Bridge to Türkiye Fund (BTF) is excited to announce its newest women’s empowerment initiative! Through a collaborative agreement with Değişim Liderleri Derneği (DLD) (Change Leaders Association), a nonprofit based in Turkey, BTF will be supporting women’s leadership by sponsoring a group of students attending public universities in Istanbul, Turkey.

For this pilot program, a group of 8 to 10 young women will be carefully selected to take part in the “Sparks (Kıvılcımlar)” Program, a unique eight-month-long leadership development program. All participants in this new training program will be selected among BTF’s scholarship students based in Istanbul coordinated with CYDD (Çağdaş Yaşamı Destekleme Derneği - The Association in Support of Contemporary Living) a leading non-profit organization in Turkey that supports the education of youth, especially girls.

This year, BTF’s supporters are sponsoring 259 scholarships with a special focus on girls who are often disadvantaged and not encouraged to go to school. Educating girls and young women has enormous social and economic benefits and has been identified as a primary means toward national development. This is why BTF has been committed to investing in efforts to bridge the gender gap in education and empower academically gifted but economically disadvantaged girls and young women in Turkey.

What is the “Sparks – Kıvılcımlar” Program?

The Sparks program is a unique and innovative eight-month experiential learning program to develop formalized leadership skills through active participation in a social change project that benefits the participants’ communities. Developed by California-based Turkish Women’s Initiative (www.thetwi.org) and launched in 2009 in Turkey in close collaboration with DLD, Sparks targets university women and employs a dynamic collaborative learning model to achieve leadership skills while simultaneously developing an awareness of social responsibility. It emphasizes “learning by doing.”

Examples of past projects include: Launching a campaign on breast cancer awareness; teaching
marketable skills to women at home; sensitizing a community about domestic violence by building a unique photographic montage; and developing educational materials on the use and abuse of medication. To date, these projects have touched the lives of thousands of people in different communities.

So far, the program has been offered to students in Izmir, Izmit, Ankara, and Duzce. DLD is currently working on plans to expand to new cities, namely Istanbul and Bolu.

**Long-term Impact**

Thanks to the generosity of our supporters like you, through our scholarships program, BTF helps keep academically successful, but socio-economically disadvantaged young women in school and graduating. Through this new leadership-training program, BTF will help develop a new generation of women leaders serving as positive change makers in the Turkish society.

Please watch for updates throughout the year on BTF’s newest project and help us grow this program to other areas in Turkey. Thank you for your continued support and for sharing our enthusiasm and commitment to investing in girls’ education in Turkey. Together, we can advance opportunities for young women, so they become productive citizens and help them invest back in their communities.

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For a more detailed description of BTF’s other programs, please visit us at:

- [Bridge to Türkiye Fund’s Website](#)
- [BTF’s Facebook Page](#)

For more detailed information about Değişim Liderleri Derneği (Change Leaders Association), please visit [www.degisimliderleri.org](http://www.degisimliderleri.org).