SOWING SEASON

GRANT PROGRAM STORIES

2013-2014
SOWING SEASON
SABANCI FOUNDATION GRANT PROGRAM STORIES
2013-2014
Contents

Foreword 4
Güler Sabancı, Chairman of the Sabancı Foundation Board of Trustees

Introduction 6
Brief Information about Sabancı Foundation Grant Program

Grant Program Stories

Association of Women with Disabilities 10
Rights-based Struggle of Women with Disabilities

Community Volunteers Foundation 16
YouthBank

Flying Broom Association 22
Child Brides

Hayat Sende Youth Academy Association 28
Let’s Remove Social Barriers

Karabiga Women’s Cooperative 34
Karabiga Woman and Child Center

Mardin Women Cooperation Association 40
Empowering Youth

Ödemiş Women’s Cooperative 46
Weave Your Future with Silk

Social Rights and Research Association 52
Monitoring Group for Disability Rights

Women for Women’s Human Rights – New Ways Association 58
We Stand Up for Our Rights
Adopting the life philosophy of my grandfather Hacı Ömer Sabancı, Sabancı Foundation was founded forty years ago and based on the principle of “sharing what we have gained from this land with its people”. For my grandfather, who first made his living from the land as a cotton laborer, agriculture held a very important place. The roots of the Sabancı Foundation, as well as many industrial organizations of Sabancı Holding, were in fact planted in the earth. We grew up hearing from my grandfather about both the difficulty and the joy of working with the earth.

Working with the earth requires a lot of effort. There is a precision to every process – from preparing the soil for harvest, to where to plant, how much to water, to the type of fertilizer to use. But like in every precise endeavor, putting effort brings greater joy. There is the priceless joy in seeing the first sprouting seed. We pray for some rain, and eagerly the rain, and eagerly await the harvest. For this reason, each year, the hope of seeds to germinate the next season gives us strength; in the sowing season the seeds are sown and the subtleties of the soil are patiently overcome.

This book, which we have titled “Sowing Season: Sabancı Foundation Grant Program Stories” takes its name from the hope in planting the seeds that, through our efforts, will eventually sprout and thrive. This book of stories, which we publish each year, contains the accounts of how the seeds of the Social Development Grant Program started in 2008 are growing.

The Social Development Grant Program’s goal is to support civil society organizations working to achieve equal and active participation of women, youth and persons with disabilities in society. The Grant Program is built on the aim that everyone enjoys equal rights, which is one of the most important indicators of a developed society. Through the Grant Program, we support the projects of civil society organizations every year and continue to sow new seeds in the name of social development.
From the time we set off, to the present, the number of projects supported by our program has reached 46. Through 37 completed projects, we have directly reached over 70 thousand women, youth and persons with disabilities in Turkey’s 72 provinces, as well as around 300 thousand indirectly. Beyond the numbers, we have witnessed lives being transformed. As we look back, we are overjoyed to see how the seeds in our garden of social development have grown through the years. In this book, you will read the stories of how 9 of our supported projects have thrived. Among the stories, you will read the encouraging tale of how youth in Mardin, famous for its pigeons, gained the consciousness and power to take off like a pigeon; and how women in Karabiga, in their path toward equal rights with men, broke out of their shells, stepped outside their houses, and began producing. Touched by the solidarity of women with and without disabilities, you will be inspired by the struggle against discrimination by persons with disabilities and youth in care of the state. The word “struggle” will appear frequently in all of these narratives, as well as “equal society”, the ideal underlying all of these projects.

As the Sabancı Foundation, we are proud to be on this path, which began with the earth and continues with the earth. We are aware that we are on a long and challenging road which requires hard work and patience. The seeds we sow may take years to sprout. Being aware of these facts, we continue to work side-by-side with civil society organizations. We draw strength from our work and the positive developments we have created in people’s lives, and we continue to share what we have gained from these lands with its people, because we will have to plant many more seeds for abundant harvests to come.

Güler Sabancı
Chairman of the Sabancı Foundation Board of Trustees
Sabancı Foundation Social Development Grant Program (SDGP or Grant Program) was launched in 2008 in order to support civil society organizations implementing projects for women, youth and persons with disabilities.

Why Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities?
Turkey is home to 38.2 million **WOMEN**, 12.6 million **YOUTH** and 8.5 million **PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**. Women, youth and persons with disabilities constitute a large portion of the population. However, a variety of indicators such as work, education and political participation show that these groups face problems when it comes to equal and active participation in public life. Groups, subjected to double discrimination as "**Women with Disabilities**", "**Young Women**" or "**Youth with Disabilities**", face even greater obstacles.

Why Civil Society Organizations?
With the goal of ensuring equal rights and active participation in public life for women, youth and persons with disabilities, Sabancı Foundation decided to support civil society organizations through its Social Development Grant Program.

There are mainly two reasons for this:
1 - Need
2 - Potential for Change

Due to the lack of local organizations or foundations that provide grants to civil society organizations, there is a constant need in the sector. On the other hand, civil society organizations, which are working closely with disadvantaged groups and analyzing their needs, have a high potential in solving some of the social problems.

It was at this point that the Sabancı Foundation, through the grant program, sprang into action to support the projects of civil society organizations promoting equal rights for women, youth and persons with disabilities, and their active participation in society.
Through the grant program, the Sabancı Foundation manages the following process in order to provide not only material support, but also technical support where the need presents itself. Creating an environment of sharing between organizations and conducting joint projects with them are essential aspects of this process.

- The grant process begins with organizations deemed eligible after a comprehensive selection process, taking their places within the grantee network.
- The organizations become acquainted with other organizations working in similar areas within the grantee network, and become part of various information and experience sharing environments.
- The Sabancı Foundation keeps close track of projects implemented and works collaboratively with the organizations, through frequent meetings, field visits and comprehensive evaluation of reports.
- Following this close monitoring, the foundation provides technical support in the area of need, from communications to monitoring and evaluation.
- In order to keep the public informed on projects being conducted, the foundation also creates vehicles for communication such as a bulletin service, special news and activities.

In an environment where women’s organizations cannot reach women with disabilities and organizations for persons with disabilities are male-dominant, the Association of Women with Disabilities was the only organization that focused on the needs of women with disabilities.
INSTITUTION
Association of Women with Disabilities

PROJECT NAME
Rights-based Struggle of Women with Disabilities

PROJECT PARTNER
Adana Women’s Solidarity Center

LOCATION
Ankara, Bursa, Gaziantep, İzmir, Samsun, Trabzon

PROJECT PERIOD
July 2013 – July 2014
In 2009, a group of empowered women with disabilities came together to fight the double disadvantages they face in Turkey for being women and disabled, and formed the Association of Women with Disabilities. In an environment where women’s organizations cannot reach women with disabilities and organizations for persons with disabilities are male-dominant, the Association of Women with Disabilities was the only organization that focused on the specific needs of women with disabilities.

Beginning their work with the "Rights-based Struggle of Women with Disabilities" project, the first of its kind in Turkey, the Association reached other women with disabilities in Turkey. The goal was to raise their awareness on women and disability rights, support them to gain strength together and form an alliance among women with disabilities.

Thus far, the project has reached 120 women with disabilities in 6 provinces of Turkey. Through a process that begins with announcements in each province, the project team has reached women in various disability groups. For three days, these women shared the discrimination they had faced both as persons with disabilities and as women, and became aware of the rights they possessed. Along with this awareness, the need to act together with other women with disabilities brought the powerful effects of solidarity.

I began losing my sight when I was six months old. I could see until I was nine, but I had no sight in my right eye. I studied until third grade like this. My elder brother said, 'Let’s send her to a school for persons with visual disabilities so that she can continue her basic education'. My father said 'No, she’s a girl, I can't send her.' When my brother insisted, my father became furious and said 'I have enough money, she doesn't have to earn'. But unfortunately my father passed away, and we have no money.
In an environment where women's organizations cannot reach women with disabilities and organizations for persons with disabilities are male-dominant, the Association of Women with Disabilities was the only organization that focused on the specific needs of women with disabilities.

Following the workshops, the women with disabilities themselves held local events in order to increase the visibility of issues they face. At these events, some women with disabilities told about their experiences in a documentary film; others brought their problems to the table together in a panel attended by public and civil society organizations. These local events helped the women draw strength from each other and made their voices heard.

This project showed me that as a woman I am strong, and as a person with disabilities, I am not helpless. As a young woman preparing to enter the workforce, the project allowed me to clear my doubts and the fears I had not yet conquered. Through this project, I will be more aware and patient in my struggle with the problems of being a woman and a person with disabilities.
In this rights-based struggle launched by women with disabilities, the women will continue to take steps toward defending their rights; steps which, as the project coordinator said as well, may seem small from outside, but tremendous in their own world.

Along with this awareness, the need to act together with other women with disabilities brought the powerful effects of solidarity.

This project, the first of its kind in Turkey, has completed its second year. Through it, every province we visited and every women with disabilities we met experienced a “first.” For the first time, women with disabilities realized what a rights-based struggle was, and became acquainted with a completely different version of their own worlds and struggles for survival. Looking from outside, the steps these women took as they learned the concept of rights-based struggle seem small, but within their own worlds, these steps are enormous and their greatest achievement.
This project showed me that as a woman I am strong and as a person with disabilities I am not helpless.
In an environment where youth are seen as tomorrow's adults, YouthBank supported that young people are partners, not only of the future but today as well.
INSTITUTION
Community Volunteers Foundation

PROJECT NAME
YouthBank

PROJECT PARTNER
Selçuk Municipality

LOCATION
Adana, Adıyaman, Afyonkarahisar, Artvin, Batman, Çanakkale, İstanbul, İzmir, Kilis, Samsun, Zonguldak

PROJECT PERIOD
January 2014 – November 2014
The YouthBank project was established in 2011 by the Community Volunteers Foundation (TOG). Since its establishment, TOG opposed statements such as "Youth are our future" and "Youth are tomorrow's adults" and supported that young people are partners, not only of the future but today as well. With this vision, the foundation added YouthBank to its list of projects. Its goal was to empower young people between the ages of 15 and 25, and conduct a project that viewed young people as decision makers at every stage, having a voice, starting today.

An international youth work model, YouthBank's story began in Turkey with young people living in eleven provinces. First, YouthBanks, composed of teams of six enthusiastic, high-potential youth, were established in each province. These young people met in training sessions held by the YouthBank coordination team, where they met their peers from very different cultures in different provinces, and experienced working together with their differences. The training sessions also opened a new page in their lives, on subjects such as youth work, social responsibility, communication and the grant program.

The YouthBank project is a youth work method that allows young people to create projects on social issues they see around them. During the implementation stage of the projects, young people provide one-on-one support to their own peers, other youth. From this standpoint, the YouthBank project is both a vehicle providing youth with the opportunity to create values that benefit the society and a process which supports personal development of young people in many areas as they realize their projects.
Returning home after the training, the young people contacted other youth, and learned what they wanted to change where they lived. Then, based upon these demands, they encouraged these young people to devise their own projects. The needs were quite variable, ranging from environmental pollution to the need for repairs and outfitting of schools. So which social need should be addressed first? At such times, the YouthBank coordination team did not leave the young people on their own. With the support of the coordination team, young people learned such concepts as “principles of cooperation” and “teamwork” by experiencing them together.
Once young people chose the projects to be supported with respect for everyone’s views, it was time for them to bring their ideas to life. Although they did have a certain budget provided by the coordination team, they had to create additional resources in order to realize their projects. This was one of the methods that YouthBank used to develop the youth. Young people mobilized local actors, from municipalities to private sector. Explaining to adults for the first time why their projects needed support, they forgot their hesitance and timidity without even being aware of it. The dream of realizing thoughts in which they believed triggered change in youth.

Once the resources were gathered, the ideas began, one by one, to come to life. From libraries set up at bus stops so that people could read while waiting for their buses, to schools painted in brilliant colors, close to 180 projects were brought to life. And these projects were implemented by nearly 600 young people with the direct participation of 3,000 more. With each project, youth both discovered their own potential and transformed their community.
YouthBank gave me the self-confidence to say "Yes" when someone asked me "Do you have an idea?"
Today early and forced marriages continue to be a crime committed not only in Turkey but also throughout the world.
INSTITUTION
Flying Broom Association

PROJECT NAME
Child Brides

LOCATION
Konya

PROJECT PERIOD
July 2013 – July 2014
The Child Brides project, launched in 2010 by the Flying Broom Association, began to address the problem of early and forced marriages. Every day, throughout the world, 14 million girls were being married before the age of 18. In Turkey, one out of every three girls was estimated to have been married as minors. If no measures were taken, it was expected that over the next ten years, 142 million girls – almost twice the population of Turkey – would be married as minors.

Child marriages steal young girls’ futures. To combat the problem, Flying Broom journeyed through 54 of Turkey’s 82 provinces. Meeting with women, they listened to the stories of child marriages and then, one by one, they told these accounts to public, civil society organization and media representatives in the provinces. The stories, gathered from all corners of Turkey, made the issue of child marriage more visible than ever before to the media, academia, public and civil society.

Having gained visibility for the issue, they continued by sharing their experiences with women’s and children’s rights organizations in Turkey and around the world. As such organizations joined forces in Turkey, they established a platform for a joint effort. They also shared what they had done and learned the difficulties encountered in other countries that experienced this problem. At the end of the process, it became once again apparent how complex child marriage problem was, and how many other problems it involved.

---

**A. S.**
Project Beneficiary

My father married me off at the age of 12. My husband was 20 years old; I had never seen him. They took me and said ‘This is your husband’. I stayed with him for 20 years. It was very painful.

Today, early and forced marriages continue to be a crime committed not only in Turkey but throughout the world.
Here a child bride talks about her experience and the many facets of the problem, such as how early motherhood affects health, and how a child who has not learned to defend herself is subject to violence by her husband and other adults in the family:

After international experience sharing, Flying Broom decided to concentrate more intensely on child marriage prevention, and how to eliminate this complex problem before it occurred. They called to task key actors in the community who ignored this crime when it occurred. They dreamed of imams (religious leader) who would refuse to marry girls under the age of 18, headmen who would say ‘no’ to early marriages in the village, gendarmes who would penalize child marriage where they saw it, and public employees who would not remain silent on the issue.
Konya province was chosen as the pilot province for the creation of a local child marriage prevention network. The needs analysis work included one-on-one conversations with 11 different public administrators in areas like national education, health, family and social policy, and security. At the end of these meetings, it became clear that they did not view child marriage as a problem. At this, a host of key actors were presented with information ranging from who child brides were to the drawbacks of child marriage, legal obligations and definitions of their duties. Public employees who knew the laws and were aware of their duties went into action to brainstorm for a solution and, most importantly, to work in cooperation.

Saying "No to child brides", Flying Broom reached a turning point in its journey. The efforts had been conducted in only one province; new steps were needed in order for it to spread to other provinces, reach more authorities, and to seek ways to overcome this crime together. The struggle is not over yet, and will continue until girls will be children not brides and able to live their dreams; until this crime is buried in history, and not a single child bride remains.

**After international experience sharing, Flying Broom decided to concentrate more intensely on child marriage prevention.**

**DR. ŞULE İZGI**  
*Project Beneficiary*

Early and forced marriage is a big and significant problem, and there is no once-and-for-all solution to problems involving so many factors. But if, through these efforts, we can save even one girl from an early or forced marriage, it is significant. Cooperation between institutions is very important, as well as direct communication between the provincial governor and administrators, and informing them on the issue.
My father married me off at the age of 12. My husband was 20 years old; I had never seen him. They took me and said "This is your husband".
Newspapers portraying boys in government care as prone to crime and girls as open to sexual abuse shape society’s view of children raised in government care. The result is an invisible social barrier around them in every interaction with their communities.
INSTITUTION
Hayat Sende
Youth Academy Association

PROJECT NAME
Let's Remove Social Barriers

PROJECT PARTNER
Association for Fostering and Adoption,
Association of Social Workers,
Habitat Center for Development and Governance,
Koruncuk Foundation

LOCATION
Ankara, İstanbul

PROJECT PERIOD
September 2013 – April 2014
Children growing up in government care in Turkey are subject to discriminatory language and actions in school, at work and everywhere in society. This discrimination builds an invisible wall around them. In 2007, a group of idealist young people who had experienced government care formed the Hayat Sende Youth Academy Association (Hayat Sende for short), in order to fight against the everyday discrimination they experienced. Their goal was to combat this attitude towards young people growing up in government care and create a society that didn't "label" young people like them.

Hayat Sende’s first target in their struggle against labeling was the media. Almost every day, newspapers portraying boys in government care as prone to crime, and girls as open to sexual abuse, shaped society's view of children raised under government care. The result was an invisible social barrier around these children in every interaction with their communities. Beginning under the name, “Let’s Remove Social Barriers,” their struggle was to transform the negative perceptions created by the media.
"Let’s Remove Social Barriers" project began by forming a team of civil society organizations which had been working in this field for many years. The team regularly scanned and analyzed news appearing in the media, and found that 87% of the news they scanned included labeling. It emerged that girls were labeled more with sexual abuse while boys were labeled more in stories of suicide. The news also contained concepts that triggered negative and false perceptions. The most common false usages were "child with nobody", "foster child" and "orphanage".

For example, when we say "child with nobody", we are defining that individual in an incorrect way, isolating her, and deepening the problem by ignoring that individual’s biological ties and existing circles. These concepts are words, but they act like a shadow, affecting the hearts and minds of the people they touch.
Following the media scan, the project team created a dictionary including the terms used incorrectly in this area. Titled ‘Doğru Sözlük’ (Correct Dictionary), this publication became a source for the media, as well as society as a whole, showing how they could transform their incorrect language. All of these publications were shared in meetings with members of the media and representatives of public and civil society organizations. Public opinion was recreated through various informative projects and campaigns conducted through the social media.

Over time, this pioneering rights-based struggle by a group of young people growing up in government care was joined by many more. Hayat Sende will continue working hard to show everyone that young people growing up in a children’s home can go to school, work, express themselves and participate in society in any way they desire.

The project definitely made me aware of how seemingly simple details that we gloss over can deeply affect people. I realized that certain words should not come out of our mouths or our pens nearly so easily. For this I thank you all sincerely.
The project definitely made me aware of how seemingly simple details that we gloss over can deeply affect people. I realized that certain words should not come out of our mouths or our pens nearly so easily.
The women of Karabiga spend their lives at home. There is no social center for them to get out and go to. Social activities are very limited, nearly impossible.
INSTITUTION
Karabiga Women's Cooperative

PROJECT NAME
Karabiga Woman and Child Center

PROJECT PARTNER
Foundation for the Support of Women’s Work

LOCATION
Çanakkale

PROJECT PERIOD
July 2012 – May 2014
The small town of Karabiga in Çanakkale province has a population of 3,000. The women constituting about half of this population used to sit at home without being able to participate in social or economic life. In 2009, 20 strong housewives wanted to change this situation. With this aim, they got organized and formed the Karabiga Women’s Cooperative. Their goal was to demonstrate to the entire town that the women of Karabiga could take part in their community with men as equals, go out from their homes, and work.

They started by selling the food they prepared in the open market first. Later on, they sold them at the public beach, ironically known as the "Women’s Beach" where women never used to go. While selling food at the beach, they were confronted with questions like "what business do you have in a place where men swim?" At the end of the summer, they won their prize by creating a beach where women could go comfortably and men showed respect. These 20 powerful women not only forced themselves for change, but also their communities. Their next move was to open a restaurant in the center of the town, which was known for its coffeehouses full of men, where women hesitated to go. Seen as strange at first, this eventually changed the lives of Karabiga's women. Women working in the town center became visible.

**IŞİL ÖZFİLİZ**
President of the Cooperative

The women of Karabiga spend their lives at home. There is no social center for them to get out and go to. Social activities are very limited, nearly impossible. It is very difficult for a woman with limited economic means, living under the oppression of her community, her husband and her mother-in-law, to take advantage of such opportunities.
It was now time to establish a Women and Child Center to allow other women in Karabiga to join the struggle. Their goal was to get the women of Karabiga out of their houses, pave the way for them to participate in trainings on subjects for which they felt a need, and discover their own potential. To this end, they conducted home visits, reaching some 300 women. As they told the women of their idea for the center, they learned about women's interests and needs to develop their skills.

Then the training began. While some women discovered their potential through leadership training, they also attended financial literacy training, learned concepts like budgeting and saving, and realized that economics was not so difficult after all. One group of women became informed about women's rights, women's health and communication within the family. Another group developed their professional skills through training in sewing, service/presentation and pre-accountancy.

There was a change in my life and my skills. This change began when my child started in the children's section, because it allowed me to create time for myself. Otherwise I would have spent the day at home doing housework and taking care of my children. Thanks to the center, I was able to get out of the house. I took part in the courses they offered, and with the sewing class in particular, I discovered my talent for sewing that I was unaware of before.

Our goal in establishing this center is to get women, who can't access these opportunities by themselves, out of their homes and make them participate in economic and social life.
At the center, a separate children’s section with expert teachers was allocated so that women could set aside time for themselves. Children from 3-6 age group received preschool training and enjoyed a toy library, while high school children received support through after-school programs.

The women of Karabiga learned, and the more they learned, the more self-confident they became; with this confidence, they became stronger every day. They had now achieved visibility, at home, on the street and at work. There were even women who became candidates for headperson, entered local assemblies and became visible in politics. The 20 powerful women, who broke out of their own shells and that of Karabiga itself, told their story in this way:

**IŞİL ÖZFİLİZ**  
President of the Cooperative

Women are productive, women are powerful and women can succeed. All they need is the chance, and not to be held back. The Women and Child Center gave women opportunities and taught women that they can create opportunities for themselves. They taught women that they can confront obstacles and succeed. The women of Karabiga now have a say in Karabiga’s administration, production, service and sales. The women of Karabiga are now informed mothers, informed spouses, informed young people. The women of Karabiga are self-confident women. The women of Karabiga are powerful, enthusiastic women. The women of Karabiga have broken out of their shells, their own shells and that of Karabiga itself.

With the training I received, my self-confidence increased, and though I was not able to attend school, I felt like a university student. I felt proud to be a woman again.
Women are productive, women are powerful and women can succeed. All they need is the chance, and not to be held back. The women of Karabiga have broken out of their shells, their own shells and that of Karabiga itself.
In Kızıltepe district of Mardin, where mainly patriarchal families live with many children, families could not spend enough time with their children, and the schools could not provide adequate support in issues concerning adolescents.
INSTITUTION
Mardin Women Cooperation Association

PROJECT NAME
Empowering Youth

PROJECT PARTNER
Kızıltepe District Directorate of National Education,
Provincial Directorate of Family and Social Policies,
Provincial Directorate of Public Health,
Woman Life Center Association

LOCATION
Mardin

PROJECT PERIOD
July 2013 – July 2014
The "Empowering Youth" project, launched by the Mardin Women Cooperation Association targeted adolescent youth in the Kızıltepe district of Mardin. In Kızıltepe district, where mainly patriarchal families live with many children, families could not spend enough time with their children, and the schools could not provide adequate support in issues concerning adolescents.

The project aimed to help young people discover themselves and learn more about what they are going through. It also aimed to create an environment where family and school work together to provide support to young people.

Based on this goal, the first step was to establish "Youth Desks" in pilot schools chosen for the project. These desks provided young people the opportunity to express themselves. As role models, young, trained desk supervisors played a key role especially in reaching the students, and they spent plenty of time in explaining the aim of these desks which were free spaces for them to share their problems, create and produce.
In addition to the ‘Youth Desks,’ training sessions were held weekly on reproductive health, gender and communication in the schools. As young people learned, they were challenged; the more they were challenged, the more they asked questions. In this way they found the opportunity to compare their misconceptions with what they learned, and most importantly, to realize that their problems were not the result of some abnormality but simply lack of knowledge.

As the training with young people went on, the project included meetings to help the families establish healthy communication with their children. At these meetings, they particularly discussed how to communicate with their children during their adolescence. Through these meetings, families realized that the psychology of children were deeply affected by the communication problems within the family. They also realized when children feel isolated they may end up seeking the solution in risky environments.

**Young people realized that their problems were not the result of some abnormality but simply lack of knowledge.**

---

**RAMAZAN KAMÇI**

Psychologist

In families with wrong attitudes toward their adolescent children, problems occur between children and their parents, and families lose control of them. Young people who want to escape from the control and guidance of their families and become part of a group, find this social environment in the wrong places. Young people who become disinterested in school and continue to show serious declines in academic success, believe that they will not succeed, lose self confidence, and become completely estranged from their parents.

---

**İLKAY İLDEM**

Nurse

When I told the students about their reproductive organs, they were embarrassed at first. But after they understood the function and importance of these organs, they gave their undivided attention, and began asking questions. They learned that the awkward rebellious phase and conflicts with their families, were normal during adolescence. Amazed by this fact, they said, "We go through this a lot and we kept asking ourselves if maybe we were the cause of the problem!"
With the project, young people realized what they were capable of, and experienced the excitement of increasing self-confidence and of discovering themselves. While some of them received psychological support for their issues, others developed better communication with their families and friends. Another group filled the Youth Desk with stories, drawings and poetry.

I never got tired of listening to the students, and they never got tired of telling their stories, some of which really moved me. At that point, just listening to the student did a lot of good, because not only did they have no say in their home environment, but also they were ignored. At home, at school, in their circle of friends and in the community, they lived like a ‘ghost’. Having no say and being ignored were very difficult for them.

I won the Kızıltepe Young Poet’s Award. I shared my poems with you, and you published them in the ‘Empowering Youth’ newspaper. Sometimes it requires effort to make oneself heard, and you became the means for me to do that. I hope that this project doesn’t stop here, and continues. Sometimes, you need to work to be the voice of silence.
Sometimes it requires effort to make oneself heard, and you became the means for me to do that. I hope that this project doesn't stop here, and continues. Sometimes, you need to work to be the voice of silence.
In Ödemiş, historically known for its sericulture and weaving tradition, silk is a disappearing cultural treasure.
INSTITUTION
Ödemiş Women's Cooperative

PROJECT NAME
Weave Your Future with Silk

PROJECT PARTNER
Birgi Municipality, Ödemiş Municipality

LOCATION
İzmir

PROJECT PERIOD
July 2013 – May 2014
The Ödemiş Women’s Cooperative was founded in 2011 to empower women through economic participation in Ödemiş district of İzmir. Since the weaving tradition of the Lydians and the legend of Arachne was spread in the Little Meander Basin where Ödemiş is located, Gülfer Keskin, a member of the Cooperative’s Board of Directors, shared her idea of reviving this legacy with her partners in the cooperative.

Then, the story of 25 cooperative members reviving the weaving tradition had begun. The "Weave your Future with Silk" project aimed not only to revive silk weaving in Ödemiş, but to support its productive women as well.

The first step in the project was the establishment of a training center and workshop. A wooden loom and the system needed to unwind the silk was carried to the workshop. Learning to unwind the cocoons from the last silk master in the region, the women first collected kilos of silk. The silk was then dyed with completely natural herbs, roots, vegetables and fruits such as pomegranate, turmeric, walnut, henna and indigo. As they wove the silk into delicate fabrics, the women earned a place for themselves on the pages of history.

Silk was the main occupation of women in Ödemiş, but unfortunately, production nearly ceased when industrial silk replaced weaving silk in the 2000s. In 2011 we established a women’s cooperative. Of course our material had to be silk. Silk had to take its historical place, and we had to turn Ödemiş back into a center of silk production.”
The story of the silk has continued, with the production of many different products, from sheets to kerchiefs, needle lace earrings to hats. In addition to silk production, the women became better equipped through trainings in the areas of women's rights and violence against women. Some of them went on to experience the joy of creating, working together, following their dreams, and freeing themselves from the past and weaving new lives for the future.

I had done similar things at home; I always had a creative side and with this project, I became visible. I started to gain recognition and do more work to earn more. I’ve met many people, outside of Ödemiş as well, and have been recognized. This has made me happy, and I’ve begun to see more beauty and joy in life. Most days I can’t wait to get to the workshop.

In Ödemiş, historically known for its sericulture and weaving tradition, silk is a disappearing cultural treasure.
When the products of the “Weave your Future with Silk” project began to be sold in and outside of Ödemiş, the women who produced them felt the excitement of earning an income; and those who bought them, took the pride of protecting a cultural heritage. Through the items they produced, some of the women also experienced the excitement of getting back to nature, returning to the genuine, and leaving a mark.

Some of the women went on to experience the joy of creating, working together, freeing themselves from the past and weaving new lives for the future.

AYŞE KOLDAŞ
Project Beneficiary

After big-city life, I was fascinated by the struggle of the cooperative in this conservative district. I remembered that wisdom that came from nature was more precious than that from industry. I better understood that nature’s effort to return us to our essence is not a fad, but a vital necessity. The old Ödemiş home that we used as our workshop became a space where I could take refuge and breathe freely when I became depressed. Years from now I may not be remembered, but I will absolutely leave a mark.
The old Ödemiş home that we used as our workshop became a space where I could take refuge and breathe freely when I became depressed. Years from now I may not be remembered, but I will absolutely leave a mark.
As of 2015, despite all of the legal regulations, there are still serious problems in the implementation of disability rights in Turkey.
INSTITUTION
Social Rights and Research Association

PROJECT NAME
Monitoring Group for Disability Rights

PROJECT PARTNER
Bilgi University

LOCATION
Turkey

PROJECT PERIOD
July 2013 – July 2014
The "Monitoring Group for Disability Rights" was founded by the Social Rights and Research Association in order to demonstrate the degree to which the rights of people with disabilities had progressed in Turkey. A 2009-partner in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Turkey has passed many pieces of legislation concerning the rights of people with disabilities since 2005. However as of 2015, despite all of these legal regulations, there were still serious problems in the implementation of disability rights in Turkey.

With the start of the project, civil society organizations working in the area of disability came together to form the Monitoring Group for Disability Rights. Working in a variety of disability areas, the group was formed of individuals with disabilities and civil society organizations. The group meetings started with the reflections on discrimination that people with disabilities were confronted with. A family who couldn’t enroll their child with autism to school, the students who couldn’t continue their education due to accessibility problems and many others shared their experiences. With these real-life experiences, the group decided to gather data on the availability of four areas to persons with disabilities: accessibility, education, employment and health.

As of 2015, despite all of these legal regulations, there were still serious problems in the implementation of disability rights in Turkey.

When you can’t go down a sidewalk suitable for you and are answered with insincere excuses like ‘We didn’t have budget for such measures’; when you can’t enroll your child in school and they say ‘I can’t be responsible for a kid with disabilities’, when you face exclusion in the guise of kindness like ‘We hired you but the workplace conditions aren’t appropriate for you; we’ll pay your salary but don’t come to work, there’s no need’ – these are all direct and indirect forms of discrimination. With the Monitoring Group for Disability Rights we want to emphasize that what government offers to people with disabilities is not a favor but simply an implementation of rights. We aim to ‘hold a mirror’ to the government in that sense.
It was then time to gather data in those four areas. First, they applied for information from public instructions and organizations. They investigated the accessibility of ministries, district governorships, municipalities and administrations, as well as accessibility of mass transit vehicles, streets, hospitals and universities. They also scanned the news and analyzed the text books used in the compulsory education system.

All of the data gathered demonstrated that people with disabilities were not able to access their basic rights. The media were filled with stories of cars parked in front of access ramps, stands put on guide lines used by people with visual disabilities, and how society created obstacles. Text books presented disability as a disease, and addressed people with disabilities as "elderly", "poor", a group highly dependent on the help of others. Education promoted prejudiced views such as "unable" and "helpless", and these prejudices acted as barriers to people with disabilities.

Discrimination is something that people with disabilities face frequently in their lives. The inability to walk down the sidewalk like other people, the unsuccessful attempts to get into a mass transit vehicle and the inability to continue education, are actually the instances of discrimination against us.

Civil society organizations working in the area of disability came together to form the Monitoring Group for Disability Rights.
Out of 6,538 public buildings, 54% were not equipped for physical disabilities, 94% were not equipped for visual disabilities, and 99.5% were not equipped for hearing disabilities.

Throughout the project, a lot of data was gathered; it was now time to share this with the government and remind the government of its responsibilities. The Monitoring Group for Disability Rights met to lobby in Ankara and spoke with representatives from many public institutions, from the Ministry of Family and Social Policy to the National Ministry of Education. Speaking with solid data was effective; perhaps for the first time, a civil initiative working in the area of disability rights was seen as qualified by the government and taken seriously. How? The data demonstrated in stark relief how, from education to employment, health to independent living, the rights of the people with disabilities were violated.

The work was not yet complete. By seeking rights, the Monitoring Group for Disability Rights continued for the right to live in dignity and equality, because much more remained to be done, until – as explained by the project coordinator – the government and society at large, understood that ensuring the rights of the people with disabilities was not a favor, but an obligation.
With the Monitoring Group for Disability Rights we want to emphasize that what government offers to people with disabilities is not a favor but simply an implementation of rights. We aim to 'hold a mirror' to the government in that sense.
In Turkey, despite countless laws and measures, one of the most basic reasons for the continuing discrimination experienced by women is that women do not know or exercise their rights.
INSTITUTION
Women for Women’s Human Rights – New Ways Association

PROJECT NAME
We Stand Up for Our Rights

PROJECT PARTNER
İzmir Women Solidarity Foundation, Women Association of Van

LOCATION
Ağrı, Antalya, Bitlis, Diyarbakır, Giresun, Hakkari, İstanbul, İzmir, Kıbrıs, Muş, Ordu, Şanlıurfa, Trabzon

PROJECT PERIOD
July 2013 – August 2014
Women for Women’s Human Rights – New Ways Association was formed in 1993 by a group of pioneering women in order to defend the rights of women and make them a reality. In Turkey, despite countless laws and measures, one of the most basic reasons for the continuing discrimination experienced by women each day is that women do not know or exercise their rights. Therefore, the association planned to work in this area.

In 1995, Women for Women’s Human Rights – New Ways Association developed the Women’s Human Rights Education Program (KIHEP) to inform women of their rights. Covering areas such as violence towards women, strategies against violence, constitutional and civil rights, fertility rights, the women’s movement and organized struggle, the program aimed to help raise women’s consciousness of their rights.

For women to simply know their rights is enough to stop physical violence to a great extent.

I became a child. Before I became a child, I became a young woman. I didn't know anything about myself. I never met my mother; I was raised by my grandmother. I got engaged at 15 and married at 16. At 23, with two children, I left my husband. I’ve been washing dead bodies for 35 years. But I never thought about death. Living under fear and oppression, and the prohibitions I am subjected to, I just thought about life.
With its training of trainers program, KIHEP has reached nearly 12,000 women in 54 provinces in Turkey and Northern Cyprus with 192 KIHEP trainers. The process was as follows: the trainers were selected after a comprehensive evaluation stage and went through a two-week group training session. Following the training sessions, the trainers formed groups and began training other women around them. During this process, Women for Women's Human Rights – New Ways Association offered supervision support, clearing the way for them to become trainers.

KIHEP is like a stone thrown into a river. First it falls into you, affects you, excites and informs you; at times it depresses you and makes you laugh, reminds you of the beauty of sharing, lets you know you are not alone, and makes you say, 'I'm here'. Then, more and more, the ripples spread out from you to other women. They leave their beauty on the river bank. I'm now experiencing the serenity of being a woman in that river.
One trainer explains KIHEP as follows:

Implemented for many years now, the program has brought women the message, "You are not alone," and provided them with the strength of solidarity. The results were extraordinary. First, the women gained more self-confidence. Believing in themselves, the women stopped the violence they were experiencing. Then, they continued education and work, and eventually began charting the course of their own lives.

KIHEP was founded by and for women, to empower women through the knowledge of their rights, live their lives as they chose, and organize in the areas they felt necessary. The program will reach new women every year, until all women can choose the lives they want to live, as one of the participants expresses below.

The "magic wand" of the Women's Human Rights Education Program shines light on the path of women who are left in the dark, unable to see the way forward.

---

**N. P.**
Project Beneficiary

For women to simply know their rights is enough to stop physical violence to a great extent. After being informed, 60% of the women saved themselves from violence in the family, 35% of them continued their education, 33% started working, and 7% started their own businesses. 95% of the participants said they felt generally more self-confident, and 89% said they had more of a say in family decision making. To some extent, the ability of women to make themselves heard was connected to their realization that they were not alone.

---

**T. A.**
Project Beneficiary

Until I took this training, I was limited in every way. After the age of 45, I became a person who would stand up to anything. "A widow cannot go on the Hajj," they said. I went on the Hajj. I bought a piece of land and built a house. Nobody can say I had help, it wasn’t an inheritance either; I did it myself. After I left my husband, I was living on the street. Now my daughters have gone to school, I’ve even sent them abroad so that can see it for themselves.
Until I took this training, I was limited in every way. After the age of 45, I became a person who would stand up to anything.