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) 1. Who are we?

Support to Life (STL) is a humanitarian association that works to ensure individuals and communities affected by natural or human-made disasters to access core rights and needs. We support the lives of persons in need in 12 provinces of Türkiye with our offices, mobile teams, and information-support line. Today, we carry out operations that we have shaped since 2005 in the framework of core humanitarian principles in Emergency Response, Refugee Support, Child Protection, and Capacity Building in Civil Society. Within the scope of our humanitarian aid efforts, we support persons in need to access their basic rights and needs, aims to eliminate risks faced by children living in difficult conditions prominently in agricultural areas, and conduct emergency response operations in disasters. In addition to all this, we are working to contribute to a civil society that is prepared for disasters.

a. Support to Life Community Based Disaster Response and Localization Efforts

Within the scope of our Emergency Response efforts, we shape our projects within the disaster risk management and humanitarian aid framework in disasters. We conduct emergency response operations, disaster preparedness, and resilience-building activities that provide in-kind and cash assistance to communities affected by disasters. Our

goal with these operations is to meet basic food and non-food needs, provide cash assistance, and improve housing conditions, in addition to responding to water, sanitation, and hygiene needs. We also support communitybased activities to increase resilience in disaster areas. As part of our efforts in coordination and advocacy, we support the creation of first response teams, primarily awareness and training, preparation plans with local governments, and the creation of risk maps in order to initiate a disasterready society.

We continued our coordination and advocacy-related efforts intensively in 2022 in the framework of coordination networks and institutional dialogue. We carried out our activities through the Localization Advocacy Group, Disaster Platform, Türkiye Refugee Council, Balance and Inspection Network, Seasonal Worker Migration Communication Network, and Partnership Network to Prevent Violence Against Children, of which we are members together with NGOs. We actively supported the activities of the Localization Advocacy Group. The Advocacy Group created the Localization Strategy and Minimum Standards Document and took necessary steps to manage risks. Working groups on financing, capacity, partnerships, and advocacy were also established in the new period.

b. Protection from the Local to the Global: Local 2 Global Platform

Local 2 Global Platform (L2GP) is an initiative established in 2009 by humanitarian workers and activists experienced in various areas of humanitarian response for local and national actors to respond with authority in the crisis. L2GP collaborates with learning and policy-making organizations, as well as organizations and individuals at all levels of the humanitarian system, and seeks to influence crisis policies. L2GP is supported by DanChurchAid, Act Church of Sweden, and Christian Aid but operates as an independent and opensource collective.

L2GP conducted Moreover. community-based action research in Burma/Myanmar, Kenya, the occupied Palestine, Philippines, South Sudan, Sudan, and Zimbabwe. These studies explored the experiences of people facing threats and challenges to their protection and survival during crises such as armed conflict, protracted socio-political crises and natural disasters. As a result of studies. L2GP developed the 'survivor and crisis response' community-led (in short, sclr) approach from the findings of its examinations and other experiences related to citizen and community-led responses in various contexts.



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2. Introduction

2021 was a challenging year for Türkiye in terms of natural disasters. A total of 53 provinces were affected by the wildfires that continued throughout August, and 170 thousands of hectares of forests were burned. In floods in Bartin, Kastamonu. and Sinop, 81 people died, and at least 454 structures were heavily damaged.

STL put sclr pilot implementations action between December 2021 March 2023 with funding from the Center for Disaster Philanthropy (CDP) to support communities affected by disasters. The Project team was composed of one project coordinator, two program specialists, and six field workers, consisting of two persons in each field.

The project started with the joint training organized by L2GP and STL in March 2022. Following the 3-day training, field workers introduced the project to communities through meetings with local authorities in project locations, establishing communication with communities, and applying appreciative inquiry. Communities were encouraged to carry out risk and vulnerability assessments and develop microprojects for the identified needs, with a primary emphasis on their capacities and strengths. The developed projects were assessed by a committee created by STL teams, and the eligible projects were transferred micro-grants via bank transfer. STLfield team remained in touch with communities during the application of the projects and provided support where required. The completed projects were finished with financial and narrative reports prepared by members of the local initiative that developed the project. A total of 74 projects developed and executed by local initiatives in three provinces were supported with micro-grants.



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Throughout the project, STL team organized meetings where members of the community could come together and share their experiences with each other. During these meetings, the members of the community found a space to share their own project development and implementation processes, their advice to each other in addition to their feedback to the STL.

3. Survivor and Community Led Crisis Response (sclr) **Approach**

approach aims to develop communities affected by crises by strengthening their response capacities and preparing them for future disasters. This methodology aims at increasing responsiveness of overall general combined response. its speed, and access while also reinforcing the sense of dignity, selfworth, commitment, social cohesion, and the broader well-being of survivors, handling leading causes of vulnerability against crises and accelerating meeting emergency needs and recovery after a crisis. In addition, it is aimed to ensure target communities assess their deficiencies in disaster preparedness, design disaster preparation and reduction plans, and increase their capacities to apply these plans.

The local-led disaster risk management The approach reinforces autonomous action to help one another, considering crisis-affected communities are first and last responders. It focuses on strengths and opportunities rather than problems and vulnerabilities as a starting point. It transfers power and ownership from NGOs to local community groups. It contributes to strengthening social cohesion while also aiming to encourage disadvantaged groups as leaders. It also supports groups in considering the causes of vulnerability. It benefits from accountability and harm minimization mechanisms at the local level. It is fast. user-friendly, and unbureaucratic.

Naming the approach: While L2G and the NGOs it worked with used the acronym 'sclr' ('survivor and community-led responses to crises') for the approach, it was intended to be broad enough to be adopted by any organization to refer to processes that recognize and seek to strengthen autonomous collective selfhelp among people facing crises.

However, as part of the initial co-design process in each new context, national NGOs adopting the approach for the first time were encouraged to give it their own name. Support to Life called its sclr approach Locally Led Intervention.



O 4. Support to Life Locally Led Response Pilot Program, Türkiye Learning Brief

a. Implementation Steps

Financing Support to Life and Building sclr Capacity: A partnership was established between STL and the Center for Disaster Philanthropy (CDP) between December 2021 and March 2023 to execute pilot implementations of sclr approach in Türkiye, and the project was financed by CDP. The co-design workshop organized in March 2022 by STL and Local 2 Global Platform was the first step for STL to introduce the sclr approach and adapt it to its corporate culture. The Project team gained information on the steps of sclr approach and participatory action learning in the crisis model.

PALC Process Started with Appreciative Inquiry: Field workers trained during the joint design workshop conducted interviews to assess crisis impact levels, needs, and capacities of affected communities. Such interviews were conducted according to the Participatory Action Learning in Crisis (PALC) method. Using a modified 'appreciative inquiry' approach, PALC facilitators encourage groups to consider how to improve their local capacities, experiences, and opportunities to expand the scope and scale of autonomous self-help initiatives. Field officers who act as PALC facilitators visited the villages in the implementation areas and met the communities to identify the dynamics of the local area,

the extent of disaster impact, and the groups on which applications could be implemented while also visiting the local governments working on disaster crisis management in the region to understand the capacity of the implementation.

Reinforcing Accountability, Inclusiveness, and Do-No-Harm: As field workers reinforced communication with the communities, they evaluated project ideas on locally-led response initiatives, local recommendations and suggestions to support initiatives being inclusive of the community, and application processes would be in line with the no harm principle.

Evaluation and Processing of Grant Applications: Community initiatives shape projects for their needs in terms of the aspects such as the action plan, budget, purpose, and method applied for micro-grants. A commission, including the STL field team and senior managers, evaluated these applications. The amounts of the grants vary between 610-4700 dollars. The grant amounts of the selected projects were transferred to the bank account of an initiative member determined by the community.

Access to Demand-Centered Skills Training, Connectivity, and Networking: Certain groups stated that they needed skills training related to the projects they

designed and implemented. Such skills training was mainly complementary to the projects (e.g., groups with a fire equipment procurement project organized and received basic fire response training). Spaces were created for different project groups to come together, and community meetings were scheduled.

Reportina and Recording Lessons Locally-led Response Learned:

Groups filled out their Final Activity Report after completing their projects. In this report, they recorded lessons learned in the process. They also participated in one-to-one impact analysis discussions with the project team and individual assessments. They organized online or small group evaluation meetings with other initiatives conducting projects at the local level.



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In the fire zone Manavgat, local initiatives developed projects focusing on the acquisition of first response vehicles and the announcement system.

b. Implementation Locations

The wildfires in Türkiye in the summer of 2021 affected many provinces in the country's south and west, resulting in both losses of life and material in many regions. In the summer of the same year, a flood disaster occurred in the northern provinces of Türkiye. Marmaris district of Muğla and Manavgat district of Antalya are two regions significantly affected by the fires. The region most affected by the flood disaster in 2021 was the Bozkurt district of Kastamonu province.

Therefore, Marmaris district of Muğla, Manavgat district of Antalya, and Bozkurt district of Kastamonu in Türkiye were determined for Locally-led Disaster Risk Management implementations, and community-based disaster risk management activities were started in 2022 at these locations.

Marmaris

Marmaris has a population of 95,851 people. During the wildfires in 2021, 10 villages in the district were affected. In total, 297 households were damaged. Beekeeping, one of the essential livelihoods in the region, was damaged due to the burning of pine trees. Olive cultivation was damaged since olive trees were affected by the disaster. Another economic activity affected by the disaster was farming due to the damage

to pastures. This compelled many people to direct to tourism, the region's main economic activity. After the fires, improvement works were carried out in Marmaris, but the local people stated that they could not actively participate in these works and were left out of the process.



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Manavgat

Manavgat has a population of 242,490. In the region where tourism is the main source of income, the fires spread to 88,000 hectares of land within 10 days. The fires affected 35 neighborhoods, damaged 200 households, and resulted in the death of 7 people. 3320 animals

were destroyed, 360 beehives and 37 greenhouses were damaged. Beekeeping and farming activities were adversely affected in this region due to the damaged pastures and forests. It was observed that the local people were preparing for another possible disaster with their own means. This was a factor in increasing interest in the sclr-based project.

Bozkurt

Bozkurt district of Kastamonu has a population of 9,620. The flood

caused heavy destruction and caused significant damage to both buildings and infrastructure. Due to the flood, a total of 300 buildings were damaged in Kastamonu province, and 62 people lost their lives. Based on the geographical location and structure of the region, access from the center is difficult. This aggravates response in the event of a disaster. Many people emigrated out of the area after the flood. Several people reported experiencing adverse psychological effects after the flood.



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In the village of Kestanesöke in the Bozkurt district of Kastamonu, the local initiative has implemented the project, which includes the construction of a disaster assembly area and a stone oven needed in times of floods.

c. Positive Outcomes

- 1. Increased recognition of civil society understanding in pilot fields: In the Bozkurt district of Kastamonu, the Manaygat district of Antalya, and the Marmaris district of Muğla fields, where pilot implementation of sclr approach took place, there was no awareness of or information about the STL and civil society understanding in general. During the entire pilot implementation, STL became a wellknown institution after the field workers established solid relations with the communities, promoted the works of STL and the sclr approach, and successfully transferred micro-grant support to local groups, increasing the local knowledge and awareness about non-governmental organizations.
- 2. Increased institutional capacity in sclr approach: The pilot implementation process was also a new process of learning by practice for STL. The Association and the project team's capacity were increased in designing responses using the sclr and experimental learning by finding necessary responses for different dynamics and needs, such as geographical conditions or cultural sensitivities of the implementation fields.
- 3. Increased individual sense of capability of group members that conduct local projects with grant support: The majority of the group

- members interviewed individually stated that being involved in this process developed them individually, enrichening their participation experience and courage, and that they were proud of themselves. All of the interviewed community members said that they would participate if they had a similar opportunity again.
- 4. Increased sense of self-sufficiency of non-governmental initiatives and project conducting local groups: Communities supported by micro-grants during the activities stated that their competences increased during locally-led response activities and that their reflexes to respond to a disaster in the region as local groups improved. It was observed that the experience of locally-led response strengthens the feeling of 'togetherness' in the local groups and of having contributed to the place they live.
- **5. Increase in participation and use of feedback mechanisms:** Regarding areas such as promoting the approach, ensuring participation and receiving feedback from the local people, and field officers' experiences in their first contact with communities as PALC facilitators; a significant positive change was observed from the beginning to the end of the pilot application. It was observed that the perception of the locally-led response improved, the interaction of

the group members developed, and the suggestions and feedbacks given by the association to the project team increased as the members of the group, who were distant to participatory behavior at the beginning of the activity, experienced participation in the process.

6. Increase in the local community's sense of security in disaster and crisis situations: In some groups where the sclr approach was implemented within the scope of locally-led response projects, not only the project members, but all local people provided feedback that they felt more resilient, more

informed and confident in responding to a crisis.

7. Increase in problem solving skills of local communities: In the impact analysis and focus group discussions, the groups that conducted locally-led projects by receiving micro-grant support stated that their ability to find solutions to the problems they encountered during the project execution processes increased. Community members stated that their skills such as receiving permission from the local government, creating additional resources for the project budget, resolving conflicts in meetings, and division of labor among themselves as a group improved.



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- **8. Groups whose disaster resilience** was observed to have increased: In parallel to the projects developed by the local communities in the scope of locally-led response projects, it was observed that they applied to institutions such as AFAD, Forestry Operations Directorate, and fire brigade, in order to conduct fire drills and receive basic disaster and equipment use training. In addition, some groups have tried disaster response systems which were established within the scope of their projects, and developed crisis response plans although they did not receive formal training.
- **9. Different local groups helping each other.** All groups that developed a local response project by receiving microgrant support in all locations where the sclr approach was applied introduced the sclr approach and micro-grant supports to other groups that they were in contact with locally. It was observed that local groups encouraged each other to benefit from the support. They supported each other regarding the goods and services provided with the micro-grant, in the process of obtaining permission from local governments or in the access to training-drills.
- 10. Increase in willingness of local communities to take action against other local needs: Another positive outcome observed in all groups applying

disaster risk response projects with micro-grant support and among the local people was increased awareness towards other local needs and exchange of ideas on these needs among those local groups' themselves. It was observed that possible areas of action were discussed among the groups such as repairing damaged public spaces, collectively supporting community members with individual needs, pollution, and stray animals.

11. Increase in women's participation: In three implementation locations of the pilot project, qualitative and quantitative positive developments were recorded in involvement of women in the groups contacted by STL during the initial stages when sclr approach was tried. It was observed that any time PALC facilitators came together with groups that conduct local projects with micro-grant support, numbers of women included in meetings increased, their interaction and feedbacks for field officers increased, and they were more involved in decision making mechanisms of the group in project execution process. When the entire process is assessed, women were better adapted to dynamics of the approach compared to the men once the sclr approach was introduced and applied. In Kastamonu Bozkurt region, two initiatives where all group members were women were provided with micro-grant support.

- volunteering in the local: Although STL completed the pilot application without including the community volunteers which was enabled by the sclr approach, initiative members who undertake the role of community volunteers within the scope of locally-led response were identified in all fields. Community members who establish closer and more active communication with the motivation of volunteerism, announce the approach in the local field, and supporting project execution processes of other local response groups came forward.
- **13. Inclusive examples of locally-led response initiatives:** Although the sclr approach was used in the scope

of community-based disaster risk management program, more inclusive initiative examples were found at the local scale in time. In implementation locations, disaster response and postdisaster recovery initiatives applied at micro-grant support with an inclusive understanding. Disabled and Their Families Association which operates locally in Marmaris, conducted disaster training for individuals with disabilities via a gathering of disabled persons and their families. At the same time, animal rights-sensitive community initiatives in Marmaris Orhaniye received micro-grant support for their inclusive initiatives. They placed recycling boxes carrying fire-related information and food cups for stray animals.



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In the projects of local initiatives in Marmaris, the touristic district of Muğla, brought forward the establishment of fire containers to be used in the first response to the fire.

d. Lessons Learned

- 1. Time spent after the crisis: Although an increasing mobilization was evident in the public especially during and the immediate aftermath of fires. it was observed that mobilization and awareness of fire decreased from March onwards when the project gained speed. As the time passed over the disaster, it was observed that interest of communities on the project decreased. This demonstrates that initiating sclr approach right after the event/phenomenon that caused the crisis is important in terms of protecting response reflex of community members against crises, high participation, and motivation.
- 2. Different dvnamics between conditions in the field and community activities: Although the approach has flexible principles towards implementation, due to differences between seasonal, geographical, and social dynamics of application fields, it was observed that application must be evaluated differently in every field. For instance, communities affected by the flood in Kastamonu Bozkurt were elderly, mostly retired, and accessible only in spring and summer seasons due to seasonal migration, while the communities in Marmaris were middle aged, working in spring and summer months that was the tourism season

- and it was difficult for them to spare time for community activities in these periods. The fact that it was difficult to bring communities together in spring and summer which are both tourism and agriculture season depending on locations in Antalya Manavgat, and that the villages are distant to each other decreased the interaction among the communities and the chance for them to come together physically. It was observed that there must be flexibility based on these conditions while putting the application into practice.
- 3. Capacity of implementing institution and project team in application of the approach: The sclr approach requires being innovative and flexible compared to known communal approachas and procedures. Because it does not follow a straight line but a learn by practice in the process as underlined by the approach, the implementation process is directly affected by the implementing institutions increasing its own and the project team's capacity accordingly, and being open to learn from the community and each other. Institutions and persons that implement the approach must work to increase participation in the process.
- **4. Previous experiences of communities:** In some of the groups supported by micro-grants, it was

- observed that adopting sclr in terms of organization, participation, and experiences of acting together was also based on previous experiences of the group. For instance, groups that had previously acted together on different subjects were more participatory and motivated in the process of introduction of the application and implementation of the project, while local groups with no previous autonomously acting experience remained distant to sclr approach. In addition, considering the historic development of service system in Türkiye, communities in some regions were more open on taking the power into their own hands due to the disruptions experienced in reaching rights and services to distant corners, and therefore the experience of meeting their own needs in the local.
- 5. Internalizing the sclr approach: STL and the civil society in Türkiye in general is unfamiliar with the sclr approach. Therefore, it took time to tailor the pilot application in accordance with sclr approach on the field. There were challenges in terms of community mobilization, increasing recognition of the association in the region, and in parallel to this, finding strategies to encourage community volunteerism. A major lesson learned out of this was the importance of having examples that apply similar approaches in the field. The

- lack of NGOs and local governments that make community-based applications, and the fact that the approach is not familiar to the community and other stakeholders was determined to be a problem that must be overcome. Such issues demonstrated that the need for "training" on the sclr approach could not be sufficiently met only with the "joint design workshop" in the beginning of the process and that the implementing project team must be supported with processes such as mentorship, experience sharing, peer learning in the process of implementation of the approach.
- 6. Establishing a relationship based on trust with the community: In the fields where the sclr approach was applied, there were no local community members that recognized or heard about STL. The field officers that acted as PALC facilitators on the field had to overcome several situations as the people that establish the first contact with the community. At application regions there were some challenges in the first stage of the application with establishing relationship of trust, explaining transparency of the association to community members due to the lack of recognition of STL. Support was received from the local governments in order to overcome this situation, and the STL was promoted and dialogue process



As STL, in the scope of our community-

was started. In time, as the recognition of the association increased and the name of STL was known in the local region, it became easier to establish the relationship based on trust.

- 7. Creating spaces to come together with the community in the Daily life in the local region: A phenomenon that was underlined at the joint design workshop in the beginning of the pilot application but turned out to be a challenge in the reality of the field was to find activities that emphasize common beliefs and values that bring local together and can mobilize in the field. At this point it was observed that capacities must be developed by the sclr implementation team both institutionally and in terms of activities that could be conducted on community mobilizations.
- 8. Facilitation of micro-grant management and shaping feedback mechanisms according to community needs: In the beginning of application steps of the sclr, a system was developed on how to execute micro-grant systems. According to this system, there were processes involving communities' being required to get price offers, invoice every expense, and have every group member sign official documents. When these processes transitioned from design to implementation, they were

found to be unsuitable to the local conditions. An important feedback was that the community members reported challenges such as the difficulties in bringing every group member together to sign documents, or the local supply chain and service procurement who did not follow the procedure determined by the non-governmental organizations.

based disaster risk management efforts in regions that were affected from fire and flood disasters in Türkive, we executed a pilot implementation of the 'sclr' approach and increased our experience with locally-led response to crises. In the pilot implementation between March 2022 and March 2023, there were challenges and lessons learned described above of the flexible and innovative model of the locally-led response approach which was designed under guidance of Local2Global Platform. This process was recorded by STL as a new and 'learn by doing' process, and with lessons learned it was observed that Participatory Action Learning in Crises (PALC) processes could be improved as experienced by different groups.

In line with lessons learned, both the non-governmental organizations and local governments generally in Türkiye and the teams that want to apply locally-led response to crises approach could be given some recommendations.

• In general, in Türkiye, which is a disaster country, non-governmental organizations can use cost efficiency and flexibility of the sclr approach to increase local resilience. They can shape their capacities to move their operations and projects away from centralized approaches.

- Non-governmental organizations can enhance their capacity to plan activities in order to increase participation for the groups for which the projects are implemented.
- Non-governmental organizations can contribute to the development of 'sclr' and similar approaches by sharing lessons learned from other locally-led projects.
- Non-governmental organizations can try to carry civil society from big city centers to the local and to introduce the understanding of civil society and NGOs to the local.
- Schools, municipalities and all local governments can conduct more effective activities by reinforcing communication with and supporting local initiatives and groups.
- Advocacy activities can be conducted to transfer material and moral resources directly to local initiatives and to expand community-based support.
- Activities such as workshops, panels, and forums that will create sharing spaces on community-based approaches and experience among institutions and networks that carry out localization and community-based studies in Türkiye can be increased.



