

IPRA Golden World Awards
2007 Competition

“Snowdrops”



Category: 03 Hill & Knowlton Award For
Corporate Social Responsibility

"Snowdrops" is a joint educational project developed and managed by the Association in Support of Contemporary Living and Turkcell, Turkey's leading GSM operator.

Starting with the scholarship of five thousand female students in year 2000, the Snowdrops program now provides social, financial and mentoring support to 12,300 young Turkish women in leading them to become comprehensively educated and qualified professionals.

Turkcell's long-term objectives for the Snowdrop project are to contribute to overcoming the problem of female illiteracy in Turkey and to set an example of Corporate Social Responsibility for other Turkish companies. Snowdrops is achieving both objectives.

Statement of Problem/Opportunity

Many families in undeveloped urban and rural areas of Turkey live below the poverty line. Education is not easily accessible for girls. Boys are more likely to attend school and in some regions male students outnumber female students two-to-one. As a result, Turkey has a high rate of illiteracy among its female population: Of the 7.5 million illiterate adults in Turkey in 2000, 24 percent were male, 76 percent female.

To address this problem, Cagdas Yasami Destekleme Dernegi (CYDD - The Association in Support of Contemporary Living) launched a project in 1997 to educate girls from rural parts of Turkey, starting with 17 female students. The program was successful and, by 1998, the number scholarships increased to 237. However, the association's finances were insufficient to expand the program.

In 2000, Turkcell conducted an extensive research project that identified education as an important area of need in Turkish society that would most benefit from Corporate Responsibility funding and initiatives. Turkcell determined that expansion of CYDD's educational program would have a tremendous positive impact on the future of Turkey, and partnered with CYDD as a corporate sponsor and co-manager of the KARDELENLER (Snowdrops) project.

Research

Turkcell's research among NGO's, finance, government sectors, media, and students clearly indicated that education is an area where Turkcell could make a positive contribution to Turkish society.

Since the project started, studies in 2001 and 2006 confirmed that the public now associates Turkcell with several positive attributes:

- support for education
- social responsibility
- care of schoolchildren and young people

Planning

The Snowdrops project began in the 2000-2001 school year. To start the project, local governments, local educational institutions, teachers, NGO's, and Turkcell's locally operating sales agents were asked to help select female students to receive scholarships. Students enrolled in the project are called "Snowdrops."

The goals of the Snowdrops project are:

- Offering equal opportunity in education to girls that had the determination to go to school but lacked the financial resources to do so;
- Giving scholarships to 5,000 female high school students every year;
- Supporting female students that continue their education in University
- Growing the Snowdrops project beyond the status of a Turkcell project to become a project of Turkey and attracting the contribution of other companies;
- Becoming a role model for other companies
- Expanding the project - launched initially in the Eastern provinces where financial hardships are more severe - to the whole country over of time.

Communication channels:

- Media relations
- Turkcell Internal Communication
- TV advertising
- Promotional materials (Calendars, notebooks, school materials, etc.)
- Snowdrops web site

Execution

- The project was launched August 2000 with a press conference held jointly by the Ministry of State in charge of the Affairs of Women and Family, CYDD, and Turkcell. The Snowdrops project started by providing educational scholarships to 5,000 female students.
- Additional scholarships were granted for the 2002-2003 school year to students who had been receiving scholarships under the project and became eligible to enroll in a university.

- At the third stage of the project twenty-six of the Snowdrops started attending the Turkish Education Association College (TED İstanbul) on Turkcell scholarship. The students were selected through exams administered in the provinces of Siirt, Şanlıurfa, Van, Batman, and Bolu in collaboration of the school and CYDD.
- In 2004, Turkcell published a book about the true stories of the Snowdrops describing their struggle for an education. The stories were compiled and written by the famous novelist **Ayşe Kulin** and photographed by **Manuel Çitak**. Kulin, interviewed 50 girls in 35 cities.
 - The book, which chronicles the changing lives and prospering hopes of the Snowdrops project students, is intended to improve awareness of the project benefits and expand its reach to become a "Project of Turkey's."
 - Turkcell and Ayşe Kulin donated the income from the sales to the Snowdrops project. To date, the book was reprinted 24 times (120.000 copies) to meet the demand from hundreds of thousands of readers.
- Following the book's success, the famous singer **Sezen Aksu** made an album about the program titled "*Kardelen*", which she dedicated to the Snowdrop girls. The album was highly acclaimed and sold 300,000 copies. Various companies purchased the album and sent it to their customers as new year gifts to contribute to the project. Sezen Aksu also gave 21 concerts in 2005 in a multi-city tour spanning Turkey to promote the album and solicit donations to the project. Over 75,000 people and the Prime Minister of Turkey attended the concerts, where Aksu called to the whole nation with the message: "**Let's send our girls to school. Our girls are our future.**"
- The proceeds from the sale of Ayşe Kulin's book Snowdrops, the Sezen Aksu Snowdrops album and concert tour and all the donations received from other sources all provided a four-year high school education for **770** additional students.
- In 2004 Turkcell started the "**Mentoring Program (YONDER)**" for the Snowdrops that continued their higher education. First time applied in Turkey by Turkcell, YONDER was supporting Snowdrops coming from the rural areas of Turkey with their integration into big city and university life. Female managers within Turkcell and respected journalists volunteered to provide social and moral mentoring for these Snowdrops. Due to the success and positive feedback it received the guidance program will be expanded in 2007 and the number of mentors will be increased from 46 to 150.
- The "**Snowdrops Development Program**" began in 2006 to prepare Snowdrops for urban living and the professional world. Held at Turkcell's corporate training center, the Turkcell Academy. The program trains students in computers, presentation and communication techniques, English language, fine arts, culture, music appreciation, self-awareness

and self-assertion, personal image, and time management. The trainees completing their training received their certificates in 2006 and 2007.

- Starting in the 2007-2008 school year, Turkcell decided to increase the number of scholarships to 10.000 yearly, covering entire Turkey.

Evaluation

- Through the Snowdrops project, **12,300 students received scholarships, 7,380** graduated high school, **950** enrolled at university, and **170 graduated from university**. These graduate Snowdrops are now professionals contributing to their hometown. As teachers, computer programmers, lawyers or accountants, they are working to enlighten their environment. The project is not just changing the Snowdrops' lives, it is also contributing to the education level of their families and environment.
- The Snowdrops' success rate at university entrance examinations is 30% as opposed to the Turkey average of 18%.
- The recognition rate of the Snowdrops increased to 23% in 2006 from 5% in 2004. (According to Synovate February 2006 Turkcell Corporate Reputation Survey Report),
- Turkcell's Snowdrops project ranks first among the ten companies the business world finds most successful in the field of social responsibility. (According to *Capital* magazine's "Turkey's Social Responsibility Leaders" survey).
- Turkcell was named the company that the business world said is most successful in the field of social responsibility. Credit for this achievement is due to the Snowdrops project. (According to "Turkey's Social Responsibility Leaders" survey by GFK Türkiye conducted 2005, 2006 and 2007)
- Snowdrops web page : <http://kardelenler.turkcell.com.tr/>