

FIRST Impact Award - Team 8159

2025 - Team 8159

Team Number

8159

Team Nickname

Golden Horn

Team Location

Ataşehir, 34 - Türkiye

Describe the impact of the *FIRST* program on team participants within the last 3 years. Think about percentages of those graduating high school, attending college, in STEM careers, leadership skills, and serving as mentors/sponsors in *FIRST* programs.

Our team members develop their technical and social skills by embracing World Economic Forum and FIRST competencies. 100% of the 20% of our graduates in the last three years have pursued STEAM careers in various countries such as the UK, USA, the Netherlands, and Turkey, receiving acceptances from prestigious universities like Cornell, UPenn and Stanford. 80% continue on to FIRST; some of our FIRST graduates actively volunteer at competitions, while others start FRC teams that still compete.

Describe your community along with its unique opportunities and circumstances. Think about your geographic region, diversity of town/school, language barriers, socioeconomic barriers, and cultural expectations.

We are a team of 35 students from the top 20 schools in Turkey, ranking in the top 2% on average, who have received STEAM education since childhood and who are aware of the problems in the world. As Istanbul, a cosmopolitan city which hosts 21 UNESCO Heritage Sites, where the underserved population lives together, where unequally distributed resources and cultural expectations stem from socio-cultural changes, unites two continents, Europe and Asia, we create a bridge between us and technology.

Describe the team's methods, with emphasis on the past 3 years, for spreading the *FIRST* Mission in ways that are effective, scalable, sustainable, and creative.

With members from public and private schools, we reach a wide audience. Through presentations in schools and cities, we have engaged with 20K+ people. Leveraging the district mayor's public outreach, we introduced FIRST and its mission to him, as well as to national and international media by DailyNews and DEMİRÖREN Media. With FIRST LIBRARY, we published FIRST resources as videos in 6 languages, reaching 400+ people. Through STEAM and NGOs, we use FIRST's mission as a tool for social impact.

Describe your team's goals and the progress you have made towards them to fulfill *FIRST*'s Vision.

Adopting equal access, we donated LEGO sets to Hatay, taught coding to orphan girls, started #10692 with underserved students. Empowering disadvantaged people, we united with individuals with Down syndrome in ROBOJR, started 7 FLL teams for refugees and Turkish students, organized NGS competition and built labs. Encouraging technology use, we created the FSC in 7 Regions app; gave STEAM education to children, mothers, and earthquake survivors. Over 3 years we have increased our reach by 162,36%.

<p>What impact has your team seen from your efforts described in the above question? How does your team measure impact?</p>
<p>With QUALITATIVE research, we collect feedback from parents and children following our workshops. 37% of the families in our mall events reported after that they enrolled their children in STEAM courses. Spreading technology and their bright eyes fuel our motivation. With QUANTITATIVE research, we apply a curriculum-based system and add pre- and post- tests in our app. Through sustainable communication with the teams we mentor, we support their growth and help them strengthen each season.</p>
<p>Please provide specific examples of how your team and team members act as role models within the <i>FIRST</i> community with emphasis on the past 3 years. How do you share these best practices with other teams?</p>
<p>Our contribution to the FIRST community embodies the program’s spirit, inspires students of STEAM to reach their potential. With the leadership of the first Turkish WFFA and 2024 FIRST Educator Awardee mentor, we are the role models of FIRST’s spirit with 3 DLFA, volunteering in FIRST events. With FIRST ALUMNI interviews we supported 1500+ rookies. In our Kick Off, we gave 20 1.5 hour workshops to 33 teams. We offer GOLDENAI, a tool that responds to FIRST competition details and questions.</p>
<p>Describe your team's initiatives to Assist, Mentor, and/or Start other <i>FIRST</i> teams with emphasis on activities within the past 3 years.</p>
<p>We started 8 FRC, 6 FTC, 15 FLL, and 12 FLL Jr. teams. We mentored 7 and assisted 16 other FRC teams. Adopting “Gracious Professionalism”, we opened our workshop to 11 FRC teams and shared our resources. We established Azerbaijan’s first FRC and FTC teams, Mechack and MechackTB. We started and mentored YGA's first FTC team, Con-Science, with students from 6 different cities. At FTC competitions, we support teams by solving challenges and sharing our experience through our ‘Ask to Golden’ banner.</p>
<p>What other initiatives have you created, grown, sustained, or participated in (<i>FIRST</i> or otherwise) to help inspire young people to be science and technology leaders and innovators? What outcomes have you seen from your efforts in the past 3 years?</p>
<p>With the inspiration of being the force of raising innovators, we created FSC in 7 Regions app for underserved students in 7 regions. We uploaded educational videos of STEAM reaching 11K+ people by sharing videos on social media. We hosted STEAM workshops for 630 families in malls. By publishing uni-first.org, we united FIRST Alumni in same universities, inspiring them to take action. We were volunteers of the DRONE SOCCER TURKEY competition. We welcome new Peace Ambassadors on barisetcisi.org.</p>
<p>Describe the partnerships and relationships that you've created with other organizations (teams, sponsors, educational institutions, government, philanthropic entities, etc.) and what you have accomplished together, with emphasis on the past 3 years.</p>
<p>With the motivation of being the first #TeamREV team in Turkey, we ran Kick Off with #5665, whom we mentor. To maximize the impact of our interviews with CEKUL, TURMEPA, and LET’S DO IT TURKIYE, we collaborated with BUBBLEWORKS MEDIA. We reached 12K+ people with STEAM workshops done in Municipality Festival, HILLTOWN and AKBATI Shopping malls. We designed BioGuy-JR with BAKTEK to solve the mucilage problem. In the project led by AMAZON TURKEY, we donated Lego Sets to 500 earthquake survivors.</p>
<p>Describe your team's efforts in the past 3 years to promote equity, diversity, and inclusion within your team, <i>FIRST</i>, and your communities.</p>
<p>Through ROBOJR, we work with 20 students with Down syndrome, proving that science has no barriers. STEAMWAVE provides curriculum STEAM education to 500 earthquake survivors. We teach coding to minority groups. To promote social unity, we reached 2906 people by sharing refugee interviews via FIRSTREACH. With Women in Society conferences, we raised gender equality awareness to 55K+ people. With FRC 10692 & FTC Con-Science, we foster inclusivity. We are proud that 40% of our team consists of girls.</p>

Explain how you ensure your team and the initiatives you have created will be sustainable.	
We collaborate with sponsors to ensure sustainability, strengthening relationships through financial support and projects. We keep them informed via ‘Golden News’ and create a lasting structure where graduates return as mentors, and new members join from our FLL teams. To maximize impact, we identify root causes and work with enterprises to implement sustainable solutions. Rooted in FIRST values, we foster a cycle of growth that empowers future generations through innovation and collaboration.	
Highlight one area in which your team needs to improve and describe the steps actively being taken to make those improvements.	
As a community team, the diverse academic calendars and goals of our members create challenges in coordinating schedules due to varying family expectations. To address this, we organize events involving families and deliver presentations on the FIRST mission to highlight its benefits. Since it's difficult for departments to work together because of workshop conditions, we hold external events, and throughout the season, we meet online at least 4 days a week to conduct cluster work and push on.	
Briefly describe other matters of interest to the <i>FIRST</i> Judges, including items that may not fit into the above topics. The judges are interested in learning about aspects of your team that may be unique, particularly noteworthy, or had a large impact.	
As a team coming from 20 different schools; we select a Gracious Professionalism Ambassador to make sure that we stay on track with FIRST’s principles. We participate in STEAM education sessions, municipal fairs, association interviews, and competitions alongside our FTC team, instilling the FIRST culture in them. In FIRST17, which forms the foundation and roof of our projects, we focus on the UN's 17 SDGs to address global issues and work on how the wider STEAM community can contribute.	
Judge Feedback	
	As we piece together a map, we made STEAM not just an educational tool, but a key to social transformation. What aspects should we strengthen so that our projects create a more sustainable impact on a long-term and global scale? An area the team has an opportunity to improve. Something that really impressed the judges.
Essay	
<p>The world was on the verge of losing its natural balance. Suddenly, a mystical map which held the key to restoring harmony, shattered into pieces, scattering across the globe. Golden Horn (GH), a team of Peace Ambassadors (PA), discovered that they had been chosen as the map’s guardians. They had a dream: to cultivate the future leaders, educators, and innovators, creating a tangible impact within their communities and beyond. Determined to turn this vision into reality, they embarked on a journey to find the missing map pieces.</p> <p>To find the first piece, PAs had to spread the mission of FIRST far and wide. With this goal, they traveled nationwide and beyond, reaching 20K+ people in 20 schools across 7 provinces. Tying east to west: In 2023, they introduced FIRST at the UN HQ in NY, and in 2024, they represented it at Nagoya University in Japan.</p> <p>In the 2023 Champs, Dean Kamen visited their pit and handed them the first piece. Etched onto was their next mission: bringing FIRST to Central Asia. To fulfill this call, in 2023 they started Azerbaijan’s first FRC team, Mechack, and in 2024, a FTC team, MechackTB. At the 2023 NYC Regional, 9030 won a spot in Champs with GH’s Wildcard, winning Rookie All-Star. In 2024-25, PAs welcomed both teams into their workshop, offering mentorship and guidance to help them grow.</p>	

With a piece from Mechack, they saw a greater mission: amplifying FIRST further. Embracing inclusivity and diversity, they started GoldenREACH. They started a FTC team at a minority school, Zapyon Greek, in 2024. In 3 years, their efforts led to the start of 15 FLL, 12 FLL Jr, 6 FTC and 8 FRC teams. They mentored 7; assisted 16 FRC teams. By working with 65 teams in total, they broaden youth access to FIRST's power.

PAs, who serve as a bridge between FIRST programs, brought together underserved students from 8 cities with the guidance of a new piece. In 2024, they started YGA's first FTC team, ConScience. Golden Horn Jr which they started, Mechack TB and Conscience, qualified to compete in Turkey's first national champs.

PAs were set to find the pieces of the map that would save the world from collapse.

At the FTC Champs, they found a new piece on the game field, revealing names of various associations. In 2025, with Golden Horn Jr and BUBBLEWORKS MEDIA, they launched a podcast series highlighting skills gained through FIRST and their role in social awareness. Featuring special guests and enterprises like TURMEPA, CEKUL, LET'S DO IT, the podcasts encouraged the public to take action. Impressed by their innovation, TURMEPA invited them to serve as judges in a competition. Alongside this honor, a new piece awaited them.

This piece combined symbols from different roots to form a tree. PAs soon realized that the hidden message was urging them to unite the roots of the FIRST society. So, PAs launched uni-first.org in 2025, bringing together FIRST Alumni in the same universities and creating FIRST communities that would continue to benefit even after graduation.

Dazzled by their impact and outstanding robot performance, REV Robotics selected them as Turkey's first and only TeamREV, which followed with a piece: they were to host the DIVE Season!

In response, PAs ran the 2025 Next-Gen Kickoff, welcoming 1K people to learn about the new season. Across 20 1.5-hour workshops, participants enhanced their technical and social skills, engaged in innovative thinking through water pollution and entrepreneurship discussions.

For sustainable growth and guidance in the competition, they needed an all-in-one solution. This is where GoldenAI emerged as a powerful tool. GoldenAI provided guidance on mechanics and programming; team management, mentorship and AI analysis. Teams worldwide can freely access GoldenAI on ChatGPT. In this way, PAs won a piece that led them to an initiative, focusing on global issues.

FIRST17/ This remarkable piece revealed the 17 SDGs, guiding them toward global objectives. As PAs pursued these goals, they merged engineering and creativity, gaining strength.

Throughout this journey, they built a bridge to share their ideas and solutions: bariselcisi.org, a website connecting volunteers who aspired to become PAs with GH. They wrote articles under each goal, invited new PAs, collaborated with organizations to expand their impact and shared their work.

In 2023, PAs established FIRST17, a framework that served as a roof of the projects they carried out and directed them to another piece. By merging the SDGs and FIRST values, could this initiative take their STEAM journey to an entirely new level?

SDG2/ Guided by the light of FIRST17, their first stop was a foodbank which the PAs collaborated with. Throughout 2024, they prepared meals to distribute to 1930 homeless individuals. They inspired 11 teams to support this foodbank as well. In recognition of their efforts, the foodbank rewarded them with a piece. Following this, they stumbled upon a house in a secluded area. Just then, a loud noise echoed, drawing some PAs toward it.

SDG3/ The remaining PA entered the house they had discovered. There, they met and had a conversation with a person who had lost their sight due to Diabetic Retinopathy. PAs designed a prototype that allowed individuals at risk of the disease to take images of their eyes. Using the image processing technology they learned through FIRST, they designed a device that allowed people to assess their disease status from home by uploading images on a website they created. Thus, by consulting experts, they increased the chances of saving people's vision through early diagnosis.

SDG4/ PAs who followed the sound found themselves in Hatay, a city devastated by a major earthquake. They acted swiftly, seeking support from those in Istanbul. In 2023, they collaborated with Global Mind Association (GMA) to send 100 aid boxes to earthquake survivors while leveraging social media to expand their efforts globally.

Meanwhile, they donated 500 STEM kits to Hatay, under STEAMWAVE in 2024. They developed curricula tailored to different age groups and included pre and post-tests to measure their evident reach. They helped prevent collapse today while equipping 500 children to face future challenges.

As they provided hope through STEM education, PAs sought to expand their impact. In 2025, they developed an app called "FIRST STEM Course in 7 Regions". This was more than just an educational app, it served as a bridge to make STEM accessible to everyone. They shared tutorials on FRC robots, CAD, tools, Scratch, Arduino and Tinkercad through the app and social media, reaching 11K+ people. Understanding that impact matters as much as reach, PAs added questions into videos, enabling users to engage in an interactive learning experience.

Not just online, PAs began searching for ways to engage with people directly. Finally, an idea was born: bringing STEAM to everyone's doorstep.

Through 'Change Starts with Mothers', they organized STEAM workshops in malls: AKBATI in 2024, HILLTOWN in 2025. These workshops enabled 630 families to engage in their children's STEAM journeys, with 37% enrolling them in robotics courses afterwards.

Following their success at malls, in 2025, PAs decided to advocate with Atasehir at municipal festivals where they provided STEAM education to 12K people. These projects brought them closer to their mission of nurturing today's youth into leaders. Their impact was immense that one of the participants gifted them a new piece.

SDG6/ The collected map pieces came together to form a passage to the Marmara Sea. PAs faced a thick mucilage layer, endangering marine life. Inspired by BIOGUY, which prevents water pollution with Zeolite bacteria, PAs developed an at-home version called BioGuy-Jr in collaboration with BAKTEK. During the cleaning process, another piece came out from under this layer.

SDG10/ The piece led PAs to 10 youth centers across cities. In 2022, with GMA and GIZ, PAs taught 34 refugee and Turkish students expertise they acquired through FIRST. Noticing obstacles in social interaction, they fostered cohesion by starting 7 FLL teams, pairing them with 77 FRC competitors as mentors. To measure outreach, PAs volunteered at the Next Gen Science Competition under the theme "Prepared for Disasters and Life" where the 7 teams competed. A Coding Our Dreams employee offered them a new piece: an invitation to their community, leading them to Hatay.

In 2024, they allied with AMAZON, PAs donated 500 Lego sets through the 'Coding Our Dreams' project. This donation motivated PAs to support more underprivileged communities in their network. That year, they teamed up with the Down Syndrome Association, inviting 20 vulnerable youth to draw their dream robot. With AI, they turned these drawings into a storybook, published on Amazon Kindle, proving science knows no barriers.

SDG13/ The new piece pointed to an archaeological site in Kirklareli. PAs partnered with LET'S DO IT in 2023 for the cleanup of Kanli Gecit. They cleared an area of 3000m2, preserving both history and environment.

PAs had finally uncovered the last missing piece they had been chasing for. The map came together, gleamed like a ray of light, and revealed a previously unseen path: a route to a mysterious sea. A voice echoed from the depths: DIVE IN!

Driven to uncover its meaning, PAs DOVE IN and discovered a hidden passage. At its end, awaited an extraordinary sight: everyone they had supported, mentored and collaborated with on this journey. The depths of the sea were a deep reflection of the commitment and solidarity PAs had woven over the years. Since 2019, they have extended their hands to those in need, from underserved to vulnerable populations.

For 1095 days, 26280 hours, Peace Ambassadors IMPACTED 116,373+ people, reaching 102 individuals daily and 4 per hour, shaping a sustainable future! Each year, they continue to discover new maps with FIRST, expanding their influence for a better world.;

