

ANNUAL REPORT 2020



النساء الآن
WOMEN NOW
FOR DEVELOPMENT

تسعينين نضال وأمل



Contents

Foreword.....	4
Vision and Mission.....	6
Impact.....	8
Programs & Activities.....	9
Programs.....	10
Empowerment	13
Participation	16
Protection.....	18
Advocacy.....	20
Campaigns.....	25
Research.....	27
Blog.....	31
Contact	32



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Foreword

It might sound strange to talk about “Women Now” in personal terms. It is not what we usually do on occasions that require factual reporting. But for me, the personal is political and the political is personal.

I have for so long been fascinated by messages sent at the dark moments of mankind’s brutal upheavals; messages that continued to see light at the far end of the tunnel. I have been a rebel and turned my back on society at an early age. I would defend my rebellion all over again if I were to relive those days. Yes, I never regretted my decision to break away from societal bonds and traditions. I was lured by the idea of freedom, and by liberating myself from the yoke of servitude. That servitude scared me. Many rebellious women knew it, while both men and women knew the political servitude that enslaved us all. The price we paid was huge. I knew we had to disregard the gully of pain lurking in our souls, which the revolution was bound to leave behind.

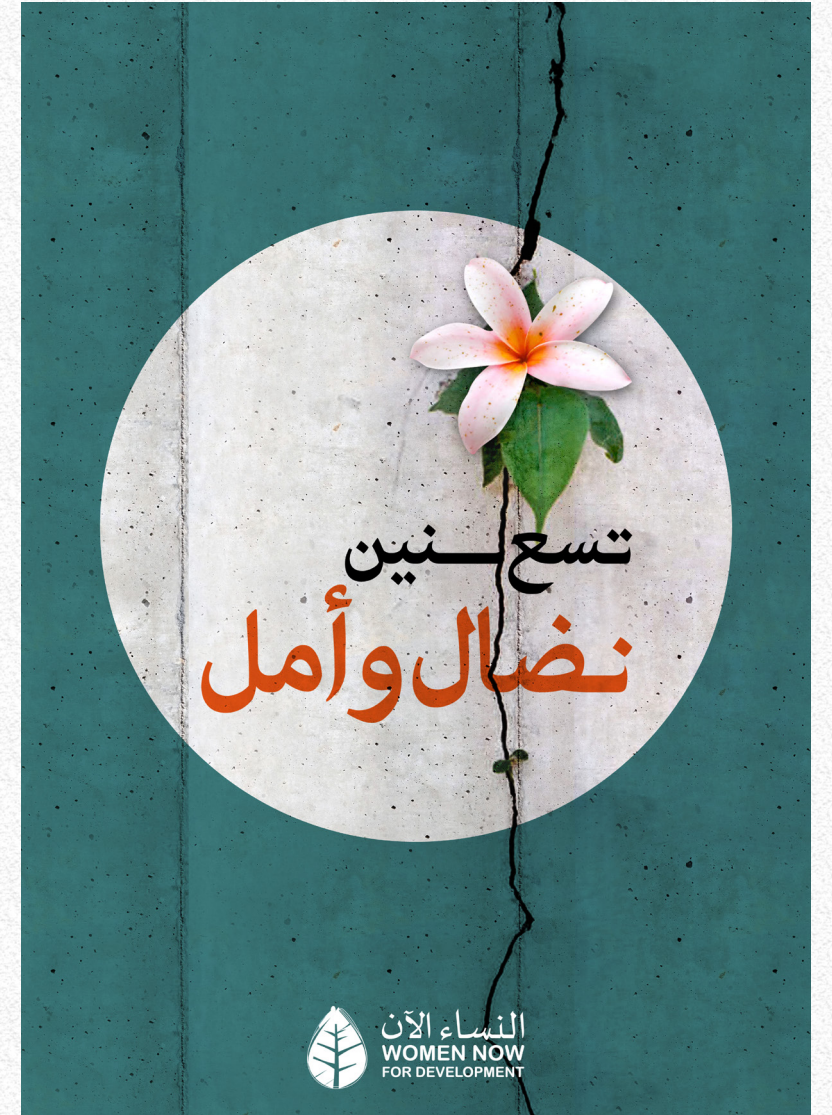
For the full letter:

In the eighth year for Women Now - Women Now for Development (women-now.org)



Samar Yazbek
Founder and President of Women Now for Development

Despite all the circumstances, we continue the struggle and hope towards our goals, we have been taking this road since 2012, and we are still firmly rooted in it by our resilience, our diversity, and our commitment to grassroots work, which is the secret of our success.





Our vision for Syrian society is to secure human rights, freedom, and justice for all.

We understand Syrian women and men to be playing equally meaningful roles in political, social, and economic lives.

We seek to protect girls from all harm by growing up in a peaceful, inclusive society.

Our mission is to initiate programs that empower and protect Syrian women and girls across diverse 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.





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.



2020 in Numbers

3787

NUMBER OF WOMEN
AND GIRLS TRAINEES

Programs & Activities

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.

EMPOWERMENT



Educational empowerment and Vocational Training

Economic empowerment

PARTICIPATION



Leadership training

Feminist Consciousness Activities

PROTECTION



Psychosocial support

Girls' & Child protection

RESEARCH & ADVOCACY



Participatory Research

Campaigns

Programs

Women Now implemented comprehensive programs for women and adolescent girls in different locations in Northwest Syria, encompassing a wide range of activities in the areas of Protection, Empowerment, Participation, and feminist Knowledge.





Educational and Vocational
Endeavour for Women and
Girls in Lebanon's centers

Total participation

1656

Women and girls

Educational and Vocational Endeavour for Women and Girls in Lebanon's centers

Arabic Courses:

- we proposed basic reading and writing courses in order to give our participants the
- chance to participate in public life and knowledge of their basic rights and needs.

English Courses:

- It was one of our main importances to widen women's opportunities in communication
- and job research.

IT Courses:

- it was one of our hardest activities during lockdown because of the lack of computer
- materials in our participant's residences. Our alternative topics were more related to the
- use of smartphones and internet security.

Knitting, Sewing and Handicrafts:

- This activity always gained significant success and importance for our participants.

Hairdressing and Cosmetics:

- This activity was essential for our participants who seek to find jobs in this field.

We offered these activities for women while also providing babysitting rooms for their children in order to reach mothers in our courses.

Empowerment

WE delivered educational programs and vocational skills training which enabled women and girls to pursue their learning despite the destruction and disruption of schooling and earned safe and sustainable incomes.

AMRA 25 years old, who attended a computer maintenance and digital security course said: “During the computer maintenance training, I was able to reboot my neighbour’s laptop after it had broken down and used a proxy to work around bans on Google applications by using the tools I learned in the digital security course. I want to continue to develop myself and my skills in this field by training further, specifically in hardware... I have a passion for this field.”



Supporting Women and Adolescent Girls during COVID-19

We provided our trainings fully online during the lockdown, as this was not the first time for us to teach online, the teams were forcibly displaced and went through much more difficult situations where they were not able to leave their homes in the past.

Through these projects, we directly reached **461** women and **131** adolescent girls. Where many participated in multiple activities, strengthening their capacities on multiple levels. We worked with Syrian Women and Adolescent Girls from different groups including IDPs and those living in underserved rural areas in Syria.



- Some of the courses we offered online and in-person:
- Sewing course, Computer maintenance course
- Project management training
- Arabic literacy and math courses
- Information Technology (IT) Courses
- English courses

Empowerment

The Women Now Leadership Programme

With this program, 18 Syrian women from different religious, ethnic, and professional backgrounds participated. Women targeted through the program, received One-to-One Support Sessions, two days team-building retreat, leadership training, English classes, peer-to-peer learning circles, mentoring sessions, and a tailored internship program. Salam, a 23-year-old mother of a baby girl, who joined the program, said “After I attended public speaking training, my confidence increased. I managed to express myself and my opinion in front of others. At the end of the program, I did a job interview, and I got it! In the children’s room, my daughter was able to merge with the other children”



Participation

We provided online awareness sessions to increase levels of awareness of gender, political and social issues.

We have conducted five online Awareness Sessions via zoom, 66 women participants including 60 IDPs. This course covered Gender and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and Gender and women's rights with a focus on mechanisms relevant to the Syrian context.

Participation

Leadership Programs

The main objective of the training is 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.



AWARENESS AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT SESSIONS

2020 was a challenging year for implementing activities, the constant transition between online and physical activities

However, we continued to offer online sessions, until it was possible to meet again.

The topics of these online sessions were Awareness sessions, Groups Psychosocial Support, One to One Consultations. Where we trained **317** women, **127** adolescent girls, and **40** children.

Protection

PSS staff at Women Now, worked with **260** women and **82** adolescent girls, facing a range of complex issues, such as bereavement, loss of appetite, sleep disorders, fear, shyness, isolation, divorce, and marital issues, psychological abuse, economic abuse, sexual abuse, anxiety about exams/school and low self-esteem.

I Have a Voice

Women and Adolescent Girls who went through this training:

- received Psycho-social support through One-to-One or Group Psycho-social Support Sessions and Awareness Sessions.
- developed coping skills for improved mental health and psychosocial well-being or gained knowledge on protection issues.
- have increased levels of leadership skills and relevant knowledge which will equip them to take on leadership roles within their communities.



Forced Displacement

STEPPING OFF THE GREEN BUS, FINDING STEADY GROUND, AND RECLAIMING THEIR LIVES

Half of the Syrian population are displaced either inside or outside the country and women and children are the majority of displaced people.

So the voice of women needs to be heard about it, based on this perspective, We build this pilot project to support **20** Forcibly-displaced Syrians with technical knowledge on story-telling, advocacy and displacement-relevant laws.

The legal training was designed by our partner Syrian Legal Development Programme (SLDP) in collaboration with the participants with a very interactive approach and was followed with a mentorship program.

As part of our integrated approach of empowerment, psycho-social support was available for participants.



Campaign Against Child Marriages

As part of our advocacy efforts, we continued this project, which was led by the local community who are themselves affected by child marriage and see the negative effects and have an interest in changing mindsets within their own local communities. This makes them champions for the cause (women who have been married early), affected families (mothers - sisters - fathers - brothers), teachers, activists, Lawyers, Syrians, Palestinians, Lebanese, men, and women.

We collaborated with 8 municipalities in Bekaa in the advocacy campaign (Let me Keep My Childhood) against child marriage, collecting the signatures and participation forms of about **800** families in the area



Fatima, 45 years old, opposed marrying her 14-year-old daughter to a 26-year-old relative, but her husband forced the wedding, which led Fatima to divorce him and join the campaign against child marriage. "My daughter faced sexual violence, physical violence, psychological violence, and she entered into depression," recalled the 45-year-old refugee originally from Homs. Her daughter, now 20 years old, is divorced and has a daughter. Today, Fatima's youngest daughter is 14 years old, and "no way she is getting married," she says. Fatima is a campaign lead organizer.





We continue to support the “families for Freedom” movement in their demands for the liberation of Syrian victims of arbitrary detention and forced disappearance. We stand next to them and all women who continue campaigning for justice of their detained and forcibly disappeared relatives.

FEMINIST JUSTICE

Women Now have always believed in the primary role of women in change in Syria. Therefore, it's our priority to document and voice Syrian women's concerns and needs. We also support the development of grassroots-based feminist activism as well as alternative and original social and political activism connecting social, economic, and political justice to gender justice.

Executive director of Women Now, Dr. Maria AL Abdeh delivered on the 23rd of September at the United Nations General Assembly a speech about the Accountability for Human Rights Violations: "Women are denied their basic rights in our patriarchal society and suffer from systemic discrimination in the legal, economic and family spheres."

<https://women-now.org/speech-dr-maria-al-abdeh-delivered-at-the-united-nations-general-assembly/>



Dr. Maria AL Abdeh, Executive director of Women Now

SYRIAN ROAD TO JUSTICE

On June 18th, 2020, a day before the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict, Syrian feminist organizations Badael, Dawlaty, Women Now for Development, and the Syrian Female Journalists Network, as well as The Syria Campaign, launched 'Syrian Road to Justice' campaign. This campaign advocates for greater legal access to justice for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) perpetrated over the past ten years of the Syrian conflict, especially for female survivors who face particular barriers to justice.



Syrian Road To
Justice طريق
سوريا إلى العدالة

SYRIAN ROAD TO JUSTICE



4 reports released by Women Now in 2020:

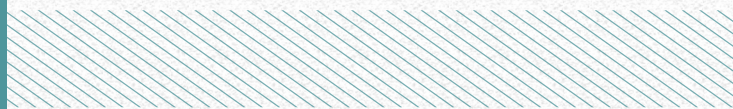
1. The disproportionate impact of Covid 19 crisis on women and adolescent girls in middle Bekaa and Women Now for Development's response

This paper was based on field interviews in order to identify the pandemic crisis on women and girls that we work with within the Middle Bekaa region in Lebanon, on the economic, psychological, and social levels, as well as to respond to their current needs.

For full report:

<https://women-now.org/the-disproportionate-impact-of-covid-19-crisis-on-women/>





2. COVID-19 and Women in Syria

This study was written after interviewing 69 women in Syria in May 2020. The paper aims to point out the rise in women's gender inequality and violence by the pandemic. Also, the increase in women's demands for healthcare and mental health support.

For full report:

<https://women-now.org/covid-19-and-women-in-syria/>

3. Syrian Women's Readings of the Present, Future, and Associated Concepts

This paper was written through Syrian women's words and experiences in times of war and displacement. It shares in-depth perspectives on topics such as identity, peace, violence, militarism, and the role of women in conflict.

For full report:

<https://women-now.org/syrian-womens-readings-of-the-present-future-and-associated-concepts/>

4. Feminist and Women's Organisations in Syria: Challenges and Opportunities

The main question of this research was about the challenges faced by women and feminist organizations and the ways in which they can be supported. The study was made after interviewing 92 individuals and providing data on the work of 76 different organizations and groups in key regions throughout Syria. This research was the result of cooperation between the Global Fund for Women, Women Now for Development, and IMPACT-Civil society research and development.

For full report:

<https://women-now.org/feminist-and-womens-organisations-in-syria/>

5. Surviving Freedom

This study was realized through a cooperation between Women Now and 3ayni3aynak platform. It provided an analysis of the experiences and difficulties of eighty-two female survivors of detention after their release, based on the testimonies of the 'Survivors or not Yet' Campaign".

For full report:

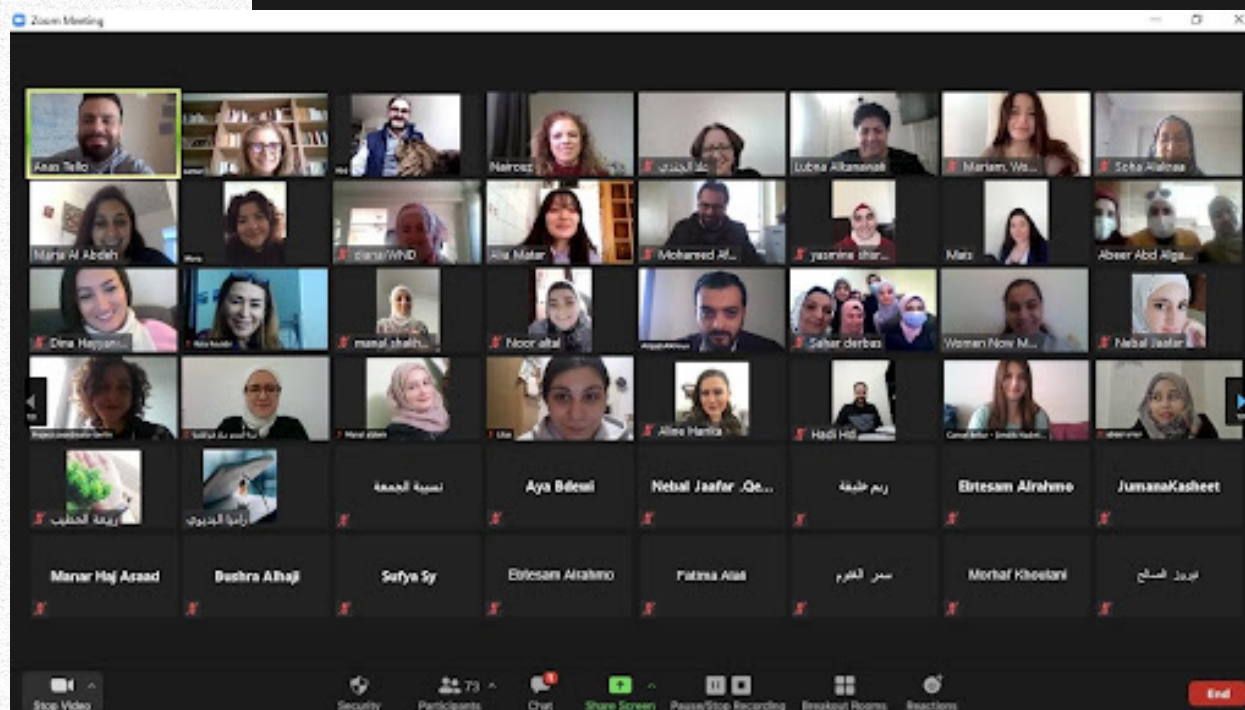
<https://women-now.org/surviving-freedom/>

First meeting for the whole team during the year of Covid 19

At the end of this challenging year, Women Now team managed to meet virtually, for seven sessions, totaling 28 hours.

We discussed the challenges and learning steps we faced, planned our strategies and ideas for the future, and strengthened our internal communication.

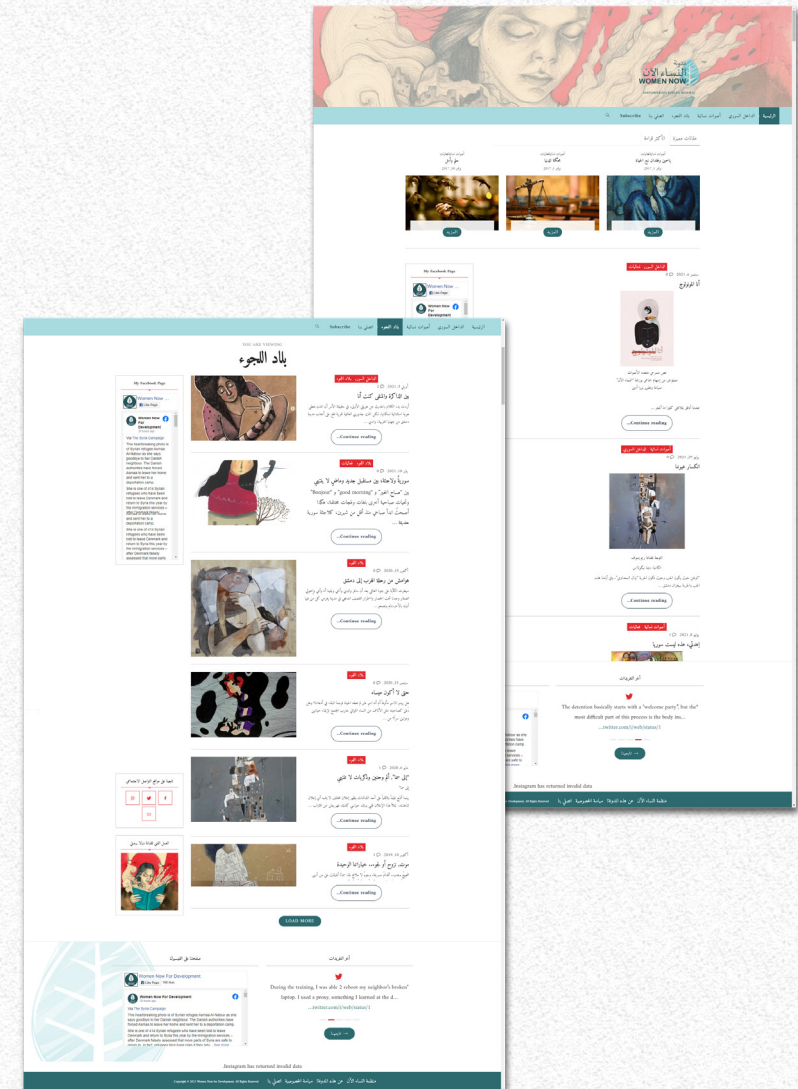
We were around 90 people, gathered for the first time, from Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, and Europe.



Women Now Blog

Women Now Blog is a platform for Syrian women to share their stories, thoughts, and memories. The blog is open for all women living in Syria or in exile to tell their experiences during the war or their lives abroad. This project aims to empower women and give them the opportunity to express themselves by raising their voices in all aspects of life.

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



Thank you for your trust and support!



As well as all of our individual donors



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