

# **Pomegranate Arils: The Boyner Group's Approach to Empowering Young Women in Turkey**

By Deniz Seebacher<sup>1</sup>

## **1. Case Abstract/Executive Summary of the Case Study**

**This case study explores collaborative efforts and respective achievements of the Boyner Group and its partners towards socio-economical empowerment of marginalized young women in a country with low female labor force participation.**

The Boyner Group is Turkey's largest fashion retail operator and keeps high standards of corporate social responsibility, including sustainable ethical and environmental conduct. The Boyner Group also seeks to make use of available resources and to engage partners to meaningfully contribute to improve opportunities for some of the most vulnerable groups in Turkey today. Young women from marginalized groups are particularly affected by social stigmatization, conservative gender roles and lack of access to higher education and work. Responding to the urgent needs of these young women, the Boyner Group partnered with non-profit organizations, foundations, government entities and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to develop a specialized project in 2008. Reflecting the Millennium Development Goal 3A, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the United Nations Global Compact Principles 1 and 6, which is based on the International Labor Standard Organization's Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, the project unifies the partners' efforts to help these young women in their educational progress and prepare them for the job market through self-development trainings, access to networks, and individual mentoring.

## **2. Company Profile**

Founded as the Altinyıldız Textile Company in 1952 the Boyner Group eventually turned into a customer centric retail service group, which is well established and respected in Turkey. The Boyner Group is Turkey's largest fashion retail operator, representing hundreds of brands in their department stores, and owning 25 brands. The group has more than 500 stores across the country - such as Altinyildiz, Beymen, YKM and Boyner, and a dedicated e-commerce business called Morhipo. In addition, the Boyner Group produces ready-wear apparel under its own labels, such as Beymen, Fabrika, Network, Que and Divarese. The Boyner Group has over 10,000 employees, and the supply chain of their own textile production, 98% of which is produced in Turkey, provides an additional 45,000 jobs. From luxury fashion stores to department stores and e-commerce retailing, the Boyner Group reaches 15 million unique customers each year, from a variety of socio-economic segments through its different retail formats.

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The Boyner Group consists of two main companies: Boyner Holding A.S. and Boyner Retail and Textiles Investments Inc. Boyner Holding A.S. is a closely held (privately owned) company by the Boyner family. Boyner Retail and Textiles Investments Inc. is a publicly listed company, with shares of 79.11% held by Boyner Holding and 20.89% by other owners. Having both types of ownership structures represented at the group level with a majority of ownership in the hands of Boyner family, decision-making is a swift and non-bureaucratic process. However, as a public company the Boyner Group keeps transparency mechanisms in place and publishes yearly reports. In an annual meeting, in which all stakeholders are invited, strategic decisions are taken. The Executive Board is responsible for non-strategic decisions, chaired by the Chief Executive Officer Cem Boyner. In general, the company is known for its direct involvement of employees and its ability to quickly seize new opportunities.

The Boyner Group, as a United Nations Global Compact LEAD participant, is highly committed to respecting and supporting corporate social responsibility, especially on human rights, ethical labor standards, sustainability and environmental standards. The company's CSR director is a member of the United Nations Global Compact Advisory Group on Supply Chain Sustainability. Many employees and board members of the Boyner Group are active within and respected by Turkish civil society.

Several company awards during the past few years highlight the company's active engagement with civil society on women's empowerment and social issues. For example, in 2014 at the UN Women and UN Global Compact Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) annual event, the CEO Cem Boyner was awarded the "WEPs CEO Leadership Award" in the category of Benchmarking for Change. The 5<sup>th</sup> Middle East and Africa Women Leadership Forum held in Dubai in 2013 recognized the CEO as a Male Champion of Change. In 2013 and 2014, The Boyner Group was recognized as a 'Great Place to Work' and 'Great Place to Work for Women' in Turkey. In 2012, the company got certified for the Equal Opportunity Model (FEM) with a focus on Human Resources Politics by World Bank and KAGIDER, the Women Entrepreneurs Association of Turkey.

"In Turkey, women's income is thought to not be related with female economic independence. The majority thinks that women only have to work to support family income, if the husband does not make enough money or if the women don't have children. Otherwise women are not thought to have to work." (Boyner Group's CSR Director, holding a major in gender studies, reflecting on cultural ideas of women labor participation)

### 3. Women and the Labor Market in Turkey

The female employment rate<sup>2</sup> in Turkey was approximately 29% in 2014, which is half of the female employment rate in Europe (60%) and OECD countries (58%).<sup>3</sup> In contrast, the male

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<sup>2</sup> Employment rate represent persons in employment as a percentage of the population of working age (15-64 years). For details see <http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=STLABOUR#> (accessed 15<sup>th</sup> May 2015)

<sup>3</sup> The female employment in Turkey has improved by 6% since 2006 (22.8%), while OECD and European countries have improved by 2% only in the same period.

employment rate in 2014 was 70% in Turkey and Europe, and only 3% higher (73%) in OECD countries. Being economically independent (relying on one's own income or property) is thus a gender issue, as these numbers indicate. The involvement of women in the labor market is an important topic in Turkey, not only for individuals but also for economic development. In fact, The World Bank estimates that Turkey's Gross National Income could increase by 22% if gender gaps in economic participation were closed.<sup>4</sup>

According to Güven Sak, Director of the Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey, and the Report on Female Labor Participation in Turkey by the World Bank and the State Planning Ministry, there is a problem of labor supply and demand. Historically, women migrating to urban areas with their spouses in the course of rapid urbanization lacked the skills required by industrial work, as they were participating mostly in family farming and subsistence culture in their villages. The only jobs available to them paid poorly and required long working hours. Lacking affordable childcare facilities also made it very difficult for low-skilled women to enter the labor force. In addition, socio-cultural norms and conservative family values failed to promote women working outside home and has had a strong influence on Turkey's current female labor population.<sup>5</sup>

Girls and young women from rural areas are among the groups at high risk of poverty due to the impermeability of social class in Turkey. They are also particularly affected by socio-cultural norms, social stigmatization, conservative gender roles and lack of access to higher education. Young women who were raised in orphanages have traditionally not had access to programs addressing their quest for education, despite the implementation of several CSR projects. Most commonly these young women do not receive support in overcoming problems associated with various types of discrimination and lack social and financial literacy guidance in the continuation of their education, as most drop out after high school.

### 3.1 Orphanages in Turkey – An Excursion

The Turkish State is currently responsible for custody of approximately 92,000 minors through the General Directorate of Child Services, located in the Ministry for Family and Health. In Turkey, the State regulates and protects orphanages. Around 70% of the children located in orphanages are called social orphans, who have legal parents that are unable to take care of them due to financial, psychological or social problems. Of the 92,000 children, most were placed in some form of family care as of December 2014, with only 12,000 children living in communal care institutions.<sup>6</sup>

Until recently, communal institutions were the dominant model in State foster care. The minors lived in dormitories, where basic needs were met. However, there has been a shift since 2014 towards placing children with their extended families and relatives or with foster

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<sup>4</sup> Teignier, Marc and David Cuberes (2015). "How Costly are Labor Gender Gaps? Estimates for the Balkans and Turkey." World Bank.

<sup>5</sup> For details see <http://www.tepav.org.tr/en/haberler/s/3280> (accessed 15<sup>th</sup> May 2015) and [http://siteresources.worldbank.org/TURKEYEXTN/Resources/361711-1268839345767/Female\\_LFP-en.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/TURKEYEXTN/Resources/361711-1268839345767/Female_LFP-en.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> 52.000 in foster families, 10.500 send back to their own families, 13.500 given to adoption. For details see <http://cocukhizmetleri.aile.gov.tr/istatistikler> (accessed 15<sup>th</sup> May 2015)

care families. It is only if no family placement is possible that the children are assigned to State led communal care institutions. The dormitory style orphanages barely exist today in Turkey.

Often, the situation of the young women – coming from challenging family backgrounds - and their relationship with the care-givers is difficult.<sup>7</sup> Even though they do not lack economic support, the Ministry does not see itself in the position to provide well for them in terms of attention and education. Their systematic approach to support the young women results in quota regulations, making sure that every ‘orphanage child’ – as they are called in Turkey - gets a job in the public sector, depending on their qualifications. This right is very important to the young women leaving the orphanages as it ensures them a living,<sup>8</sup> but still many face challenges in keeping the assigned jobs.<sup>9</sup> The young women have little access to initiatives that impart basic life skills and individual empowerment, or initiatives that grant access to networks outside of the orphanages. The orphanages are mostly led very traditionally, based on strong gender stereotypes. A project that was implemented in 2005-2006 with the financial support from the European Training Foundation (ETF) and coordinated by The Turkish Labor Agency İŞKUR, revealed that access to the labor market and employability of young women that come from orphanages could be improved considerably through empowerment trainings on issues such as gender and labor market in addition to strengthening their professional skills.<sup>10</sup>

In spite of many private sector projects addressing marginalized groups in Turkey, there has not been one addressing young women. Business companies considered it too risky to work with orphanages in general because of communication concerns, as media reports on orphanages usually focus on misbehavior, violence and crime. The Boyner Group decided to work with young women from orphanages as the first private business company to be innovative and trend setting - in business and social matters. Therefore they aimed to create a pioneer CSR project, which is in line with their internal strategic focus of empowering women (see next section 3.2.). To plan and execute the project, the company hired a gender study expert with vast experience in Turkish civil society as their CSR manager. The company’s work was guided by ethical principles and a high standard of collaboration, with public sector, international organizations, national civil societies and business participation.

#### **4. The Boyner Group’s Approach to Corporate Social Responsibility**

The Boyner Group activities are guided by the international and universal standards covering human rights, including the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, the UN

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<sup>7</sup> Care takers work in shifts of 8, 12 or 24 hours, depending on the type of institution. In each shift one care taker is usually in charge of 10 to 15 children.

<sup>8</sup> §3413 states, that children under the protection of the Ministry for Family and Social Policies will be employed at 0.1% (one thousandth) of the vacancies in public institutions each year. Depending on their qualifications, they have to pass an entry exam and will be allocated accordingly.

<sup>9</sup> For details see Özkan, Gürkan (forthcoming). Korunmaya Muhtaç çocukların yaşam deneyimleri ve hayattan beklentileri. Masterthesis, Ankara University, Institute for Social Services.

<sup>10</sup> For details see [http://statik.iskur.gov.tr/tr/dis\\_iliskiler/Anneme.pdf](http://statik.iskur.gov.tr/tr/dis_iliskiler/Anneme.pdf) (accessed 15<sup>th</sup> May 2015)

Global Compact's Ten Principles, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the Millennium Development Goals. Based on these standards as well as on their own experience in Turkey working on human rights, working with civil society, as well as with international partners, the Boyner Group has created its own policies on Equal Rights, Workplace Democracy, and Ethics Values, all consolidated in the Boyner Group Working Principles booklet.

The Boyner Group's approach to CSR reflects a holistic understanding of corporate citizenship, addressing the sustainability of human and natural resources with a strong national comprehension. Policies enacted within the Boyner Group outlined the ways to identify, assess and manage human rights risks and impacts within the sphere of influence of the company. Within their workforce, working culture is very important, such as being a democratic workplace, promoting gender equality and social investment, and ensuring health and safety at the workplace, equality in opportunity, transparency and fair wages. With the Boyner's Group's management style<sup>11</sup> these ideas translate into the implementation of

- Procedures regarding discrimination (democracy at the workplace, principles of equal treatment and equal opportunities)
- Procedures to ensure social compliance in their supply chain (including industrial rights, protection of human dignity, occupational health and safety, non-discrimination, waste management, safe usage of chemicals, energy and water consumption, good governance, transparency, and accountability)
- Anti-corruption policies, an Ethics committee and a Freedom of Association policy
- Procedures focusing on women's empowerment within Human Resource Management (monitoring on gender equality, training and networking activities)

Besides environmental, entrepreneurial and innovative fundraising projects, gender equality and social inclusion are the company's main focus areas. The inclusion of women in the workforce as a driver of societal development is particularly important for the company, as detailed in the next section.

#### **4.1. The Boyner Group's Approach to Women's Rights**

The Boyner Group considers itself a gender-equal company, with a majority of the customers and close to 50% of the employees being female. Within the company, 47% of the workforce, 41% of the managers, 3 out of 7 general managers of the Holding company and 3 out of 9 board members are women. A special focus on gender equality leads to constant improvement of the position of women within the company, as the key indicator on participation in training and development (41%) shows. Since 2008 the Boyner Group has conducted activities and published commercials on International Women's Day (March 8), emphasizing women's rights as citizens.

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<sup>11</sup> Türkmenoğlu, İdil (2011): Pozitif Yönetim – İş Yerinde Keyifli Ortam Yaratmak. Ankara: Elma Yayınevi.

Moreover, the Boyner Group's focus on women rights guides their sustainable social supply chain projects. Boyner took leadership towards sustainable social chains, being the first Turkish company to insist on women's rights within their subsidiaries and supply chains, such as providing breast-feeding hours and facilities and anti-discrimination measures after childbirth. The Boyner Group has elaborated Health and Safety Guidelines at the Workplace and has started a comprehensive initiative dealing with Supply Chain Audits and follow up mechanisms with an 'improve or terminate relationship' policy. In addition, the company has contributed to publications on supply chain as part of the United Nations Global Compact Advisory Group on Supply Chain Sustainability.<sup>12</sup> In addition, since 2014, the company is working with the International Finance Corporation on a Program called "Good for Business", a training and capacity building program for female suppliers of the Boyner Group on finance, marketing, strategic planning and human resource management.

#### **4.2 The Boyner Group's focus on Women's Empowerment and Access to Equal Labor Opportunities**

Taking the initiative and approaching gender equality in its broad meaning, the Boyner Group is dedicated to fulfill its role in being a responsible Turkish business and community member. The company's approach according to its CSR director is that, "we believe that when we empower women, gender roles can be changed in Turkey". Women's empowerment and social inclusion are key components of the Boyner Group's business model, personal management and strategic development – an important contribution to Sustainable Development Goal 5 on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls.

Having conducted several CSR projects managed by subsidiary companies, the decision to design and implement a common, centrally led CSR project was taken by the Board Members, to increase impact of the projects and to strengthen collaboration within the groups companies. Considering itself a gender-equal company, the Boyner Group has played an important role working on gender topics within Turkish civil society. Through the engagement of dedicated board members and the newly hired gender expert CSR manager, the company was aware of ongoing topics, challenges and projects in Turkey dealing with marginalized women. To address women's empowerment and increase equal opportunity of access to the labor market through a CSR project, the company has systematically conducted research on the topic and has actively engaged within the company and in key roles with women's NGOs in Turkey. This engagement led to the informed decision to work with a particularly vulnerable group that has not been addressed before by the business sector and has been neglected by many social equality programs addressing women: Young women who grew up in orphanages.

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<sup>12</sup> E.g. UN Global Compact and Business for Social Responsibility (2010): Sustainable Supply Chain. A practical guide for continuous improvement. For details see [http://www.bsr.org/reports/BSR\\_UNGC\\_SupplyChainReport.pdf](http://www.bsr.org/reports/BSR_UNGC_SupplyChainReport.pdf) (accessed 15<sup>th</sup> May 2015)



## 5. Boyner Group's Approach towards Social Corporate Citizenship: "Pomegranate Arils"–*Strong, Young Women, a Happier Future*

Pomegranate Arils Stronger Young Women, Happier Futures Project is considered to be the first private sector initiative targeting young women orphans with a view to provide equal opportunities for those young women to enter into labor market. It can be inspirational in illustrating innovative ways to target a vulnerable group using an inclusive approach.

### 5.1 Selection of Project Partners

Addressing equal opportunity for young women who grew up in orphanages required partners from different sectors who could contribute their expertise and knowledge, as well as engage various stakeholders. Therefore, the Boyner Group looked for dialogue and collaboration with the public sector, an international organization and national civil society organizations. As a result, the collaborative project Pomegranate Arils was established in which each stakeholder had an expert position and a special audience. Different sectors were involved and collaboratively designed the project, making it a true partnership project that is an "inter-organizational collaboration where the constituent players (known as 'partners') think of it as such."<sup>13</sup>

The **General Directorate of Child Services** (Ministry), a department of the Turkish Ministry of Family and Social Policies (former SHCEK, Social Services and Child Care Agency) was involved as being legally responsible for the young women and providing guidance to the other partners on how to engage with them. Further they provided expertise and ensured institutional visits within the framework of social activities. The United Nations Population Fund (**UNFPA**) was invited to be the administrative and financial project implementation partner under the UNFPA Gender Program Officer. The Boyner Group additionally invited several non-governmental organizations to collaborate in this project. Mainly, **PERYÖN**, the first Turkish People Management Association represented public and private sector Human Resources Professionals and **TAPV**, the Turkish Family Health and Planning Foundation, with 30 years of experience in developing and training gender equality related topics were involved. Other non-governmental organizations, mainly working on women's issues, supported the project on different occasions. The **Boyner Group** financed the project and its CSR manager was an active part of the project core team, together with representatives from the other organizations involved. The CSR manager and the project sponsor were engaged in everyday project activities, and volunteers and other employees supported occasionally.

### 5.2 Project Description

The project consisted of two phases: empowering young women aged 18-24 through empowerment trainings, self-development trainings and transformational mentoring (phase I from 2008 to 2012) and capacity building, monitoring and evaluation procedures within the

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<sup>13</sup> Tennyson, R (2003): Institutionalising Partnerships: Lessons from the Front Line. For details see <http://www.toolkitsportdevelopment.org/html/resources/0C/0CC00F20-85F6-4484-AB28-7D428002C84C/Infocus8.pdf> (accessed 15<sup>th</sup> May 2015)

Ministry (phase II from 2013 to 2015). In addition to providing individual care, attention and supporting the young women in their career trajectories, the entire project was geared towards changing the negative image of young women growing up in foster care in media representation and among HR professionals.

In the first phase, 162 young women from different regions in Turkey received 15 days of training in Istanbul in approximately groups of 20. In these two weeks, the young women attended courses exploring getting to know oneself, motivation, stress management, self-confidence, body language and business etiquette, career planning and job seeking skills. These trainings were accompanied by social inclusion and cultural events with volunteers from the Boyner Group and other private sector companies. Furthermore, mentors from the private sector were assigned to the young women one by one in their city of residence for one year. In addition, lawyers, psychologists and other professionals supported the project and the young women individually whenever necessary.

The first phase of the Pomegranate Arils project consisted of the following activities:

- (a) **Trainings for the young women** (on empowerment, work related skills, and special rights)
- (b) **Mentoring and ongoing support** (training of the mentors, one year one by one mentoring relationship, regular mentor meetings)
- (c) **Social Inclusion Activities** (visits to related agencies, historical and cultural sightseeing, collective social activities)
- (d) **Improving Public Image** (through media and interaction with professionals from the private sector)

When the first phase of the project ended in 2012, a general assessment was conducted and a follow up project was initiated to widen the scope of the project and to integrate it into the Ministry. This decision was informed by evaluations of the situation of the young women, psychologist reports, sociological surveys and the observations of the project team in the daily work with the young women. Problems associated with the young women living in the Ministry facilities were identified. These included a general lack of sufficient personnel to care for the large number of children in orphanages, and high staff turnover rates preventing the foster children from establishing strong emotional ties with their care-givers and teachers. Moreover, the Ministry's interest in protecting the young women may have hampered the young women's abilities to develop social skills, self-confidence and awareness. Further the Ministry lacked any forms of supervision and mentoring for the young women especially for supporting work or education related decisions.

Therefore, the second phase of the project (2013-2015) aimed to strengthen the capacity of the Ministries staff (service providers such as professionals, teachers and care staff, which are the primary target group of the second phase) working with mostly young women aged 13-18 (who were defined the secondary target group for this phase) at their homes in four selected provinces, through activities such as knowledge and capacity building trainings. To ensure sustainability beyond the Pomegranate Arils project duration, a monitoring and evaluation mechanism was established within the Ministry. The goal of this phase was to hand over the model developed by the Pomegranate Arils to the Ministry and allow them to conduct training



seminars for relevant public employees and new educators, and expand the project to include all children under its protection across Turkey. The second phase of the project included the following activities:

- (e) **Capacity building of service providers** (professionals, group and home leaders, care staff) working at the children's homes and serving under the Ministry through knowledge and capacity building trainings.
- (f) **Establishing a monitoring and evaluation system** for children and youth under institutional care within the Ministry of Family and Social Policies – General Directorate of Child Services.

### 5.3 Organization of the Project

Roles and responsibilities of the project staff were determined in the contracts made between the Boyner Group and UNFPA in 2009 and 2013. A Steering Committee, composed of a representative from each partner organization, convened twice a year to monitor and guide project activities. The project team was also composed of members from all partner organizations. Under the project management of UNFPA, team members were in charge of updating their respective partners on their activities in advancing the project. The Boyner Group acted as a sponsor financing the project with a core budget of 500,000 (USD).

The Steering Committee supported the young women by championing a responsible attitude toward their education and career trajectory, and by engaging the public on topics related to orphanages to remedy the prejudice against young women growing up in foster care.

#### Project Goals

The project sought to support female youth in accessing education, work and economic opportunities while raising awareness of equality in the prospects of the labor market for different social groups. The joint efforts of the project partners support the objectives of Goal 3A of the Millennium Development Goals, promoting gender equality and empowering women,<sup>14</sup> the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and Principles 1 and 6 of the United Nations Global Compact, promoting respect and support for human rights (Principle 1) and the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation (Principle 6, based on the International Standard Organization's Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work).<sup>15</sup> By addressing the inclusion of female youth in the Turkish labor market, the project actively promoted the growth and employment ambitions of the Development Agenda of Turkey for post 2015<sup>16</sup> and was aligned with the third general outcome to establish "a more protective environment for women, children and youth for them to claim and fully enjoy their rights" under the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for Turkey

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<sup>14</sup> More information regarding Millennium Development Goal 3 is available at <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/gender.shtml> (accessed 15<sup>th</sup> May 2015)

<sup>15</sup> More information regarding United Nations Global Compact principle 1 and 6 is available at <https://www.unglobalcompact.org/what-is-gc/mission/principles/principle-1> and <https://www.unglobalcompact.org/aboutthegc/thetenprinciples/principle6.html> (accessed 15<sup>th</sup> May 2015)

<sup>16</sup> More information regarding Chapter 4 on growth and employment in the Development Agenda of Turkey for post 2015 is available at <http://www.un.org.tr/v3/templates/allcss/report2015.pdf> (accessed 15<sup>th</sup> May 2015)

2006-2010.<sup>17</sup> Additionally, the second phase of the project was in line with the second output of gender equality of the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for Turkey 2010-2015,<sup>18</sup> promoting the establishment of local mechanisms “by cooperating with public, private and non-governmental partners to enable women to fully exercise their human rights.”

“I have never grown so much in two weeks. ... What I want to do, what I can do, I learnt where do I want to see myself in the future. ... I wanted to do things differently; I wanted to make good things. Let me explain that with the slogan of Pomegranate Arils: Strong Young Women, a Happier Future. I want to be a strong woman and I want to be a happy woman. ... I believe that I have to make nice things to achieve my goals. ... Before I became part of the project, we all [foster children] only had a public service career in mind.” (A young woman reflecting on the training)

## 6. Project Implementation

The following is a more detailed description of the activities within the different phases of the project, including challenges that occurred throughout the project and their respective solutions.

### (a) Trainings for the young women

Empowerment training on issues such as gender and labor market conducted by the project team was the backbone of the project. Each year from 2009 to 2013, approximately 40 young women were selected to receive trainings and participate in self-development seminars. Meeting in Istanbul, the cultural capital of Turkey, the project team and the young women spent 15 days together. The training focused on three topics, (1) self-development and job skills, developed and delivered by PERYÖN, (2) Women’s empowerment, developed and presented by several experts under the responsibility of UNFPA and (3) Information on the services of different state organizations and the rights granted to children who grew up in orphanages, developed and delivered by the Ministry.

The project partners encountered a number of challenges with the trainings and with engaging the young women from orphanages. First, training content needed to be constantly revised to respond to the needs of the young women. As a result, the project staff regularly reviewed and evaluated the training content and adapted the subsequent trainings accordingly. According to

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<sup>17</sup> More information regarding the UN Development Assistance Framework for Turkey 2006-2010 is available at [https://executiveboard.unfpa.org/downloadDoc.unfpa?fileName=Turkey\\_CPD\\_2006-2010.pdf~13-21-2013-11-21-08-503](https://executiveboard.unfpa.org/downloadDoc.unfpa?fileName=Turkey_CPD_2006-2010.pdf~13-21-2013-11-21-08-503) (accessed 15<sup>th</sup> May 2015)

<sup>18</sup> More information regarding the UN Development Assistance Framework for Turkey 2010-2015 is available at [https://executiveboard.unfpa.org/downloadDoc.unfpa?fileName=Turkey\\_CPD%202011-2015.pdf~15-29-2013-15-29-51-563](https://executiveboard.unfpa.org/downloadDoc.unfpa?fileName=Turkey_CPD%202011-2015.pdf~15-29-2013-15-29-51-563) (accessed 15<sup>th</sup> May 2015)

a number of project members, revising the training materials helped improve the trainings over time and enabled the project to address the unique situations and necessities of each seminar-group of 20 young women. The Boyner Group was recognized as supporting the flexibility of the project, which in return delivered qualitative success stories on the individual level.

Second, through the course of building relationships with the project staff, some young women revealed sensitive personal stories. Although addressing these stories was outside the scope of the project, the project partners invited lawyers and psychologists to provide support to the young women. This in turn created trust among the young women. The project partners also encouraged the young women to explore Istanbul in the late afternoons. While the women had to meet strict curfews, for many it was the first time in a big city and for some the first time to be allowed to go out in the evening. This enhanced trust between the two groups.

Third, the young women were generally approached with a lot of curiosity from project-outsiders, as little is known about growing up in orphanages besides the stigmatizing stories, which got occasionally published by media. To overcome this curiosity, often paired with pity, every person who came in touch with the young women through the project had to pass at least four hours awareness raising training. In these trainings, the hotel staff and other professionals dealing with the young women, could ask questions and received recommendations on how to address the young women adequately as hotel quests, trainees, colleagues.

#### **(b) Mentoring and ongoing support**

Mentoring was the second pillar of the project. The role of the mentors was crucial to keep the momentum of the trainings going and supporting the transition of the young women in their education and career. Each young woman therefore was paired with a mentor from her home city to receive one year of mentoring support. Mentors were selected carefully by PERYÖN. First aiming at only HR professionals and managers, it was soon clear that in Turkey, where business activity is concentrated in a few cities, the PERYÖN network would not be able to provide a sufficient number of mentors in remote areas. As such, other project partners' networks were called on to identify mentors and the Boyner Group supplied a few employees as well. To become a mentor, each candidate had to complete a two day training, in which they familiarized themselves with the mentees' profile and the mentoring role. Mentors and mentees were matched based on personal evaluation during the trainings and the Thomas Personal Profile Analysis Tool.

During the one-year cycle of the project, the mentors were supposed to meet once a month in person with their mentee and have regular phone calls. Every three months a peer meeting with the mentors and the project team was held to talk about issues and discuss the progress with their mentees. In addition, mentors had to report on the development of their relationship regularly. One of the stunning results of the project was that almost all mentor-mentee relationships continued on after the obligatory one-year period and transformed into more

personal relationships. In many respects, the mentors were key to the project success: they were not only supporting the young women in their decisions but also granting them access to networks and job opportunities. The variety of different companies involved in mentoring broadened not only the network for the mentees, but also among the mentors themselves and strengthened Boyner Group's network across different sectors. In total, 117 mentors conducted 8,812 hours of voluntary work for the project.

### **(c) Social Inclusion Activities**

In addition to the training and mentoring, the project partners conducted social inclusion activities. These activities provided additional space for the young women to interact with members from the business sector (mostly Boyner Group employees), the project team and with each other. The activities increased both networking capacities of the young women and access to networks through different professionals. Such activities fought the stigma of social exclusion, by providing space for social and cultural experience for the young women and opened space for their own entrepreneurial / civil society activities.

In a special program called Pomegranate Nectar, Boyner Group volunteers created ideas, designed and organized activities for the young women<sup>19</sup> These activities included sightseeing in Turkey, and participating in forums which would allow them to acquire social skills such as conducting small talk and communicating with the opposite sex in a semi-professional context. For the Boyner Group Volunteers it was a great opportunity to engage with the young women and with each other outside work and assume new roles, like project manager or fundraiser to enhance their professional expertise.

### **(d) Improving Public Image**

The project also aimed to promote a positive view of young women from orphanages. To convey the potential of such young women, the Boyner Group created a name and a logo featuring a pomegranate. In Turkey, a pomegranate is a symbol of prosperity and each 'pomegranate aril' is individual, yet together they make a delicious fruit. The Turkish saying "Nar tanesi, Nurtanesi, annesinin birtanesi" meaning "Pomegranate Arils, Holy light, mother's darling" is strongly linked to family culture and created the image of the second family, a notion which the project aims to foster. In addition, the logo made it easier to engage with the public, as the logo was not linked to any of the partnering organizations and therefore left room for new values. The logo was tagged on select Boyner Group merchandise of 30 different brands, presented in 380 Boyner Group stores to customers and visitors. It was also made available on the project website, in project-related material and publications, to

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<sup>19</sup> Voluntarism is part of the working culture at the Boyner Group. In 2014, the Boyner Group Volunteers included 349 employees, their friends and families, who provided 4,398 hours of voluntary services visiting hospitals, mental care institutions and kindergartens, and planting trees and cleaning parks.

raise awareness of the situation of marginalized women in Turkey.<sup>20</sup>

Recognizing that journalists may describe orphans using exclusionary and negative language,<sup>21</sup> the Boyner Group closely monitored national and international media throughout the project and provided a positive approach to ensure that the young women were being accurately represented as active citizens and strong women, and not as victims of their circumstances. Actively emphasizing positive media coverage reduced the risk of the Boyner Group being associated with problems of violence and discrimination while increasing the possibility of the young women being associated with entrepreneurial, independent and self-sufficient values.

#### **(e) Capacity building of service providers**

After the first phase was completed, the project partners in 2013 were keen to increase the quality of professionals, group and home leaders and care staff working at the children's home and serving under the Ministry of Family and Social Policies. Given the success of having supported and trained 160 young women in four years, the project team sought to institutionalize the project and provide support to all orphan children from an early age. The Ministry highly welcomed the initiative and proposed seven regions to conduct in-depth analyses. The project team conducted several study visits, focus groups, and interviews in collaboration with Ankara University, Faculty of Health Sciences, Department of Social Services, to fully understand the organization of the Ministry and the challenges encountered by employees of orphanages.<sup>22</sup> In total 245 employees from the Ministry participated in the analysis.

Based on the results, the Ministry and the project team collaboratively defined the model, target groups and content. A two-step model was defined, consisting of a) organization-internal mentoring and b) training the trainers. The care-givers were the primary target of this phase, as they spent the most of the time with the children. Professionals, like social workers, teachers and psychologists were trained as Pomegranate Arils Trainers. In two years, 369 employees of the Ministry in four pilot regions were trained on four different expertise areas: social gender equality and combating violence against women, working with children and youth, collaborating and utilizing local resources, and adult training. In addition, 23 trainers were trained to become group mentors and supervise mentoring relationships. During the two years, the project team has visited the four regions regularly to supervise the trainers and conduct an abridged version of the Pomegranate Arils workshops including mentoring activities with 42 children.

To deal with the challenges of job rotation and turnover, the project team secured the

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<sup>20</sup> The project website can be found here: <http://www.nartaneleri.com/> (accessed 15<sup>th</sup> May 2015)

<sup>21</sup> Rahmiye Bozkurt, Abdullah Oskay, Dilara Egin (2014). Etiketlemeile Örülen Sosyal Duvarları Yıkılım. Sosyal Duvarları Yıkılım Projesi Değerlendirme Raporu. Hayat Sende Gençlik Akademisi Derneği. Sabancı Vakfı Hibe Programları Kapsamında Desteklenmektedir.

<sup>22</sup> See Gökçeaslan, Elif (Forthcoming) **Social Impact Analysis**.

participation of the same individual professionals and care takers within the Ministry that were originally involved in the project. This ensured that institutional knowledge and understanding of capacity building activities were maintained within the Ministry. Additionally, in this phase final decisions on how to expand the project were taken collaboratively, with most respect to the Ministry representatives, as they will take over ownership of the project. For the Boyner Group integrating this project within the Ministry and thereby expanding its reach, was considered a huge success of its CSR activities.

#### **(f) Establishing a monitoring and evaluation system**

During the second phase of the project, mechanisms for monitoring the young women's development and progress have been implemented. The project team has been able to stay in touch with the young women based on the connections they have developed. However, more formalized routines and procedures to monitor the development have been established and will be provided by the end of the project to the Ministry.

### **7. Project Results and Multiplier Effects**

#### **7.1. Project Impact – young women**

In 2015, 57% of the young women who participated in the trainings entered the labor market, 25% decided to continue higher education and 18% started their job search. Most of the young women still keep in close contact with the project team and their mentors, and consult them for their educational and professional decisions. In general, the young women have gained self-esteem and increased their knowledge about their rights and opportunities. Through the project they gained access to the partner organizations, conducted internships within these organizations and made use of the strong network, established in this multi-stakeholder partnership project. In addition to the 160 young women who were trained directly by the project staff, the young women's siblings and orphanage mates have also seemed to benefit from this project.

The close ties between the young women and project staff have culminated in several follow up initiatives. Most prominent, some of the young women themselves joined a NGO called "Life is at your side" (Turkish: Hayat Sende), which was established by a group of young people who have lived in orphanages.<sup>23</sup> The NGO, organizes various educational and awareness raising activities of the situation of orphans and support programs. This organization reflects the reach of the Pomegranate Arils project beyond its planned scope, and can be seen as a program that has successfully empowered young women.

Further, several publications have been created to guide other social projects in Turkey dealing with marginalized youth: the Career Planning Handbook,<sup>24</sup> The Teaching

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<sup>23</sup> For more information visit <http://hayatsende.org/>

<sup>24</sup> See Türkmenoğlu, İdil (2014). KariyerPlanlama El Kitabı. İstanbul: Hat Baskı.

Handbook,<sup>25</sup> and the Expert Training Handbook.<sup>26</sup> Most outstanding, a sociological evaluation report was published to address academia, business and public policy makers, in which the young women's life stories were analyzed and the project was presented as an ideal model for developing active employment policies for disadvantaged groups.<sup>27</sup>

To date – based on project internal data - Pomegranate Arils has evaluated changes in behavior and attitude of more than 700 people, informed more than 16,000 people and raised the awareness of more than 1,380,000 people in Turkey.

## **7.2. Project Impact - Boyner Group**

Within the Boyner Group, 223 employees volunteered 1,509 hours for the Pomegranate Arils project, with board members and associates working together. The project had a noticeable impact on intra-company collaboration, strengthening communications between the headquarters and the subsidiaries. The volunteer activities also had a positive impact on employee engagement.

The internal support of the project within the Boyner Group and the partner organizations, as well as the dedication and professionalism of all project members have resulted in broad recognition of the project. The project has won several national awards, like the CSR award for best practice (2014, given by the Turkish Confederation of Employer Association), the Golden Compass Social Responsibility Award (2012, given by TÜHİD, the Turkish Public Relations Association), a mention at the AMPD awards (2010, given by the Shopping Centers and Retailers Association) and was a finalist at the Awards from the Heart (2010, organized by the Private Sector Volunteer Association). For Pomegranate Arils' social inclusion and mentoring program, the project won the Employee Volunteering Award in the category of innovation in 2011, and was honored as a “good example” among 21 participants by CSR Europe. In addition, the project has actively fostered international exchange and learning with other organizations as with the German Ministry for Youth and German civil organizations, who were interested in learning how the project addressed the inclusion of marginalized groups.

## **8. Challenges and Lessons learned**

The success and broad recognition of the project has only been possible through hard work and constant improvement to address challenges and find solutions. It is therefore very important to share some of the challenges that the organizations have encountered in implementing the program so future projects can build on lessons learned.

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<sup>25</sup> See Nar Taneleri: Güçlü Genç Kadınlar Mutlu Yarımlar, Eğitim El Kitabı. İstanbul: Hat Baskı, 2011. Edited by the Project Team. Written by: Şükran Balaban, Gül Erdost, Elif Uysal Erkol, Seher El Hüseyini, Cerenİşat, Gürkan Özkan, Selen Örs Reyhanioglu and Zehra Tosun

<sup>26</sup> See: Nar Taneleri: Uzman Eğitici EğitimS eti. Ankara: Kuban Matbaacılık Yayıncılık, 2015. Edited by MeltemAğduk. Written by Kadir Akbulut, Murat Akkaya, Gül Erdost, Fersun Paykoç, Zeliha Ünalı.

<sup>27</sup> Bozok, Nihan (2011): Ben değerliyim. Nar Taneleri: Güçlü Genç Kadınlar Mutlu Yarımlar Projesi Güçlenme Hikayeleri Biriktiriyor. İstanbul: Boyner Yayınları. See [http://www.nartaneleri.com/tr/doc/Sosyolojik\\_Degerlendirme\\_Raporu.pdf](http://www.nartaneleri.com/tr/doc/Sosyolojik_Degerlendirme_Raporu.pdf) (accessed 15<sup>th</sup> May 2015)



The Boyner Group acted as an active societal member, supporting development of a marginalized group in Turkey, their country of origin and operation.

“Public institutions, a private sector company, international organizations and NGOs, differ in their way of thinking, in their organization and in how they operate. This is seriously challenging and we had some differences. To overcome them, whenever possible we engaged the people in charge of implementation to take the decisions together. ... But most importantly, there has to be some time to establish trust among the partners.  
(UNFPA Gender Program Coordinator on cross-sectoral collaboration)

Different sectors have different ways of working. The project reflected these differences through the creation of a cross-sectoral project team that could engage with its own sector individually and represent its organization within the project. Collaboratively developing goals for the project supported mutual understanding and respect amongst the partners. Further,

conceiving of the project as a long-term partnership helped to create trust and to effectively consolidate available resources. At the operational level, different understandings of time (e.g. the government changes every four years) and regional representation (businesses and NGOs are mostly present in regions with major business activities, while orphanages are spread country wide, also in remote areas which makes it difficult to link mentors from the private sector to young women) made communication among the organizations important for project success. The Boyner Group’s active involvement in the project as well as the careful selection of highly engaged and personally dedicated project staff was considered crucial for the success of the project.

When working with a stakeholder group such as young women from orphanages on an individual level, qualitative content and targets have to be regularly reviewed to ensure they are meeting the individual’s needs. In this project, activities were constantly re-evaluated and ongoing analysis helped improve the project and its impacts. For example, the original goal of the project was to place all 40 young women in stable jobs and support them in beginning a new chapter of their lives.

“When the project first started, most of the girls did not want to be known. They did not want their face to be shown in the papers. They did not want to speak up. They participated in the program but they basically wanted to remain anonymous. And at the last meeting we had, we had so many testimonials from them, where they actually got up in front of a huge audience, and talked about their experience within this project. That was precious. That’s when I felt that we really did a good job, because they wanted to share the experience rather than wanting to remain anonymous. They actually gained a lot of self-confidence through the process. (Boyner Group’s Board Member and Project Sponsor on project success)

However, the project team quickly realized that this goal was neither possible nor desired, as the young women were still obtaining an education. The project goal was thus adapted to support the young women to prepare for their first job placements. The trainings were also subsequently adapted to address job searches and self- improvement.

The young women from orphanages are a highly marginalized and stigmatized group. As a business, engaging with such a group is considered innovative but risky, as companies like to avoid being associated with marginalized groups. Thus, deciding to work with such a group required a high level of consciousness, awareness, dedication, professionalism and expertise. Having a project team consisting of personnel with specific expertise on women issues, civil society experience and/or knowledge of the situation of young women from orphanages, was extremely beneficial and helped mitigated the risk of negative impacts on the young women as

well as the Boyner Group and the project partners. Improving the public image of young women from orphanages through outreach regarding Pomegranate Arils was also key to reducing risks.

Working with this group of young women might have influenced the public image of Boyner Group as an innovative company in Turkey. The project helped convey the Boyner Group's ethics and policies that support female workers. In this sense, the project influenced employment branding and the attraction of female talent. Further, the project increased company internal expertise in working with different sectors and created anti-discrimination awareness among its board members and employees. It also strengthened existing personal networks and created new ones across different sectors.

## 9. Looking Ahead & Conclusion

Frequently CSR projects are successfully initiated but capacity and time restraints prevent

“Our hope is that the Ministry can take this project forward as these skills should be provided to the children like a natural reflex from the Ministry. It should not be a separate project. We are supporting this, so it can become part of the Ministry's core work.”(Boyner Group's CSR director on project aims of the second phase)

some projects from meeting their intended goals. In the case of Pomegranate Arils, the decision to integrate the project within the Ministry was only discussed after the first phase of the project was successfully completed. The Pomegranate Arils project was handed over to the Ministry at the end of 2015. The Ministry will take ownership of the

content while the Boyner Group, UNFPA and other involved NGOs will support in consulting roles, as needed by the Ministry. This approach towards sustainability highlights the importance of empowering not only the young women but also the Ministry and its staff to continue working with the young women in an impactful way. This also matches the Boyner Group's approach to corporate sustainability as a Turkish corporate citizen: creating awareness and piloting projects to address societal issues, and enabling the actors in charge (in this case the Ministry) to help solve with these issues. The Ministry currently has four full-time staff members dedicated to the project; some of whom have been working on the project since 2008. Staff continuity will increase the possibility of taking the project beyond the four selected pilot regions and the trained trainers and mentors. However, due to national political changes, it is unclear, if the project will continue.

To ensure a smooth transition for the hand over of the project, the project team is working on the last activities: Preparing documents, comprehensive learning material and developing the buy-in of the new decision takers expected to be in office soon. In the future, this material will be owned by and used within the Ministry and its staff in upbringing the children. However, the Boyner Group and the other actors will continue their active engagement in empowering women.

Women's empowerment, especially equality in job opportunity and access to education, as recognized by the Millennium Development Goals, the Sustainable Development Goals, the Women Empowerment Principles and the United Nations Global Compact Principles are fundamental for societal development and require a strong commitment and dedication by all

members of society. The Boyner Group's efforts illustrate how women's rights and empowerment can be supported through the work of private enterprises in close partnership with governments, international organizations and national NGOS.

Human rights issues addressed in this project:	Human rights management practices discussed	Human rights standards, tools, and initiatives mentioned
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women's Rights</li> <li>• Right to Education</li> <li>• Standards of Living</li> <li>• Social Investment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Getting Started</li> <li>• Finding Partners</li> <li>• Communications &amp; Trainings</li> <li>• Stakeholder Engagement</li> <li>• Measuring Impact &amp; Reporting</li> <li>• Project Closure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UN Global Compact Principles</li> <li>• UN Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights</li> <li>• Universal Declaration of Human Rights</li> <li>• Women Empowerment Principles</li> <li>• ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work</li> <li>• Millennium Development Goals</li> <li>• Sustainable Development Goals</li> <li>• Post-2015 Development Agenda</li> </ul>