, 47). The field visits had shown that many of the poor had withdrawn their kids from school due to the negative impacts of the 2001 financial crisis. Furthermore, the crisis was also accompanied by underutilization of preventative care by poor families (World Bank 2001, 2).

As discussed in the previous section, similar to its counterparts implemented in other countries, the Turkish CCT allocates regular cash transfers to poor mothers on the condition that they send their children to school and to health clinics for check-ups and exams. Therefore, part of the rationale behind the implementation of the Turkish CCT was to prevent the withdrawal of children from school and to address the underutilization of preventative care by poor families, thereby facilitating this vulnerable group's access to basic health and education services (Esenyel 2009, 44). The SRMP coordination unit was in charge of this program until March 31, 2007. Afterwards, responsibility was transferred to the General Directorate of Social Assistance and Solidarity since the program was financed through the Social Assistance and Solidarity Encouragement Fund (SYDTF) (Esenyel 2009, 46). Currently, the education component of the program is known as 'conditional education assistance' (*Şartlı Eğitim Yardımı – ŞEY*) and the health component of the program is known as 'conditional health assistance' (*Şartlı Sağlık Yardımı - ŞSY*). The CCT program reached 2,978,145 children as of the end of 2008, or around thirteen percent of all children between the ages of zero and seventeen (Ortakaya 2009, 54).

Citizens apply to local Social Solidarity Foundations operating in each district for their CCT benefits. A transition to an Integrated Social Assistance Services Information System (*Bütünleşik Sistem*) is also currently under way. Citizens can go directly to local Social Solidarity Foundations with their national ID numbers in order to apply for the CCT and any other forms of social assistance administered through the foundations. With this national ID number, the foundations collect information from fourteen different institutions and compile it to determine the employment status of the applicant and whether they have social security, assets, vehicles, or property. The foundation can access data not only about the applicant, but about the entire household. Once the applicant signs a petition, they give their consent to the foundation to have access to information based on their birth certificate. On the form, the

applicants provide information on which type of social assistance scheme they are applying for. The local foundations also share information about non-disabled applicants between the ages of fifteen and fifty-five with the Turkish Labour Institution (*İŞKUR*) (Ortakaya 2012).

The application process in the local Social Solidarity Foundations has undergone changes with the transition to the Integrated Social Assistances Services Information System. Prior to this system, citizens were given a form and required to provide documents that had to be obtained from different offices, such as the Social Security Institution. Applicants previously needed to go to various offices (e.g., banks and tax offices) to obtain as many as eighteen different documents. Now, citizens are only required to go to their local social solidarity foundation to submit their application. Decisions on the application are finalized within two to four weeks (Ibid.).

The General Directorate of Social Assistance is currently collaborating with the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (*TÜBİTAK*) on a new scoring formula. Until the new scoring formula is adopted, the selection of the CCT beneficiaries works as follows: Citizens apply to local Social Solidarity Foundations in their districts and fill in a single form with their personal identification number. Using the Integrated Social Assistance Services Information System (*Bütünleşik Sistem*), the local Social Solidarity Foundations may view certain records about the applicants such as whether they have social security, houses, cars, property and other assets, as well as information about the household. Caseworkers pay house visits to the applicants' houses and fill in a report on the basis of their observations. House visits by caseworkers are obligatory. Finally, the board of trustees (*Mütevelli Heyeti*) of the local Social Solidarity Foundations makes the final decision on the basis of the information from the Integrated System and from the reports of caseworkers. As of now, not receiving

social security is one of the primary preconditions of being eligible for the CCT benefit. Whether or not the mother and father are able to work is also an important factor for the local Social Solidarity Foundations (Kurnaz 2012). However, since no scoring formula, but instead a simple means testing is used to determine CCT beneficiaries, this might leave room for some discretion in the selection process. It is also important to note that while the citizens apply to local Social Solidarity Foundations to apply for their CCTs, there are several other actors such as the greater municipalities, district municipalities, political party branches, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) involved in the allocation of different forms of social assistance in Turkey. In other words, the social assistance apparatus in Turkey is extremely complex, with the involvement of various different actors. In the next section we will analyze the effects that CCTs in Turkey have had on gender inequality, the transition to the labour market, and regional inequalities, starting with gender inequality.

CCTs and Gender Inequalities

Gender inequality is an important issue requiring scrutiny in an analysis of the impact of the Turkish CCT. This is because the Turkish CCT allocates more money to the families of girls than boys. The program positively discriminates in favour of girls over boys, as the amount of transfers distributed per female student is greater than that distributed per male student. Accordingly, with a condition of eighty percent regular attendance to the school, boys and girls who participate in primary school are given thirty and thirty-five Turkish Liras, respectively. Meanwhile, boys who attend middle school receive forty-five liras and their girl counterparts receive fifty-five liras (Tafolar and Baykal 2013).

Therefore, it is first necessary to determine whether or not the Turkish CCT has had a positive impact in terms of reducing female students' dropout rates. According to the results of an

impact evaluation of the CCT conducted by the IFPRI in 2006, the program has been effective in terms of increasing female students' school enrolment by 1.3 percent for primary school and 10.7 percent for secondary school (Ahmed et al. 2007). According to the findings of a 2012 impact evaluation on the CCT prepared by the Ministry of Family and Social Policy in collaboration with the General Directorate of Social Assistances and Gazi University in Ankara, the CCT had a positive impact in terms of diminishing school absences for the 2008/2009 academic year and for 2009/2010 academic year (Final Report 2012, 69). When gender is included in the analysis as a variable, the results demonstrate that the absence rate of girls is lower than that of boys for each academic year in question (Final Report 2012, 70). Overall, the findings of the impact assessment are positive and suggest that the Turkish CCT has been an influential public policy tool in diminishing the existing hurdles that female students confront while continuing their education in Turkey. This suggests that Turkey should remain dedicated to continuing the CCTs.

**Change in the Yearly Average of School Absences for Experiment and Control Groups
in Turkey**

School Year	Experiment Group	Control Group
2008/2009	-1.887	0.304
2009/2010	-1.105	1.186

Source: Final Report 2012, 69.

**Change in the Yearly Average of School Absences for Experiment and Control Groups
in Turkey, Grouped by Gender**

	Experiment		Control	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
2008/2009	-2.165	-2.381	0.369	-0.609
2009/2010	-1.282	-1.698	1.432	0.133

Source: Final Report 2012, 70.

Another aspect of the Turkish CCT that necessitates further scrutiny is whether it empowers its recipients, i.e. beneficiary mothers. As in the case of the other developing countries, mothers are the recipients of this social assistance scheme. They go directly to *Ziraat Bank* branches or post offices and withdraw their CCT benefit by showing their IDs. The impact evaluations suggest that there are benefits to women who receive the CCTs, however they also highlight the existence of some cultural elements that might hinder the potential positive effect of the Turkish CCT.

For instance, according to the findings of the First Qualitative Study (Kudat et al. 2006), the CCT has had remarkable effects with respect to the increase in women's participation in society. Women interviewed as part of this study generally conveyed their stories of how proud they were for participating in the application process and for their ability to utilize the funds allocated to them. The CCT is also a positive policy tool in that it encourages women to have formal marriages and to acquire birth certificates for their kids (Ahmed et al. 2007, 75). Meanwhile, the Second Qualitative and Anthropological Study (Adato et al. 2007) highlights the role of some predominant cultural barriers that might hinder the impact of CCTs on the empowerment of women. The results point to regional variation in terms of the potential

impact of CCTs on women's empowerment. While mostly husbands were decision makers and spenders of the CCT benefit in Van (a city in eastern Anatolia), women had more leverage in deciding how to use the CCT money in Samsun (a city located in the Black Sea region) and in Diyarbakır (a city located in the south-eastern region) (Ahmed et al. 2007, 75-76). A majority of the respondents stated that the conditional cash transfer had a positive influence on them in that they feel stronger because of this benefit, according to the findings of the most recent impact evaluation on the CCT (Final Report 2012, 27). Overall, these assessments also indicate that the CCT augurs well for female empowerment as it has the potential to boost women's confidence, capabilities, and agency. Furthermore, all activities related to the application procedures and the receipt of CCTs, such as applying to SYDVs, bringing documents to related offices, and even the act of going to Ziraat bank branches and post offices to withdraw CCT benefits, propel women to interact with state institutions with more frequency than before. Thus, this interaction leads to an increased sense of confidence. Yet, it is important to note that more concerted state action is warranted to cope with the still-entrenched cultural barriers to women's empowerment in Turkey. This requires more collaboration with other stakeholders involved and necessitates the formation of a better information dissemination system on the CCT program.

However, there are also several scholars that criticize the programs for simply reinforcing traditional divisions of labour that confine women strictly to domestic roles (Lomeli 2008, 489). Many programs did not even incorporate an explicit gender focus in their design or implementation and emphasize the maternal role of woman "as people who live for others" (490). Hence, CCT programs do give one the impression of encouraging women to become "active agents" in improving the welfare of their families, "but only within the restriction of traditional gender relations" (Ibid). This leads Lomeli to the conclusion that "without a program design that confronts and overcomes maternalism and familism, women will

continue to have serious difficulties integrating themselves into productive employment in less precarious ways that are less conducive to continuing the reproduction of poverty” (Ibid). As Buğra and Yakut-Cakar argue, “like labour markets, welfare regimes, too, are gendered institutions which both reflect and influence the attitudes that determine female employment” (Buğra and Yakut-Cakar 2010, 520). In an interview conducted with Burcu Yakut-Cakar last summer she stated:

“[t]he patriarchal bargain within the household is also manifested in the configuration of the welfare regime. Even though the program targeted women as beneficiaries, the Turkish welfare regime took women not as an active participant within the labour market, but as supporters of the household economy through care. So when you think about the gender dimension of course it fully neglects the role of the women in paid employment, the role of the women in the labour market. So it gives a kind of a contradictory message. While trying to empower women by transferring cash resources it is not showing a way to come out from this cycle of this patriarchal bargain, which puts women as the housewives and caregiver and men as the one working outside earning the livelihood of the family” (Yakut-Cakar 2013).

Finally, it should be mentioned that the amount allocated per child lags behind the CCT averages in the developing world. While the amount allocated per child in Turkey ranges from \$14 to \$25, the highest amount distributed in Brazil is \$28 and in Mexico \$35. The amount should be increased to a meaningful level so that it functions as a significant tool incentivizing families to keep their girls’ in school rather than marrying them at a relatively young age, and so that it operates as a substantial policy tool combating intergenerational transmission of poverty to children born into destitute families.

CCTs and the School-to-Work-Transition

One of the most crucial areas for investing in human capital is education. This is why most CCT programs make their transfer payments conditional on regular school attendance by

children. The regular amount of education support per month at the time of the start of the SRMP in Turkey was ten US dollars for the first child, nine US dollars for the second child, and eight US dollars for the third and any remaining children (Yılmaz-Şener 2010, 57-58). Even though living expenses in Turkey, and especially in rural areas, are not comparable with other OECD member countries, one can imagine that this amount of educational support can hardly cover all the expenses of a child's education. The cash payments are paid out for primary as well as secondary schooling, though payments are higher for secondary school than for primary schools, and also higher for girls than for boys. The education benefits are conditioned on eighty percent attendance rates (Adato 2007, 5-6). A large portion of the beneficiary children were, prior to the CCTs, actively involved in child labour. By targeting the poorest six percent of its population, the CCT program in Turkey has helped to present a child's education as a valuable alternative to child labour to many poor parents; according to the logic of the program, regular school attendance would ultimately help children to escape the recreation of poverty and enhance their prospects for a better life through better education and inclusion in the labour market. However, it can also be argued that CCT programs that focus on education are rather short-sighted, since no specific focus is being put on the question of what happens to the children after graduation (if they don't drop out along the way, and if they really do quit jobs when starting to go to school). Ensuring a smooth school-to-work-transition is equally as important as regular school attendance for ensuring that children get a real chance to escape the intergenerational transmission of poverty by improving their prospects in the labour market. Since Turkey has a low stock of human capital, "preventive investments earlier in the life-cycle (between the ages of three and twenty-five) present the most cost-efficient public policy and provide much larger benefits for the individual, society and economy" (ETF 2011, 31). Recent statistics and trends in

education in Turkey show the impact of the country's quite low public investments in education and its correlation with educational inequalities as well as low social mobility.

As recent data on public and private expenditures in Turkey is not available, the most recent numbers are from 2008. Back then the country spent 3.2 percent of its GDP on education, which is much less than the OECD average (which is around six percent). At the same time, private expenditures on education in Turkey is remarkably high. At around three percent of GDP, the level of private expenditures almost equals the amount of public expenditures on education (ETF 2011, 24). The high level of private expenditures on education has to be viewed within the context of a more general trend towards privatization in Turkey – the government continuously keeps public expenditures on education rather low. This indicates inequalities in educational opportunities, given the fact that most private expenditures go towards private classes that prepare students for university and college entrance exams. This shuts out children from lower socio-economic backgrounds, and consequently leads to an unfair distribution of access to higher education and the labour market. The specific discrimination against girls in Turkey's educational system and labour market has been dealt with in more detail already in the previous part of this article. In Turkey there are eight years of compulsory education. Secondary education usually implies four to five years in schools offering varying kinds of education (lyceum, high school, technical or vocational school, or Anatolian college).

Looking at the most recent statistics on Turkish youth published by the Turkish Statistical Institute in 2012, the net schooling rate by level of education for the academic year 2011/2012 for primary school is 98.8 percent for boys and 98.6 percent for girls. Secondary education is enjoyed by far fewer young Turks, with 68.5 percent of boys and 66.1 percent of girls attending. Only 35.6 percent of boys and 35.4 percent of girls attend higher education. However, several increases in the schooling rates at all levels have occurred, e.g., whereas

back in the academic year 2005/2006 only 18.9 percent of young Turks were attending higher education, only five years later the number has nearly doubled to 35.5 percent (TurkStat 2012, 21). What all of these numbers do not show is the still high dropout rates, at about 40 percent. Most of these drop-outs end up with no professional skills and find themselves outside the labour force or, in the best cases, within the informal low-wage labour market. According to the European Training Foundation, the Turkish education system is “largely oriented towards academic performance and professional careers resulting in a persistent unmet need for semi-skilled workers with concrete occupational and vocational skills” (ETF 2011, 29). It is precisely this unmet need for semi-skilled workers that is not being sufficiently addressed by the Turkish government. Turkey’s inclusion into prestigious European education programs such as the European Higher Education Area known as the ‘Bologna Process’ has certainly had a positive effect on the well-educated Turkish youth, but has surely not benefited the large proportion of Turkish youth that are facing serious difficulties gaining a foothold in the labour market due to a limited and poor-quality education.

Labour Force Status by Educational Status in Turkey, 2012

		G.Genç- Youth				Y.Yetişkin- Adult							
		İşgücüne katılım oranı Labour force participation rate (%)				İşsizlik oranı Unemployment rate (%)				İşgücüne dahil olmayan oranı Population not in labour force rate (%)			
		Okur- yazar değil	Lise altı eğitilmişler Less than high school	Lise ve dengi meslek High and vocational high school	Yüksek- öğretim Higher education	Okur- yazar değil	Lise altı eğitilmişler Less than high school	Lise ve dengi meslek High and vocational high school	Yüksek- öğretim Higher education	Okur- yazar değil	Lise altı eğitilmişler Less than high school	Lise ve dengi meslek High and vocational high school	Yüksek- öğretim Higher education
Yıllar - Years		Illiterate	Less than high school	High and vocational high school	Higher education	Illiterate	Less than high school	High and vocational high school	Higher education	Illiterate	Less than high school	High and vocational high school	Higher education
2012	Toplam												
	Total	19,7	47,6	57,4	79,1	3,9	8,7	11,0	10,1	80,3	52,4	42,6	20,9
	G	17,7	34,5	39,4	73,5	9,0	14,1	19,4	28,5	82,3	65,5	60,6	26,5
	Y	19,8	51,4	65,6	79,9	3,6	7,7	8,6	7,4	80,2	48,6	34,4	20,1
	Erkek												
	Male	34,0	69,1	74,4	85,1	9,9	8,9	8,3	7,2	66,0	30,9	25,6	14,9
	G	30,7	49,4	48,4	77,3	16,3	15,1	16,4	23,0	69,3	50,6	51,6	22,7
	Y	34,2	74,6	84,6	86,0	9,4	7,8	6,5	5,5	65,8	25,4	15,4	14,0
	Kadın												
	Female	16,7	25,6	33,5	70,9	1,4	8,1	19,2	14,7	83,3	74,4	66,5	29,1
	G	13,0	19,7	29,6	70,3	2,9	11,7	24,7	33,7	87,0	80,3	70,4	29,7
	Y	16,9	27,3	35,7	71,0	1,4	7,4	16,5	10,8	83,1	72,7	64,3	29,0

Source: TurkStat 2013, 37.

The statistics offer data for the rates of illiteracy, lower education (less than high school), high school and vocational school, and higher education in the year 2012. For these four categories, we can see the labour force participation rate, the unemployment rate, and the population not in the labour force rate. Among higher educated Turks aged fifteen to twenty-four, 73.5 percent are within the labour force, 28.5 percent are unemployed and 26.5 percent are outside the labour force. When looking at the statistics for Turks with high school and vocational high school education, only 39.4 percent are part of the labour force, 19.4 percent are unemployed, and a whole 60 percent are not participating within the labour force at all. For young Turks with less than high school education the numbers are as follows: 34.5 percent are active in the labour force, 14.1 percent are unemployed, and 65.5 percent are out of the labour force. Among young Turkish illiterates, only 17.7 percent are part of the labour force, 9 percent are unemployed (lowest unemployment rate of all educational groups) and a whole 82.3 percent are not part of the labour force (most of them young females).

What these numbers and statistics are reflecting are large educational disparities and unequal access to the labour market across the country. There are certainly various explanations for these circumstances. Going more in depth on this topic would lead us beyond the scope of this article. However, the most powerful explanation accounting for these educational and employment differences is the lack of vocational training, which in other countries with an apprenticeship tradition, such as Germany, is helping close gaps in educational attainment. In Turkey, though apprenticeships are a relatively small component of an “isolated dead-end branch of the formal education system” (ETF 2011, 29), vocational training can be a good approach for CCT programs in Turkey. Ensuring primary and secondary education for children is one thing, but what is school enrolment good for, if after graduating young adults have problems integrating into the labour market and end up unemployed? If CCT programs want to ensure that upcoming generations have a real chance to escape poverty, the program

initiators have to go the extra mile by extending the programs to include school-to-work-transition programs.

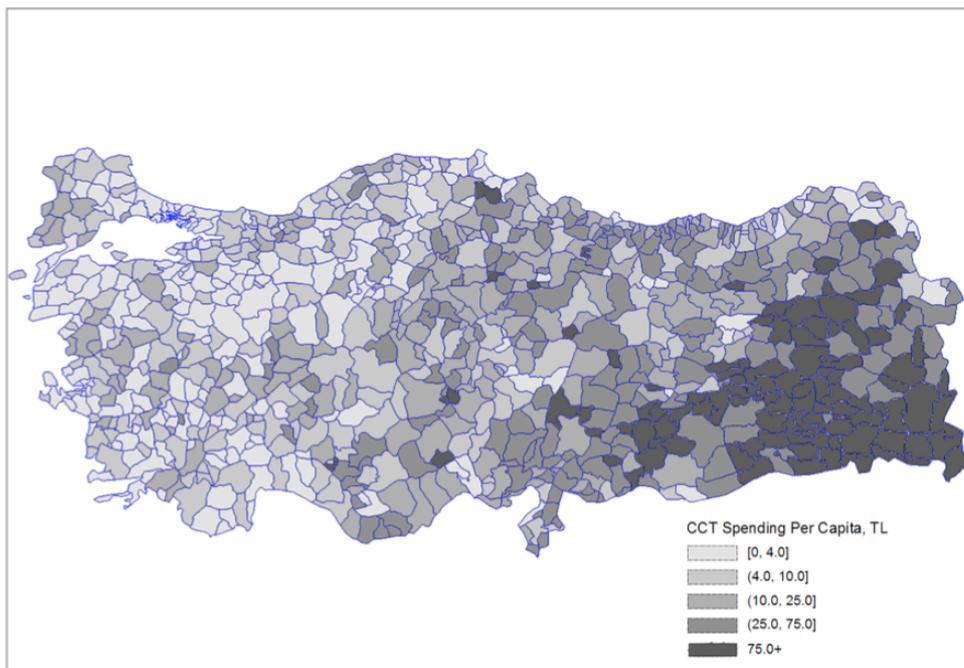
CCTs and Regional Imbalances

The Turkish government is certainly not the first government that could be accused of using social assistance programs for purposes of political power. In the case of Turkey there are several signs that indicate such an ulterior motive. Yılmaz-Şener argues that since social assistance provided by the municipalities and some NGOs is politically charged, it is essential for the Turkish state to lead in the area of social assistance (Yılmaz-Şener 2012, 769). Hence, the current government under Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan from very early on started to use this fact for exercising and solidifying its political power, as a large number of foundations and institutions carrying out social assistance programs are closely tied with the current AKP government. The Erdoğan administration acted very successfully and clever in two specific ways at the same time: while on the one hand the government was adhering to the World Bank and other International Financial Institutions' (IFI) demands to reform and increase the resources of its social security system, the government successfully managed to exploit this fact for its very own purposes of political power, leading to a situation where the substitution of rights-based assistance with charity-based ones did ultimately result in the Turkish public regarding assistance “as the benevolence of the AKP as a political party” and not as public assistance. Hence, as Yörük and Özsoy argue, the current AKP government has been implementing the World Bank and IFI's agenda by “blending it with the Islamic tradition of charity,” which ultimately has led to the current situation in which “the implementation of such *state charity* forces poor Kurds to bifurcate their class and ethnic

identities and prioritize their economic poverty while concealing their political Kurdishness” (Yörük and Özsoy 2013, 157).

Indeed, an examination of the regional distribution of social assistance programs in Turkey in terms of their ethno-political and destabilizing effects seems to support the argument that there is a political component to the allocation of CCTs. When looking at the distribution of aggregate CCT spending per capita in Turkey between the year 2005 and 2008, as illustrated in the figure below, one can observe that the highest amount of transfer payments per capita were being paid out in the south-eastern and eastern Anatolian regions of the country, which to a large extent are part of the Kurdish region and are traditionally the poorest and least developed territories in Turkey.

Distribution of Aggregate CCT Spending Per Capita, 2005-2008



Source: Aytaç 2013, 12.

Thus, social assistance programs appear to disproportionately target the Kurdish minority within the Kurdish region itself, as well as the internally displaced Kurds in urban and

metropolitan areas in particular (Yörük 2012, 518). This observation is shared by Yılmaz-Şener who writes, “migrants from eastern and south-eastern regions [most of them being Kurds] comprise a major part of the migrant population in the big cities” (Yılmaz-Şener 2012, 769). This development has led scholars such as Erdem Yörük to raise the suspicion that Kurdish ethnic identity is the main determinant of access to social assistance, and that the Turkish government uses social assistance with the aim of containing the Kurdish unrest in Turkey.

As there are no government figures on the percentage of ethnic minorities in Turkey, the research company KONDA presented numbers that estimate that 18.3 percent of the total population in Turkey are Kurds, which amounts to about 13.3 million out of a total population of 73 million (Yılmaz-Şener 2012; Yörük 2012). According to Milliyet newspaper, “23.8% of the Kurds living in Turkey are in the lowest income group, demonstrating that they are the poorest ethnic group in Turkey” (Yılmaz-Şener 2012, 774).

According to Yörük, in CCT applications, “Kurdish regions have a lower (24.84%) rejection than the country average (53.26%)” (Yörük 2012, 536). Furthermore, the percentage of CCT recipients in the Kurdish regions is “approximately three times higher than the national average” (523). He argues that behind this there lies a general strategy by the current AKP government to gain popularity and votes among the Kurdish population, which is the main electoral target group of parties that position the Kurdish issue at their centre. In an interview conducted last summer, Yörük reemphasized that argument:

“The Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) is running now 93 municipalities in the Kurdish region and they are all running social assistance programs. So social policy is a space of political struggle between the Kurdish movement and the Turkish state and government. I suggested that all Turkish governments so far have been using social welfare programs in order to contain and mobilise social groups, i.e. political elections or political competition is only one side of political underpinnings of social policy. But at the same time the drive to politically

contain dangerous groups is a maybe more structural and significant factor in developing different kind of social programs.” (Yörük 2013)

It appears that the beneficiaries that receive the highest amounts of transfer payments are most likely to be the most politicized groups. In Turkey this is the case for the Kurdish minority. By disproportionately paying out social assistance to the Kurdish regions the government follows the strategy of political containment. Yörük argues that governments in general do not expand social assistance programs when people become poor, but rather when the poor become politicized. This can be observed on a global scale. Many studies indicate that in Brazil the PT government has used the Bolsa Família program as a highly effective tool to get political support from Afro-Brazilian citizens of Northern Brazil and from the *favelas* of metropolitan cities such as Rio or Sao Paulo (Bohn 2011; Hunter and Power 2007). On the other side of the globe in China, the Minimum Standard Living Assistance program (MLSA) serves as another example of political containment of ethnic and urban unrest through social assistance programs. The MLSA reaches about 18 percent of the poor nationwide, however when looking at Tibet, where there is continuous ethnic unrest, 92.1 percent of the poor receive transfer payments (Yörük 2012, 540). With reference to the Fujimori government in the 1990s, Peru and its own practise of instrumentalization of social transfers, Julio Carrión makes an observation that is also valid for most of other countries too: “Whereas universalist policies provide benefits indiscriminately to friends and enemies, targeted programs [such as social assistance programs] give the government discretion over whom to favour and whom to exclude. Incumbents can thus reward their followers, hurt opponents, and win over the undecided [i.e. during elections]” (Carrión 2006, 26).

Thus it seems that when it comes to social assistance policies, politico-ideologically contrasting governments all around the globe (whether the conservative-Islamic AKP in

Turkey, the social-democratic PT in Brazil, or the CCP in China) are applying remarkably similar strategies and practises.

Conclusion

We believe that Conditional Cash Transfers can be effective tools in combating the hurdles and prejudices against female students' school enrolment, attendance rates, and education prospects in Turkey. The impact assessments of the program thus far concur with this assertion. However, we also believe that there are several key areas in which the program can be improved in order to have a more substantial impact. First, the amount allocated per child should be increased to incentivize families to keep their girls at school. Second, a better information dissemination system should be established in order to make sure that each potentially eligible family is aware of the program's existence. Finally, CCT should be seen only as part of a broader project and it should act in conjunction with other grants, scholarships, and fellowships that aim to remove the obstacles to girls' educational opportunities.

CCTs can be argued to have a potentially positive impact on women since they allow them to have increased interaction with state institutions, as well as gain relatively more control over family finances. However, as the impact assessments of the program also suggest, there are still structural barriers that act against the potential positive impacts of CCTs. Moreover, as our interviewees also highlighted, the state needs to develop concerted policy suggestions to increase female participation in the labour market, rather than just treating them as mothers at the service of the state.

With regard to education, CCT's are not extensive enough when it comes to ensuring a smooth school-to-work transition. This is mainly because they are initially rather shortsighted,

as only children at the age for primary and secondary education are the main target group. But in order to interrupt the intergenerational transmission of poverty a CCT program should also ensure that young people who graduate from school do have a chance to get a foothold in the labour market, e.g., by supporting apprenticeship programs or providing public funding for university entrance exam schools. Hence, it is of utmost importance that CCT programs also start to provide support during the transition period from school to the labour market.

Last but not least, we have argued that the unequal regional distribution of CCTs and other forms of social assistance programs by the government may be intentional, with the aim of containing social unrest as well as shoring up political power. The problem of the instrumentalization of social assistance programs is as old as social assistance programs themselves. However, CCTs and other social assistance programs do need further reforms that address the lack of transparency and overcome clientelistic structures.

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