

“We cannot separate Armenia from the world”

**Interview with Ralph Yirikian,
General Manager VivaCell-MTS**



CSR WeltWeit: What is the focus of VivaCell-MTS activities in the field of Corporate Responsibility? And how are these activities influenced by the Armenian context?



Ralph Yirikian: VivaCell-MTS is an international operator with a local flavor. The company is inspired by the global approach of CSR and at the same time it acts as an organization that is influenced by the local conditions of our small country. We believe that our corporate actions are linked like in a chain, it goes from inside out. Going deep into our market we at all time try to answer the needs and demands of this market and work on improving the business area we cover as well as social and ecological demands of our clients. Also, the Armenian community also has influence on our activities and decisions: be it the individual or the community.

CSR WeltWeit: VivaCell-MTS is one of the CSR leaders in Armenia. What are the challenges for a company in Armenia to be a responsible corporate citizen?

Ralph Yirikian: I would namely say: Lack of awareness as well as missing health conditions – an ever growing concern - and the alarming environmental conditions in Armenia are the main challenges. We cannot separate Armenia from the world; the country is of course in the loop of the climate change. The deteriorated life conditions (i.e. poverty, lack of education) especially in the rural regions are as well to be considered.

CSR WeltWeit: How does your company benefit from CSR? Do the Armenian consumers or the Armenian society in general reward your companies` efforts for social and ecological issues?

Ralph Yirikian: Everything starts with respect and trust. VivaCell-MTS managed to build a link of trust with the Armenian community. The Company from the first day of operation strived to provide the state of art products and services coupled with the sense of responsibility in each action executed. Later when VivaCell-MTS became one of the leaders of the concept of Corporate Responsibility in Armenia, the company acted as a role model for other businesses to follow. I am not exaggerating by saying that VivaCell-MTS entry into the Armenian market

injected the belief among the Armenian population that it is possible to have positive developments in this country.

CSR WeltWeit: Does VivaCell-MTS cooperate with other companies or civil society organizations in order to come up with valuable solutions for societal problems? How would you describe these partnerships with regard to the Armenian context?

Ralph Yirikian: VivaCell-MTS openly works with organizations or enterprises that have the best interest of the Armenian people at heart. The company extends hands at all times to individuals and entities working in several and diversified fields to serve the Armenian community.

CSR WeltWeit: Are the Armenian market conditions conducive to companies to act as a corporate citizen? Is the Armenian government aware of the CSR concept and if so, does the public policy foster the development of CSR?

Ralph Yirikian: As previously stated the lack of awareness of the CSR concept is a major obstacle on implementing a full fledged CSR strategy. In Armenia the government is aware of our company's CSR initiatives and strategy and is endorsing it like it is endorsing all activities going in that direction undertaken by other entities. The country has great potential in terms of talented people in the field of technology or art, science or medical care. Also there is a big demand and urgency of developing those sectors. In order to overcome all these issues there should be a good system of governance, as CR means implementing a responsible way of management and direct commitment to the Sustainable development. Nevertheless, although the Armenian government is aware of the CSR concept the approach and legislations are yet to be developed.