



# GENDER-SMART BUSINESS SOLUTIONS

## CASE STUDY: BOYNER GROUP'S SUPPLY CHAIN STRENGTHENS WOMEN IN BUSINESS

Boyner Group, Turkey



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## Project Overview

In Turkey, only 16 percent of small and medium enterprises are majority-owned by women.<sup>1</sup> If women participated fully in the labor force, the Turkish Gross National Income could increase by 22 percent.<sup>2</sup> To address the gap between men and women in its supply chain, Boyner Group, which is Turkey's largest retail corporation, partnered with IFC to launch the *Supply Chain Women Entrepreneurs' Empowerment Program* in 2014. The program, commonly known as "Good for Business Program," aimed to train the company's women-owned suppliers—enhancing their ability to obtain financing and improve business performance.

## Project Objectives

The goal of the Good for Business program is to position female-owned businesses in Boyner Group's supply chain, so they and the company become more competitive. The program is designed to build an inclusive pool of suppliers, constituted by the most thriving businesses in the supply chain. The suppliers are coached to become top performers and to comply with the group's social and environmental standards.

To achieve its goals, Boyner Group aims to:

- Raise women business owners' productivity and performance
- Enhance their business with Boyner and other companies

<sup>1</sup> EBRD. *Women Entrepreneurs in Turkey and Their Banking Relationships*, October 2013.

<sup>2</sup> Teignier, Marc and David Cuberes. *How Costly are Labor Gender Gaps? Estimates for the Balkans and Turkey*, World Bank 2015.

- Expand the entrepreneurs' knowledge of the markets in which they operate
- Improve their business and management skills
- Increase their access to market and finance opportunities

## Challenges

Suppliers in the retail sector face increasing market pressures. These include long payment terms, reduced prices, and low margins—which lead to cost pressures. The company saw an opportunity to address such challenges by creating a value chain that would include women, who are underrepresented among suppliers in Turkey. The group recognized and is addressing the lack of women-owned firms in supply chains, which few retailers are doing.

Daily, women in Boyner Group's supply chain confronted layers of challenges that their male peers did not encounter. Many of the women entering the Good for Business program reported that they lacked a clear vision for the future of their businesses. The burden of responsibilities as entrepreneurs and working wives and mothers held them back from reaching their full potential. They were also less integrated than men into support networks, which made market survival and positioning more difficult for women business owners than for their male peers.

Faced with such hurdles, many of the female entrepreneurs in Boyner Group's supply chain found it difficult to keep themselves motivated and to lead their businesses effectively.

## How Were Gender Gaps Addressed?

The Good for Business program selected 23 female participants representing 20 companies in Boyner Group's supply chain. In the first cohort, the women attended 12 weekly sessions. Organized into three thematic units, these workshops combined classroom instruction and coaching clinics with certified business and management trainers. Trainees also learned from guest talks by speakers from other organizations in the Good for Business program. Most important, there were networking events, such as a vendor fair, to introduce the entrepreneurs to potential buyers.

In the first unit, women-owned suppliers learned to better position themselves in the group's supply chain by closing gaps in interpersonal and leadership skills, business and financial knowledge, access to finance, and integration into networks.<sup>3</sup> Directed toward strengthening women's soft skills, certified trainers facilitated

<sup>3</sup> Evidence shows that as a group, women business owners are often excluded from the informal professional relationships that could grant them better access to market opportunities. IFC, *Women & Business: Drivers of Development*, 2011.

workshops on topics including leadership, human resource management, communication, and motivation. In these sessions, successful Turkish women entrepreneurs were invited to give inspiring speeches to participants.

The second unit was designed to build the women's market knowledge and relevant skills, focusing on product and customer-focused marketing, segmentation and positioning, and business-to-business marketing. A certified trainer facilitated the sessions. In addition, experts with in-depth local and sector expertise, such as the Boston Consulting Group, provided their insights into the retail industry and shared market patterns and trends. This helped increase the women's business contacts and gave them valuable information for strategic planning.

The third unit focused on finance and covered topics such as financial analysis and reading and writing balance sheets. In this training block, three Turkish banks (Garanti Bank, Sekerbank, and TEB) presented their programs for women entrepreneurs. This helped introduce the participants to banks that offer specific financing products and services for women entrepreneurs.

## Benefits

- The first cohort of the Good for Business program provided training to women in financial management, cash-flow management, market analysis, and strategy.
- A peer network was established among the participants. In the first two months after the end of the training program, they made eight new prospective customer or business contacts outside the peer group.
- Women were able to articulate their motivation and vision and to apply technical terminology and concepts when discussing future plans.
- A vendor fair organized by Boyner Group provided an opportunity for the women to market their products and services to potential buyers.
- The program helped foster business networks as well as relationships with banks and other companies.



## LESSONS LEARNED

- Use interactive and engaging training methods and minimize theoretical content.
- Emphasize strengthening the relationship with the Boyner Group and providing information on business possibilities over “learning new things.”
- Plan to follow up the training with commitment and action.
- Create structures that facilitate collaboration among the Good for Business alumnae, so their firms can continue to benefit and cultivate new commercial networks well beyond the time spent in the program.
- Measure the program's effectiveness through control groups.

### What the project lead says

Working with a large and innovative company such as Boyner is an excellent way for IFC to reach women entrepreneurs through corporate supply chains.

#### Sammar Essmat

Regional Gender Lead for IFC in Europe and Central Asia

### What the partner says

Through our gender-inclusive practices, we aim to set an example for companies and corporations in Turkey and promote gender equity in the country. It's a smart business decision: placing women and men throughout our operations allows us to tap into a much wider and more

diverse pool of resources.

#### Ümit Boyner

Member of the Boyner Group Board

### What the beneficiaries say

We had fun, we learned a lot, and we got to meet others.

#### Ms. Işıl Yıldız, Sereda

It really increased my enthusiasm.

#### Ms. Zeynep Çeltekçi, Zep Tekstil

I could have always stayed in accounting. Now, thanks to the program, I started to look into production and client relations.

#### Ms. Ayşegül Ayar, Ag Moda Giyim


There is no such possibility to meet others and to listen to such a trainer or to the other companies who presented themselves. In the WhatsApp group, we ask each other how we are doing. I have seen the power of the women. I have seen their strength, they have never-ending resources. It makes me happy.


#### Ms. Serap Baturay, Moso Deri

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