

# ANNUAL REPORT 2019



النساء الآن  
WOMEN NOW  
FOR DEVELOPMENT





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ANNUAL REPORT 2019



## Foreword

Dear friends and partners,

As all the previous years, 2019 was very hard in Syria, with new human and women rights violation... it end with a barbaric attacks that destroyed two of our centers in Idlib and forced more than ( member of our team to displaced to the unknown? However, as always, we know that we don't have any choice other than to continue to achieve our dreams to enjoy Peace, Freedom and Gender Equility in Syria.

During 2019, we have learned and achieve a lot, in additional to our traditional activities, we invest in community mobilization and learn again how girls and women can be amazing leaders to fight for their causes, when supported by right tools.

We also launched our first report on Feminist knowledge production and gender equality in Syria, and hold our first workshop with amazing young feminist researcher.. Knowledge is a power and Syrian women are the expert in their need and have a lot of perspective to share concerning the future of the country. We want them to be at the center of any discussion and gain their power back as first producer of knowledge.

Dr. Maria Al Abdeh  
Executive Director of Women Now for Development





# WHO ARE WE?

Women Now for Development is a feminist, women-lead organization dedicated to deepening and strengthening women's role in shaping democratic future of Syria and responding to the humanitarian crises. Established in June 2012 by renowned Syrian author and journalist Samar Yazbek, it is now the largest Syrian women- organisation reaching thousands of women and girls annually, primarily through our unique Women and Girls Safe Spaces programme, (WGSS) and through our advocacy, research and campaigning for women human rights. "We are vivacious. Our minds are on fire; strained but not desperate. We draw strength from the courage and resistance of women on the ground" Samar Yazbek.

## Theory of Change

We recognise that Syrian women, during this time of war crisis in the region, have the potential to be dynamic agents of change. They are brave, resilient, and can rebuild harmony and prosperity back into a society ravaged by extremism and violent militarization. Our programs unleash their potential by investing in their education, economic empowerment, civic participation and leadership, and social & cultural awareness.





Our vision for Syrian society is one in which human rights, freedom, and justice are secured to all, Syrian women and men play equally meaningful roles in political, social, and economic lives, and girls are protected from all harm as they grow up in a peaceful, inclusive society.

Our mission is to initiate programs that empower and protect Syrian women and girls across socioeconomic backgrounds. We strive to amplify women's political voice and their role in building a peaceful Syria anew- a Syria that safeguards equal rights for all citizens.





# Our Approach

Women Now believes that the struggle for women's rights in Syria is a multi-layered and gradual process, which cannot be separated from the struggle for peace and democracy.

Building from the grassroots, and starting with the most vulnerable and marginalised women and girls, whilst also working with boys and men as allies,

we see women as key actors rather than just victims. They are the first responders to crises and resisters standing up against violence and violent extremism; they are also primary carers for their families and their communities; they are a powerful voice for peace and fearless advocates for justice.





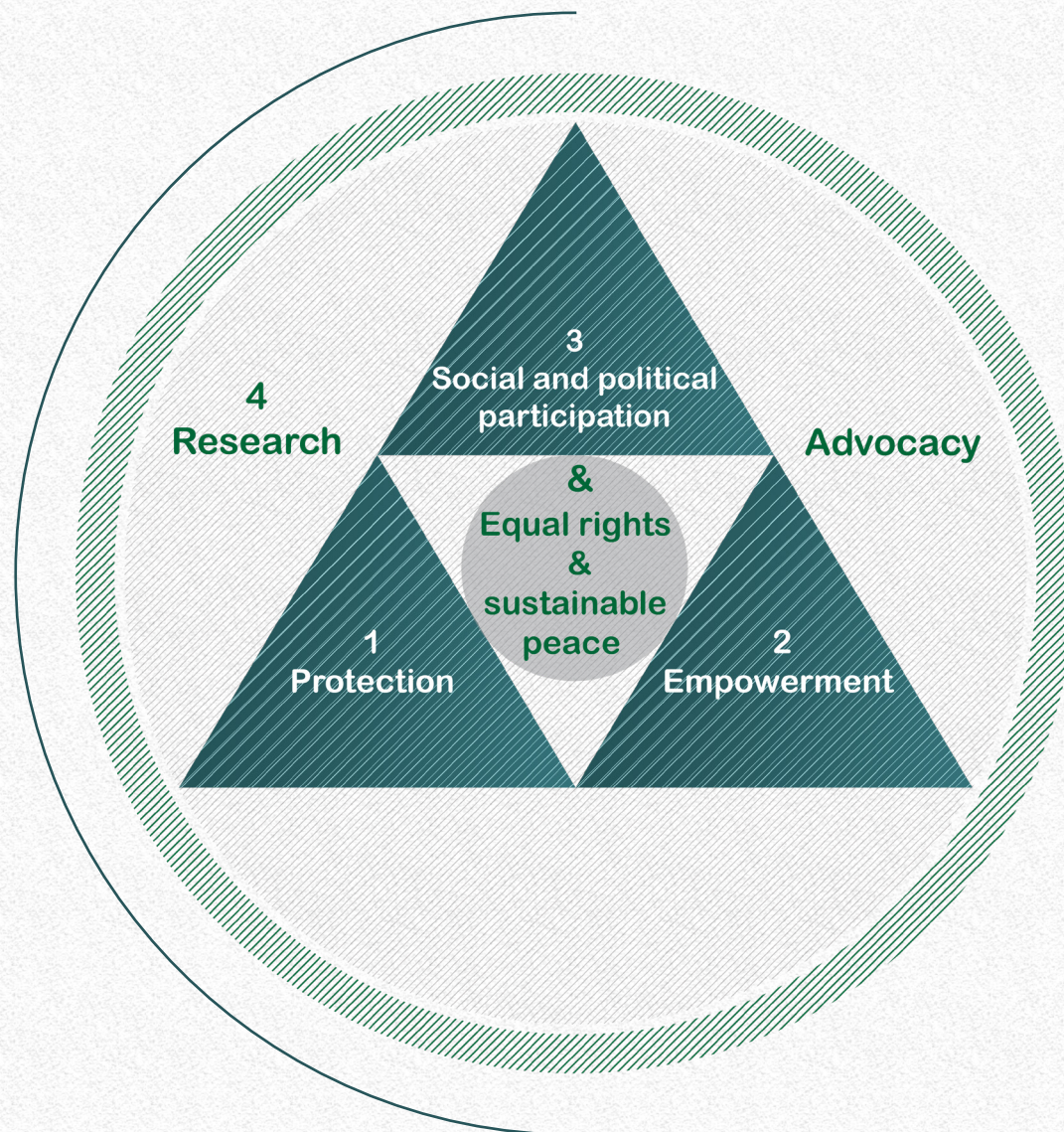
## Focus Areas & Objectives

**1. PROTECTION:** We provide psychosocial support to women and girls through one-to-one case management and group sessions including on sexual and gender based violence, child marriage, sexual reproductive health and rights, and post-traumatic stress syndrome (PSS) coping skills.

**2. EMPOWERMENT:** We empower women and adolescent girls through education and vocational training, from literacy, English classes and IT skills, to basic nursing and small business management

**3. PARTICIPATION:** We work to increase women's participation in civil and political life by strengthening their leadership skills and providing platforms for Syrian women to lead or contribute to international campaigns and advocacy initiatives.

**4. RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY:** We support local advocacy campaigns, driven by women at the grass-roots, and amplify their voices through our own advocacy at the international levels, in transitional justice processes and rights monitoring mechanisms.







## 2019 in Numbers

5

Women centers

3753  
Beneficiaries

Our two centers in Idlib were evacuated and closed sadly by the end of the year due to the military escalation by the Syrian Regime and its allies and the forced displacement of the team.





## 2019 in Numbers

4

Women centers

1548  
Participants





#SaveDLIB



# Programs & Activities

The curricula of our programs and activities have been designed to meet the diverse needs of women on several levels, no matter their nationality or religious background.

## EMPOWERMENT



Educational  
empowerment

Economic  
empowerment

## PARTICIPATION



Leadership training

Awareness-raising  
activities

## PROTECTION



Psychosocial support

Girls' & Child protection

## RESEARCH & ADVOCACY



Conducting research

Campaign



## Syria/ Idlib

"When I was young I dreamt of studying and learning but there was no interest in girls' education in our village. I wish I could have taught my children when they were young... but now after I attended the Literacy course at the Women Now center, I am able to read and write, and I teach my grandchildren."

Radwa, Maarat Al Numaan



#International\_Day\_Of\_The\_Girl

#اليوم\_العالمي\_للفتاة



### Empowerment

This course was designed specifically to support women and girls in female-headed households . it challenges gender stereotypes and norms. We taught a range of skills which women can use in their daily lives to increase their independence and self-sufficiency including skills which are traditionally seen as part of men's roles. The skills were selected depending on the needs of women in the communities we served computer maintenance , self defence, electricity extension.

The workshops were admired and accepted by women and the community, and the turnout was great. Women now is the first organization that offered such workshops in northern Syria

### Participation

Communication skills, Public speaking, Leadership Skills, Management and Supervision, Advocacy and Campaigning, and Negotiation skills. All were presented at both centers in Idlib.





### Protection

We implemented Awareness Sessions at our centers in Idlib, Group Psychosocial Support (PSS) Sessions. These sessions were designed to inform participants of protection risks and provide the tools they need to cope. Topics covered included:

- Trauma, Stress, Shyness and Isolation, Crises in Teenage Years
- Identifying Your Strengths, Self-esteem, Interpersonal Relationships,
- Problem-Solving, Communication skills, Time Management, Decision-Making,
- Types of GBV/SGBV, Child Marriage, Family Planning, Breastfeeding, Childcare, Discrimination between children,
- Explosive Remnants of War, Diseases caused by Water Pollution/Contamination - Safe Water Usage in Camp Settings, Healthy Food



### Participation

“

We implemented socially contentious activities promoting women's political participation and critiquing the normalisation of violence against women. By implementing traditional activities - such as knitting, sewing, hairdressing- we gained the trust of the participants and that helped us to minimise the risk of backlash from the community towards both Women Now and participants in response to our more radical work.

We were also aware that these courses risk entrenching the gender stereotypes we work to counter, and the opportunities to earn a sustainable income from them are limited by the market.

”



## Syria/ Mare', Aleppo

### Participation



Mare' is home to a large number of IDPs with high levels of vulnerability and existing tensions between the host and displaced communities. Women and girl youth (adolescents) face multiple barriers to education and vocational development. In 2019, Women Now established a New Women and Adolescent Girl Safe Space (WGSS) center in Northern Aleppo that provided empowerment courses. Training offered at the center included:

English

IT

Advocacy

as well as **Mentorship** for local level advocacy initiatives aimed at promoting peace-building and community cohesion.





## Lebanon

"My role is not only to learn and benefit from the lessons that Women Now for Development provides, but to support them in spreading awareness in the refugee community. Every Syrian individual must contribute to raising awareness and assisting the refugee community here, so I participated in the Campaign Against Early Marriage."- Aya R.





## Empowerment - Lebanon

Gender Justice and Community Cohesion through Educational and Vocational Empowerment of Women and Girls for Syrian Refugee and Host Communities in Lebanon

### Literacy Courses:

Arabic Literacy is an essential skill which can enable women to access basic rights more easily whether it helps them to earn an income, deal with the authorities or participate in public life

### English Courses:

The courses help women to secure work and enable them to support their children's education as the national curriculum in Lebanon is taught in English, and unlike Lebanese children, most Syrian children do not grow up learning English at home.

### IT Courses:

We use the curriculum for International Computer Driving License (ICDL) course which covers seven core skills in the Microsoft Office suite of software (Word, Excel, Outlook, PowerPoint, Access) as well as using the internet

### Future Building Workshops and Clinic:

CV-writing, cover letters, interview skills, online job searches and applications



# Leadership Academy

## Participation

The main objective of the training was to foster social and political leadership of the trained women, the secondary objective is to support the integration of the participants into the communities where they are currently living and their reintegration on return to Syria, as well as to provide them with the necessary capacities for integration into other contexts in case of resettlement.





## Women and Children Theater

What happens when 600 audience members congregate across two different countries to watch a performance over Skype?

"A one of a kind show – I don't think I will see anything like it again in my life!"

London audience member

In partnership with Seenaryo, "Staging Sisterhood" premiered What's "Far Is Near". Filing into The Palace Theatre in Beirut and London's Southbank Centre, audience members watched theatregoers 3,000 miles away do the same via a live broadcast screening on stage. Staging Sisterhood brought together refugee and asylum seeking women living in London and Lebanon's Bekaa Valley. We were honoured to pilot this exciting new way of making theatre and open dialogue beyond borders.





## Against Child Marriage Campaign

In September we started “lets us keep our childhood” in partnership with Ahel. We recruited two campaign lead organizers, they started building a fact sheet, and they met with a total of 37 men and women to see who shared their values and commitment to the cause. Of which they selected a total of 14 that were recruited into the “core team”.

In November we held Story, Strategy and Structure workshop with the core team to put the strategy, tactics and the timeline of the campaign.

Then the core team started the extension journey in order to have a group of 5 organisers for each core team member.





## Protection

Our Protection programme comprised of Group PSS Sessions, One to One Consultations and Referrals, PSS Awareness Sessions and a Health Awareness programme. Adolescent girls were given the opportunity to design and implement an activity day in an orphanage. We have also implemented Group and Awareness Sessions for adolescent girls. Moreover, We integrated art and puppet theatre into the programme for Children.







**Health Awareness** Nursing , vital signs, measuring blood pressure, intramuscular and intravenous injections, first aid (burns, wounds, drowning, fainting, fractures, shock, loss of consciousness), reproductive health, overview of the bodily systems (circulatory system, muscular system, nervous system) diseases, genetic diseases, vaccines, how to read lab test

**Positive Parenting** How to deal with aggressive behaviour from children, How to deal with Fear in children, Smart phones and risks to children, alternatives to beating children, school drop out

**Children's Programme** Self-Awareness, Recognising/Identifying Emotions, Relationships with Adults, Relationships with Peers, Conflict and Problem-solving, Self-Acceptance, Time Management, Non-Discrimination, My Dream for the Future





## Turkey-Gaziantep

Women Now began the Leadership Programme:

Capacity- Strengthening for Syrian Women Leaders of Tomorrow.

18 Syrian women from different backgrounds who have experience of engaging in political or social issues and show leadership potential, attended the training which consisted of three stages:

**One to One Support Sessions**

**WND Team-building Retreat**

**Leadership Training Programme**



## International Women's Day 2019

Women Now was one of the leaders of the forced displacement campaign #halfosyria along with other Syrian civil society NGOs coordinate by We exist! coalition. A video of women telling their forced displacement stories was produced by Women Now for the campaign on the 8th of March 2019.

The video was screened during a side event at Brussels III conference.

**For full video:**

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1234648083377402&extid=OS1nSyWnw08jUmRX>





Women Now launch its join report with Dawlaty “ Shadow of the Disappeared in Geneva. This was a advocacy opportunity to support two Syrian female relatives of the missing in order to highlight the gendered impacts of enforced disappearance in Syria. We arranged meetings with all relevant stakeholders including representatives of OHCHR and the Commission of Inquiry, the Global Advisor on Restoring Family Links and Missing Persons at the ICRC, and even the UN Special Envoy for Syria, Geir Pederson.





## Forced Displacement 2019

Our two centers in Idlib were evacuated and closed sadly in later 2019 due to the military escalation and the forced displacement of the team.



النساء الآن  
**WOMEN NOW**  
**FOR DEVELOPMENT**

Women Now For Development stands in solidarity  
with civilians all over Syria



## Stories of Displacement

"I'm going to tell the world about what's happening to us. Look out, Saraqib, the warplane is circling.

I pray for peace. How long will this go on for? The nights are not nights and the days are not days. You must always fortify your shelters. You know what our shelter is, what most people's shelter is? The bathroom.

No one is surprised by the sound of children crying or adults yelling. No one sees these massacres. No one notices the smell of blood from Syria. No one sees all the people who are now disabled because of the war.

. When we are proven victorious, we will celebrate all on our own, in Syria, and won't let anyone else participate, just as we were made to mourn alone, when everyone abandoned us."

Mouna- Idlib, March 2019



#SaveIDLIB





## Women Now at UNGA 2019

During the UN General Assembly (UNGA 74) the panel of highly experienced speakers across the humanitarian, development & peace sectors discussed & considered tangible actions needed to respond to the needs of women & girls affected by conflict and crisis. Aisha Dennis of Women Now For Development, spoke powerfully on the need for international humanitarian actors to more meaningfully support and engage local women-focused CSOs as leaders and experts in crisis. She also stressed the fact of how difficult it is for women in emergencies to attend decision-making bodies like UNGA 2019





## 16 Days of Activism Against GBV

25th of November marks the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and the start of the #16Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence.

Women Now led an online and a ground campaign, asking Syrian women, living in active war zones, refugee and IDP camps, as well as supposed safe areas in Syria, what Gender Based Violence means to them.

The testimonies were collected and shared in the form of posters, and a video was shot in Lebanon with the women participants at our center.

The video was titled:

Their Needs are Fundamental Human Rights

For full video:

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1201167836756099>







“At the checkpoint, they asked me to go into a ‘search’ room. I had been out to buy bread. I don’t want to remember that day and that room.”

Maysoon, Muadamieh/ Damascus 2013



## الإستشراق والجندر

## Feminist Knowledge Production

استنادا الى النصوص والفيلم وتجاربكم يرجى الجواب على الأسئلة التالية:

ما هي علاقة الإستشراق بقضايا النساء والجندر ولماذا فهم هذا المفهوم مهم في موضوع انتاج المعرفة وفهم التصورات عن الإسلام والشرق الأوسط اليوم؟

ما هي اهم أفكار ليلي أبو لغد في مقالها "هل تحتاج المرأة المسلمة الى انقاذ؟" هل أبو لغد تفضل النسبية الثقافية على الشمولية؟

كيف تتناول كل من أبو لغد و شندرا مهنتي مسألة "الاختلاف"؟





## Research

Our latest report on “Gender Justice and Feminist Knowledge Production in Syria”.

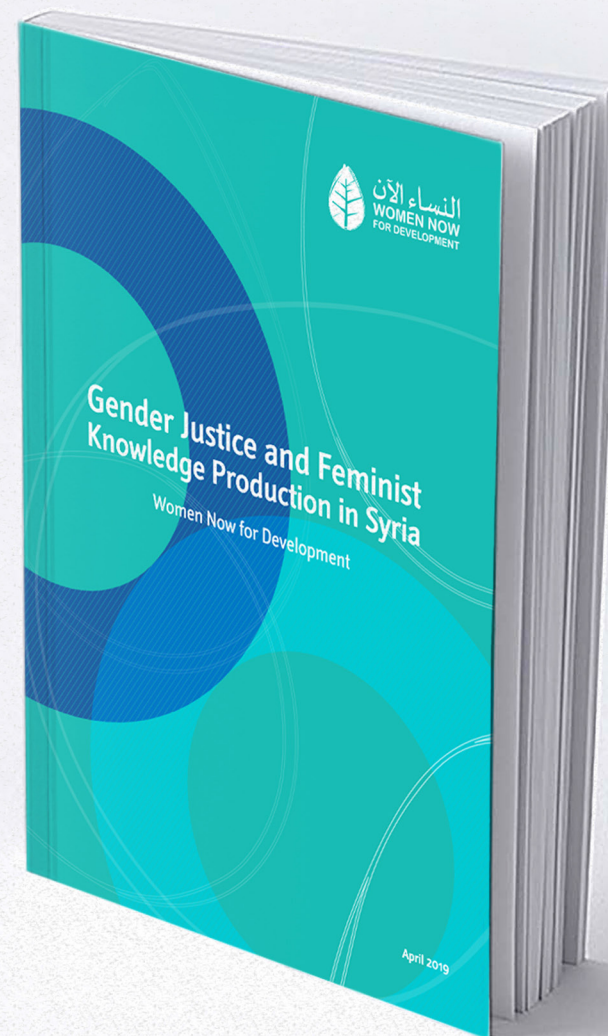
After 8 years of harsh, bloody and intense military conflicts, negotiations between various political powers invoking “reconciliation” and “justice” appear tense and complex. It is clear so far, despite women’s important social and political involvement within Syrian civil society, Syrian women’s specific roles, positionalities and experiences have not yet been entirely taken into account when thinking of a future Syria.

On the road to change this, we produced this research.

Through consultations with Syrian women and female human rights defenders, we have developed this paper in order to shed light on women’s concepts of justice and advance feminist knowledge production.

**For full report:**

<https://women-now.org/gender-justice-and-feminist-knowledge-production-in-syria/>





## Workshop

Under the title “Gender Justice and Feminist Knowledge Production in Syria”. A workshop in Berlin was held to provide the appropriate space, platform and critical feminist tools for Syrian women and activists. It specifically aimed to:

Document and voice Syrian women’s concerns, experiences and needs and put forward their own analysis and understanding of the conflict, and start building the country’s future.

Support the development of grassroots feminist activism as well as alternative and original social and political activism, connecting social, economic and political justice to gender justice.

Emphasise the role of women and feminist activists, not only as representatives of a population group affected by the conflict, but also as primary conflict analysts and knowledge producers.

Develop ways to facilitate feminist thinking and knowledge production

For the workshop video:

<https://women-now.org/feminist-knowledge-production/>

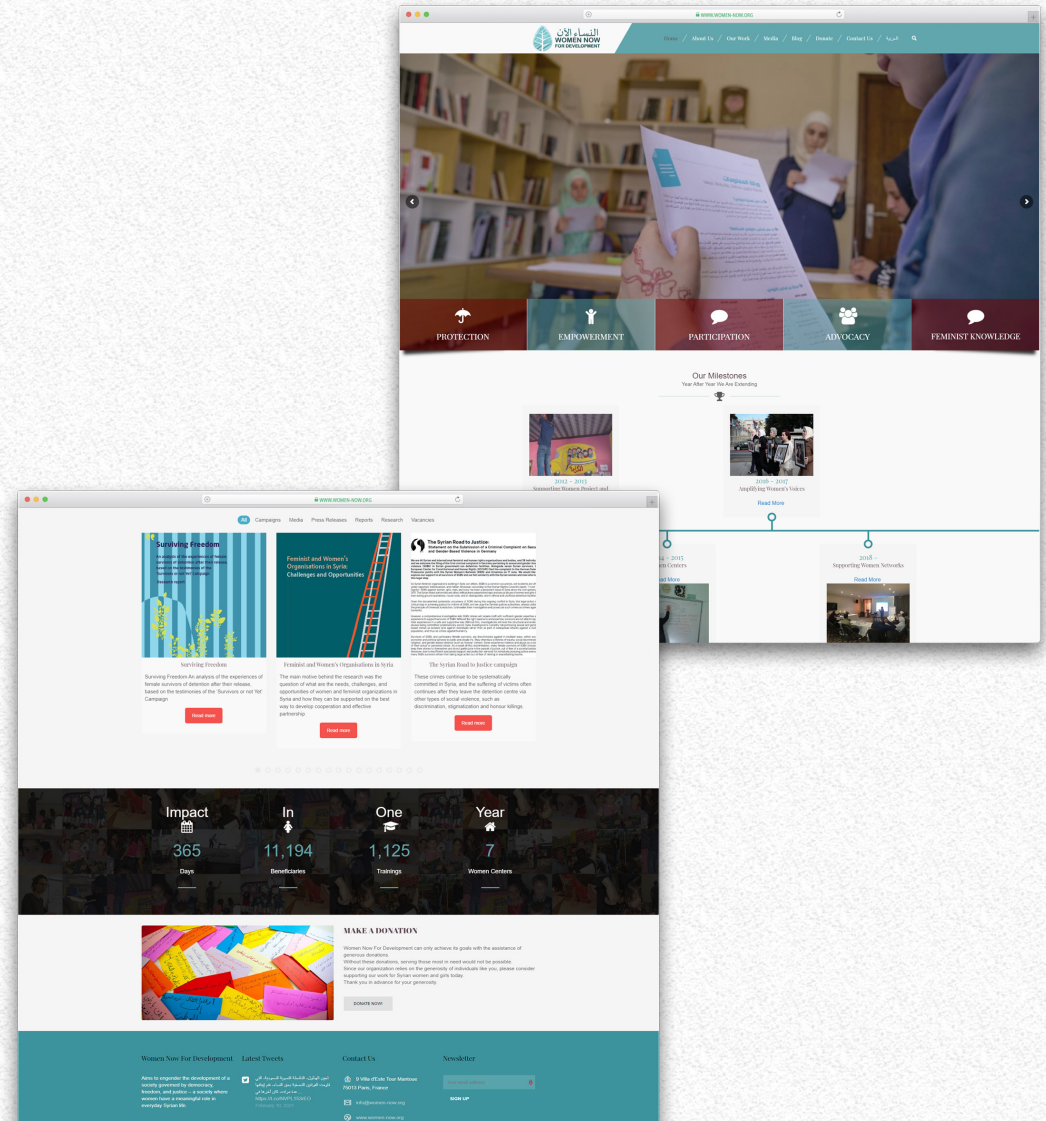




# Women Now Blog

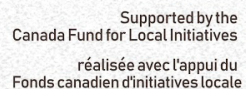
Women now blog is a project for Syrian women to express their stories, thoughts and memories in a professional manner. The blog target women in Syria or in the exile to tell their experiences during the war or the life of refuge, or any stories they want to explain and write. This blog is one of Women now for development projects to empower women and give them the opportunity to express themselves and rise their voices in all aspects of life. It is started in 2017 after journalism training in Syria about editorial principals and journalistic ethics.

Link: <https://women-now.org/blog/>





Thank you for your trust and support!

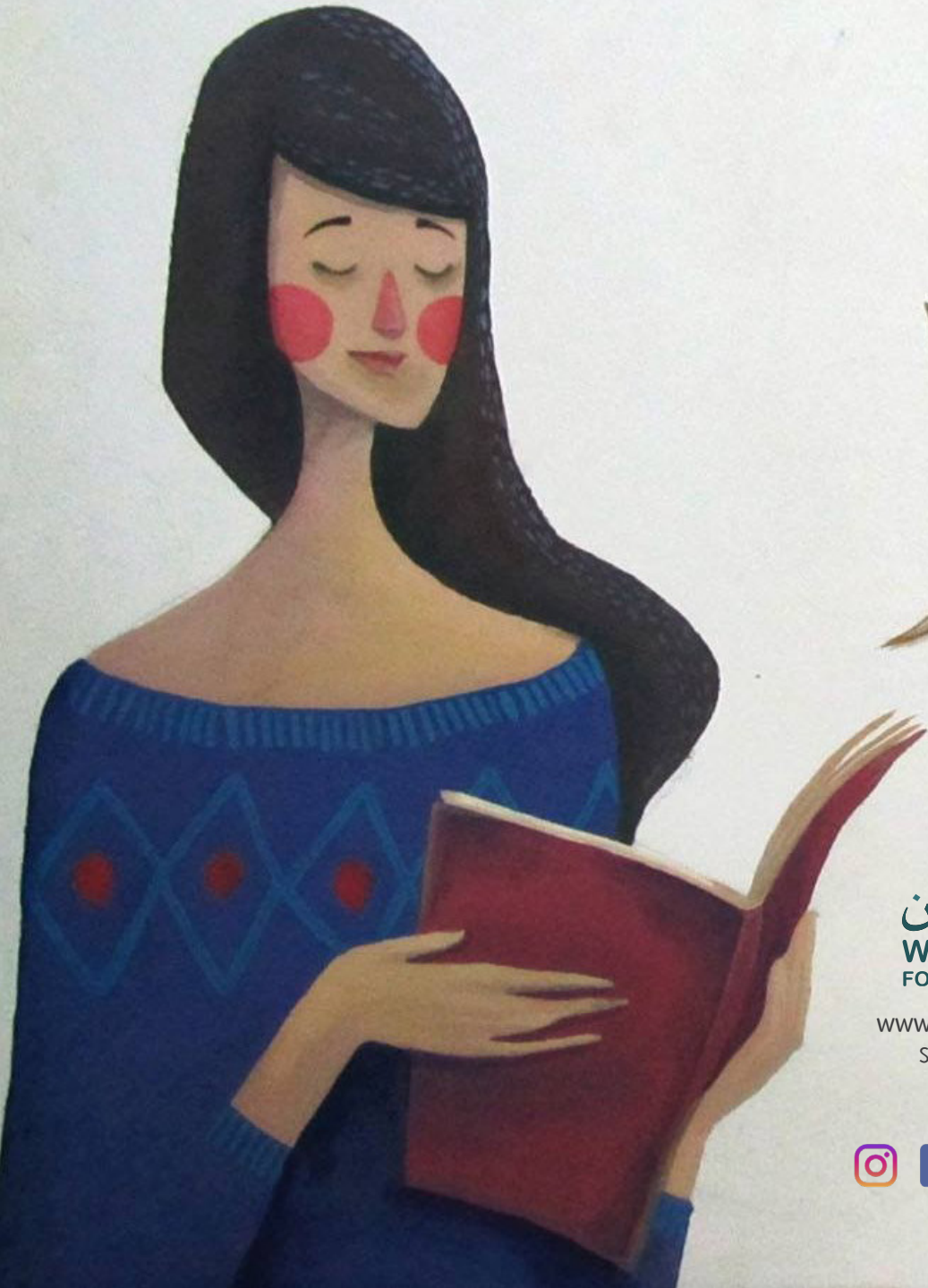


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