



Ministry of National Education  
General Directorate  
of Primary Education

# HAYDİ KIZLAR OKULA!

## THE GIRLS' EDUCATION CAMPAIGN IN TURKEY

'Haydi Kizlar Okula' — the girls' education campaign as it is known in Turkey — was launched by UNICEF Executive Director, Carol Bellamy and the Turkish Minister of National Education, Hüseyin Çelik, in mid-June 2003. Generally, the results in this first year exceeded expectations and a strong platform has been built to achieve much better results in 2004. A new and positive trend emerged during the year with increased interest among the private sector in funding UNICEF programmes — particularly 'Haydi Kizlar Okula'.

The goal of the campaign is to achieve gender equality in primary school enrolment by end of 2005 with the provision of quality basic education for all girls in 53 provinces where the schooling rate of girls is lowest.

According to the gender review in education conducted in 2003, there is a 7% gap between girls and boys schooling in primary education. In order to ensure gender parity by the end of 2005, girls' education is seen as top priority by the country office and national partners.

Gender disparities in education in Turkey are still significant, particularly in the south-eastern regions and eastern Anatolia. In some provinces over 50% of girls between 6 and 14 do not attend school while in rural areas over 60% of all girls between 11 and 14 have not even enrolled.

Both economic and social factors give rise to these statistics. Although education is free, uniforms and materials must be paid for. With many families suffering severe economic hardship, the contribution from the child's labour to the household budget is

important. When both parents are working, older children, usually girls, are responsible for looking after younger siblings.

Children, especially girls, are often kept at home from school because parents need their labour in the household or on the land. Themselves illiterate, or with only a few years of education, parents sometimes do not see any value in sending their daughters to school. Traditionally girls' education is not seen as important.

On the other hand, as numbers have thinned in rural areas, the per capita cost of keeping schools open has risen. As part of the solution, bussing has been introduced to take children from dispersed villages to schools in more populated areas. However, this is causing problems in some places where tradition-bound parents often keep their puberty-age girls at home rather than allow them to share busses with boys. This contributes to a high drop-out rate for girls.

Much research and planning was conducted 'on the ground' in order to assess specific local obstacles to raising the rates of enrolment and ensure the best possible results to the campaign objectives.

- The primary obstacle to girls' education in many parts of the south-east is a shortage of schools and classroom space.
- Many children have long distance to travel — 57,000 go to school by bus everyday in the south-east and of these just over 21,000 are girls. Attendance figures drop during winter as heavy snows close roads.



*Using a very simple logo and slogan helped to get the attention of the target audience and the public in general.*



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- Another 52,000 children who live far from school need to board and parents find it hard to send children away to school. The poor physical state of many existing schools, particularly the lack of toilets and running water, also puts families off enrolling their children.
- Economic hardship is also an important reason why girls are not going to school. Poverty means that many parents view survival as the main priority.
- The harsh necessity of scraping a living forces many to coopt their children as additional labour resources in order to augment income.
- Cultural and patriarchal family structures prioritize the needs of men and boys over girls and women — even amongst women and girls themselves.
- Many families do not view girls education as being very important as early marriage is more of a priority and many are kept at home to help with household chores.
- The absence of female role models means that there is little to stir the aspirations of girls in the villages. Although a third of teachers are women, most of them are assigned to cities and towns.
- Families who want to educate their children find that opportunities for secondary level education are relatively scarce. Even the compulsory eight years primary education is problematic since many village schools only teach students up to 5th grade. The enforced drop-out of students beyond fifth grade adds to the 'out of school' statistics.

The campaign focused on informing and mobilising provincial and district level officials in the various ministries, including Interior, Education, Religious Affairs, Health, Agriculture and the Social Services and Child Protection Agency. National and local level media — both print and electronic — were also enlisted for the campaign. Celebrities were signed up to give supportive messages through TV spots.

#### Results so far achieved:

The figures from the 10 priority provinces in 2003 show mixed results. The best province, Siirt, showed an increase of 19% in girls' enrolment over last year. The next two provinces, Van and Mus, had increases of 11.6% and 6.7% respectively. The overall increases in the other provinces were disappointing. However, on closer scrutiny of the figures, one notices a very significant increase in the enrolment of girls in grades one and six. In Siirt, the jump in girls' enrolment in grade one was a remarkable 57% and girls now outnumber boys in grade one there. Sirnak province had a 23% jump in grade one, Van 16% and Mus 13.5%. Even the worst performer had a 4.8% increase in grade one girls. In grade six, the five best performing provinces had increases of 46%, 31%, 20%, 18% and 13%. While the significance of this has still to be fully analysed, it probably indicates that parents are ready to start their daughters off at school when they reach the age of 6. Keeping the girls at school will thus be a challenge. The spike in grade six may be the result of parents sending girls back to school to complete the final three years of primary.

#### Lessons learned:

Strong leadership was possibly the most important ingredient in making the campaign a success in Siirt and Van provinces. The officials in these two provinces, and the

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*During 2004, 'Haydi Kizlar Okula!' will focus on the 23 provinces with the lowest rates of enrolment for girls.*

strategies they used should serve as inspirations and role models for other provinces as the campaign expands.

In the same vein, political commitment and the support of decision-makers at all levels is vital. The Prime Minister and Minister of Education's visible support is reflected among provincial and district officials (the PM's constituency is Siirt, the Minister of Education's constituency is Van).

The media's active involvement both at the national and provincial level was an important factor in increasing public awareness.

The development of an inter-sectoral action plan with clear goals, objectives and defined roles and responsibilities of all the stakeholders was an important tool for effective implementation.

The use of user friendly communication materials was an effective tool for mobilisation in villages, districts and provinces.

Using a very simple logo and slogan helped to get the attention of the target audience and the public in general.

NGOs were generally peripheral to the campaign, although some NGOs were active

in school construction in some areas. In one province, local NGOs provided stationery kits to poor schoolchildren.

Engagement of the private sector, both at the national and provincial level was a positive factor in the campaign. The Coca-Cola Company gave money and free publicity, and İbrahim Ethem Ulagay, a pharmaceutical company paid for the printing and distribution of training and communication materials. However, there is still real scope for the mobilisation of funds from local companies which needs to be explored. This is especially the case in view of the government's announcement that companies who invest in education will get a 100% tax break for the value of their contribution.

An important incentive for going to school was the decision of the government to provide free textbooks this year. This removed a real burden for many poor families.

Finally, an important lesson is that in order to increase enrolment, the number of classrooms and teachers also needs to be increased. The government is committed to working on both and has already started an expanded school construction programme. They have also decided to introduce an incentive scheme to persuade teachers to go to remote areas starting from 2004.



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#### Key Activities in 2004

Using the experience and lessons learned up to now, the Ministry of National Education and UNICEF will stimulate sustained action in the expansion phase (2004–2005) at the provincial and district levels by:

- Identifying barriers to girls' access to education in the 23 new project provinces and the 'hard to reach' areas of the 10 original provinces;
- Raising awareness on the importance of girls' education among provincial authorities, community leaders, and parents;
- Increasing the commitment of provincial, village and community leaders to girls' education;
- Carrying out social mobilisation/sensitisation on the importance of girls' education;
- Raising awareness that child labour can damage the child's intellectual development due to her/his missing out on education;
- Supporting community initiatives in schooling;
- Advocating for implementation of compulsory education laws;
- Involving provincial and village leaders and school directors in promoting awareness;
- Providing technical assistance and communication materials to provincial authorities and communities to ensure increased access for girl children;
- Building the capacity of provincial authorities (including governors, mayors, village leaders, imams, etc.) through organising local training sessions;
- Using mass media and programme communication strategies;
- Working with local authorities to identify where schools and teachers are most needed;
- Mobilising resources at the provincial level from the private sector and at the national level leveraging resources especially from the World Bank and the EU;

- Working with NGOs where they exist.
- The quality of education needs to be worked on, particularly as increased access means larger class sizes. In this regard, UNICEF needs to work closely with MONE to accelerate the 'Child Friendly Schools' programme.

All of these activities are labour intensive and 3 field assistants have been recruited — each to cover around 10 provinces — in order to get results.

#### Key Expected Results

- To reduce the gender gap by 50% in 2004 and eliminate the gap entirely by the end of 2005.
- To introduce the Child Friendly Schools as a pilot and demonstrate that it works in terms of improving quality in education and to create a platform for its expansion.

#### Key Challenges

- To ensure that there are enough classrooms for the extra children by September.
- Data on enrolments cannot be compiled in a short time in order to monitor progress of the Campaign.

*During the first six months of the campaign, 40,000 girls were enrolled in the education system.*

