



Women Now
For Development
النساء الآن للتنمية

ANNUAL REPORT 2022



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Opening Message from the Executive Director

The year 2022 was a very special one for Women Now for Development (WND), as we celebrated the organization's ten-year anniversary, and collectively recalled both the monumental and small moments, and the beautiful memories as well as sorrowful ones. It was a year marked by reminiscence on a decade filled with so many emotions from the very high to the very low. The year was a time for gathering and recollection-both physically and virtually for our team members to come together and remember the feminist solidarity of years gone by and the wide range of lived experiences.

In my eight years at WND, I have watched it grow from a small group dedicated to supporting local initiatives in specific Syrian geographies to Syria's largest feminist organization. In 2012, we carefully began to develop programs around protection, empowerment, feminist consciousness-raising, and community-mobilizing in response to the emergent needs on the ground. We expanded our outreach and advocacy to stakeholders and decision makers at the highest levels and nourished our understanding of the struggles and experienc-

es of Syrian women through feminist knowledge production. And it is with great pride that I say that despite the immense growth, WND has maintained and enhanced its locally embedded approach and connection to the grassroots as we continue to conceptualize, inform, and implement our approaches with the knowledge of our local communities at the forefront.

Amongst the most important lessons learned from our ten years of practice is the steady commitment to consolidating the women-led/feminist movements on the ground. Our most effective responses came out of locally informed knowledge and leadership. As we look back on the past ten years, we realize that our close connection to our different geographic centers, and the levels of democratization and autonomy, have allowed the whole organization to persevere and bring about better impacts for the communities that we serve. We are convinced that these women-led/feminist movements are the key knowledge-holders on their own conditions/struggles and it is our duty to consolidate and support their



endeavors. And for this reason our new strategy emphasizes a transformative and intersectional feminist approach and a renewed commitment to supporting grassroots initiatives.

Year after year, Syria continues to fall as a priority for governments, donors, and other stakeholders. And as advocates of justice visions that address root causes of mass atrocities, we are well aware that 'ordinary' and extraordinary atrocities continue in Syria despite the fact that aerial bombardment has largely subsided. In the midst of prolonged pain, suffering and diminishing resources, it is often local women-led groups that are responding to the dire needs of their communities through multiple ways. And for this reason, we repeat this message time and again to the international community: to believe in local women actors and to continue consolidating their efforts as we do every day. And by 'believe', we mean to hold confidence in women-led initiatives/feminist movements, provide them with sustained flexible funding, and center agendas on their priorities with the understanding that these responders know what is best for them and their communities.



VISION

Our vision is of a Syrian society in which feminist aspirations become reality and all people realize their full potential with human rights, freedom, dignity, and justice. In such a society, women play a meaningful role in all aspects of life, and girls are protected from harm to develop and grow.



WHAT WE DO



We are a locally embedded feminist organization led by Syrian women. We utilize participatory and transformative methods by empowering women on the ground in their leadership roles. We also contribute to building women-led/feminist movements and enriching feminist knowledge production nationally, regionally, and globally to reach a more just and democratic society.

PROGRAMS

Protection Services

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Services, as well as Response Mechanisms to Gender-Based Violence

Economic Empowerment

Education, Vocational Training, and Micro-Grants

Justice and Accountability

Understanding power, the root causes and gendered impacts of human rights violations, and supporting women in accessing justice and accountability processes

Community Mobilization, Leadership and Movement-Building

Supporting Grassroots Campaigns as well as Women-led and Feminist Movements

Feminist Knowledge Production

Producing situated, collective knowledge that helps better understand structural gendered inequalities with the ultimate goal of transforming power relations

International Advocacy

Amplifying local needs and demands in international arenas

'One Day We Will Become What We Want Be'

ایسٹوڈیو
پوما ماڈرن



'One Day We Will Become What We Want Be'

The year 2022 was a monumental one for Women Now for Development (WND) as it marked the organisation's tenth anniversary encompassing a time of celebration and collective reflection on a decade of perseverance. WND embarked on a reflexive journey of the achievements and challenges of the past ten years: from its continued support of local feminist movement-building and community-mobilization to the expertise acquired from its multiple emergency responses. The contemplation process also entailed harvesting lessons learned from WND's locally driven economic empowerment programs and its ever-growing context-specific mental health and psychosocial support provision. It meant looking back and into the future at its unique approach to advocacy built with local and geography-specific needs/demands in mind and platformed at the highest level of stakeholders. It included tracing the development and institutionalization of the organisation's feminist and participatory approaches to documentation, storytelling, and knowledge production. And it did not stop short of observing WND's commitment to feminist consciousness-raising, perhaps most visible in its approach to justice and accountability, which strives to address the root causes of mass atrocities committed in Syria. The ten anniversary was both an opportunity for reflection and learning as well as a time to reminisce on the feminist solidarity that has helped WND continue its journey despite the unfathomable losses and setbacks.



Samar Yazbik

Novelist, and Founder of Women Now
for Development

Our Story and Approaches

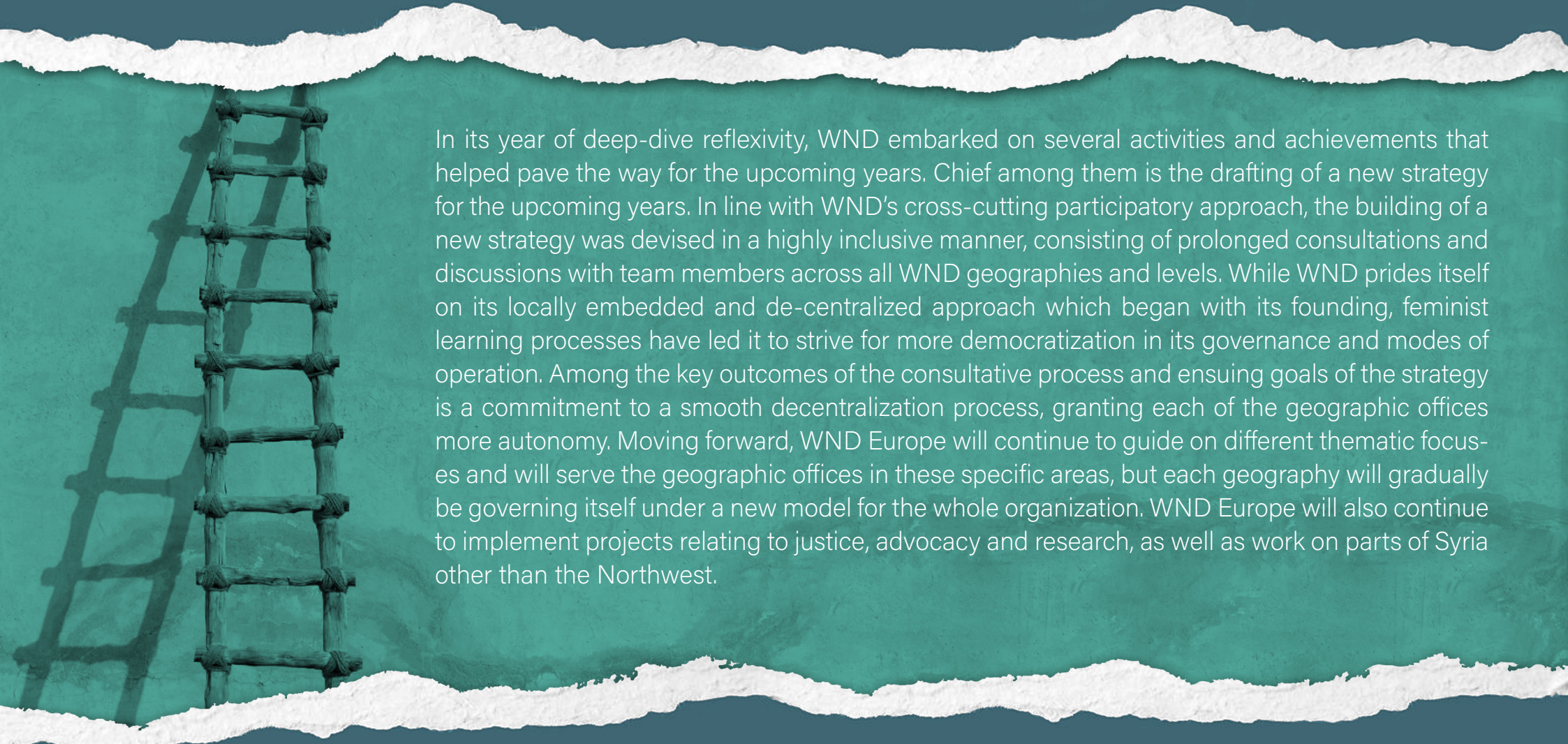
To fully understand WND in its tenth year of existence, one must look back at the organisation's emergence in 2012 in the context of the peaceful Syrian uprising which marked a wave of unprecedented widespread protests and civil society initiatives. While civil society work flourished across the country, it often lacked a nuanced gender perspective, and the priorities and visions of women were often marginalized. With the brutal clamp down of Syrian regime forces and gross human rights violations that wreaked havoc on citizens across the country, there existed a dire need for the meaningful inclusion of women in social, economic, and political processes. And it is during this epoch that WND's support for grassroots women's initiatives in Syria began and eventually grew to become Syria's largest feminist organization.

Despite its continued expansion and the multiple locations of its activities, WND remains a locally embedded organization and grassroots leadership is at the core of all the organizations activities and operational processes. While the organization maintains shared ethos and has streamlined comprehensive policies, each of the geographic safe spaces has developed a unique approach that is both community driven and emergent. And despite the differences and diverse feminist approaches that sprang from the Syrian uprising and developed over the years, WND has managed to build a collective that shares a certain WND culture encompassing women from different generations and backgrounds with a shared sense of solidarity and collective experience.



A Year of Celebration, Reflection, and Recreation

A New Strategy



In its year of deep-dive reflexivity, WND embarked on several activities and achievements that helped pave the way for the upcoming years. Chief among them is the drafting of a new strategy for the upcoming years. In line with WND's cross-cutting participatory approach, the building of a new strategy was devised in a highly inclusive manner, consisting of prolonged consultations and discussions with team members across all WND geographies and levels. While WND prides itself on its locally embedded and de-centralized approach which began with its founding, feminist learning processes have led it to strive for more democratization in its governance and modes of operation. Among the key outcomes of the consultative process and ensuing goals of the strategy is a commitment to a smooth decentralization process, granting each of the geographic offices more autonomy. Moving forward, WND Europe will continue to guide on different thematic focuses and will serve the geographic offices in these specific areas, but each geography will gradually be governing itself under a new model for the whole organization. WND Europe will also continue to implement projects relating to justice, advocacy and research, as well as work on parts of Syria other than the Northwest.





Anniversary Day

On the 10th anniversary of its founding, WND held a team-wide annual conference, which was conducted online so that all members of the organization could participate. The meeting presented a unique opportunity for WND team members to gather and share their favorite memories of their time at the organization. The recollection process involved reliving moments from the early grassroots activism days, the achievements, and developments over the course of the years, as well as the unfathomable losses and setbacks. It included recalling moments experienced together whether during the siege of Eastern Ghouta, or under the aerial bombardment of Maaret al-Numan and Saraqeb, and the ensuing displacement from all these places. Or the days of refuge and fragmentation in Lebanon, Turkey, as well as Europe, where team members sought to reinvent themselves and find new ways of connecting-whether to each other or to the homeland. It involved reminiscing on the first encounters between one another, the acts of solidarity and mutual support, and the conflicts and misunderstandings that are now funny stories. It entailed reliving the friendship, love, and unspeakable pain. After multiple military campaigns that have closed centers and forcibly displaced staff, as well as a pandemic that has kept many members from coming together, it was a much-needed occasion for the whole team to gather in one space, albeit a virtual one.



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_6P2kc1t9xY

A Strategic Retreat



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0LO-cJslVSc&feature=youtu.be>

WND convened a retreat for the purpose of setting its vision, values, and goals for the upcoming period. Also taking place in the aftermath of the healthcare crisis and the political turmoil that have separated the WND geographic bodies throughout the years, the retreat held important symbolic significance for WND members. It commenced at a much-needed time, at both the strategic and psychological level. The retreat brought together WND members from Syria, Turkey, Lebanon, and Europe. Together, the team members created a space to reconnect, reflect on the experiences of the past year, and harmonize the different geographic and thematic efforts to achieve the vision and goals of the new strategy. The meeting served as a launching pad for the strategic planning process how it will be phased and implemented in a smooth and gradual manner. And importantly, the retreat helped WND redefine itself and the core principles behind our existence as a feminist organization led by Syrian women and focused on participatory and transformative methods for the empowerment of women and adolescent girls. It reaffirmed our commitment to the local women-led/feminist movement and to enriching feminist production nationally, regionally, and globally to reach a more just and democratic society. It paved the way for the reiteration of values around solidarity, equity, respect, inclusion, and the meaningful celebration of diversity. It also asserted our belief in transparency, credibility, and accountability, as well as flexibility, investment, creativity, alongside reflexive learning.



Protection:

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
and Responses to Gender-Based Violence



“Working as part of the Women Now Protection team means the opportunity to provide and support safe spaces for Syrian women and adolescent girls. This is significant given the trauma and harm that we’ve experienced over 12 years of conflict. As a Syrian woman who has also endured trauma and hardship, it is also an opportunity for me to give what I have to offer in terms of expertise and experiences.”

Oula Marwa
Protection Manager

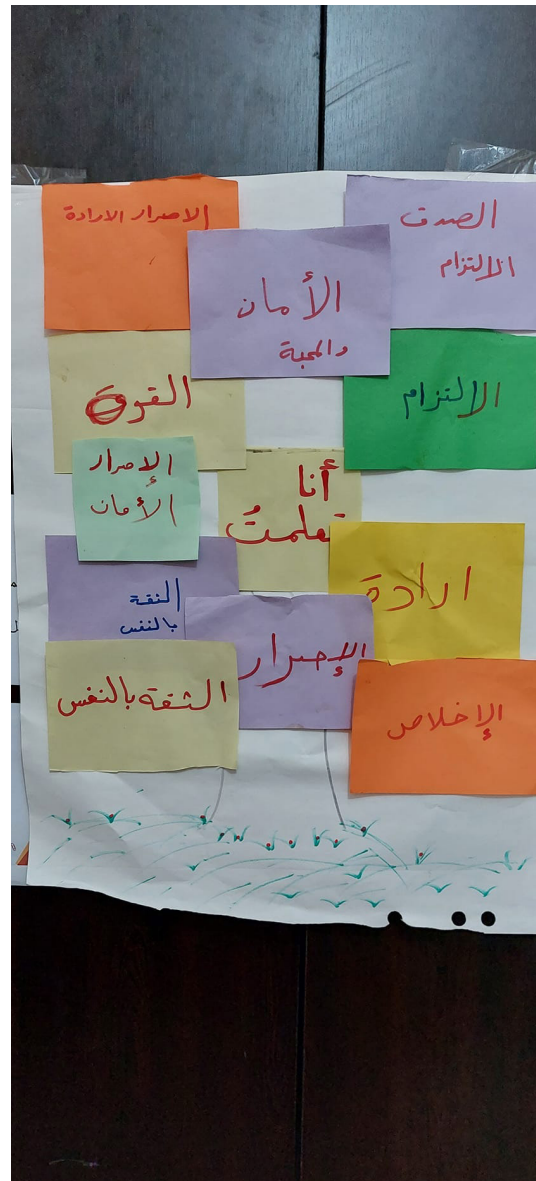


Background and Co-Created Impact

The multiple and overlapping adversities in Syria and Lebanon have led to mental health impacts often most heavily felt by vulnerable female populations. In response to dire necessities, WND proceeded with its mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) provision and successfully delivered psychosocial support and awareness sessions, as well as one-to-one mental health sessions to 1,442 Women and 439 Adolescent Girls in Syria, and to 365 Women and 157 Adolescent Girls in Lebanon.

And beyond numbers, WND continued to co-create localized psycho-social support, developed in close consultation with affected women and adolescent girl communities on the ground. These localization efforts come from the emergent need to build decolonial and feminist approaches to MHPSS based on an understanding of psychological distress as often symptomatic of oppressive and overlapping systems—including patriarchy, a collapsed capitalist economy, prolonged militarization, amongst others. Progress this year culminated in the launch of new activities/programmes in line with the priorities and demands of women and girls in different geographies.

Spotlighting Adolescent and Motherhood in Syria



With the war in Syria reaching its 12th year, it's needless to say that this has meant immense loss of love, livelihood, and land for many. But often overlooked are the formative and integral years of life namely childhood and adolescence that have also been lost. Children and adolescents have had to mature at very fast rates and have often been forced into roles far too early for their years and in violation of their humanity. In a modest attempt to mitigate this affliction, the Syria team worked with teenage girls and their mothers to create a psychosocial support programme for understanding and supporting this period of youth. The program focused on a localized approach to raising awareness of adolescence covering important developmental changes, as well as addressing challenges vocalized by the affected communities.

And because the struggles of motherhood often slip from foremost feminist conversations and care interventions, WND co-created a psychosocial support program for young mothers in the Syrian Northwest. The program is of particular importance as it targets young women who became mothers under the age of 20 and face particular challenges physical, psychological, financial, and social that come with bearing so much responsibility at such a young age. The program focused on the unfathomable difficulties of mothering in protracted conflict, and especially for young women, as well as child development and behavioral issues felt among children during war, amongst other specialized topics.



Rola Alroukbi
Country Director Lebanon

Gender-Based Violence Response Mechanisms: Syria and Lebanon

Like many other protracted conflicts, the years-long political and socio-economic turmoil in Syria has led to an increase in gender-based violence (GBV), often taking place in the private sphere, in the forms of intimate partner and domestic abuse. Accordingly, WND's Syria team formally developed a case management for protection program encompassing emergency cash and cash for protection for women and adolescent girl survivors, as well as psychosocial support and one-to-one sessions. The program's development included the establishment of a well thought out criteria to ensure that those at most at risk can access cash assistance. Lebanon's dire financial and political situation, which disproportionately affects Syrian refugees, and women and girls in particular, has also meant an increased spillover of violence into the home. WND's Lebanon WGSS continued to develop the existing GBV protection programme and assigned a caseworker to each of the safe spaces. WND supported 44 cases in 2022, 24 of which were GBV cases that received recurrent cash assistance, and 16 cases which received emergency cash assistance. In addition, survivors were offered psychosocial support and one-to-one sessions as well as participation in empowerment activities.

A Multiplying Effect: Internal Capacity-Bridging and Beyond

As a holistic feminist organization, we are firm advocates of a cross-cutting protection component for all our programs and for key staff to hold adequate knowledge of fundamental protection principles. In 2022, the Protection team provided the broader team with learning sessions on the concept of a safe space as well as the 'know-how' of dealing with issues that arise within these spaces. To ensure effectiveness, these learning sessions were given periodically and throughout the whole year. Moreover, a Training of Trainers was delivered to over 30 facilitators covering Protection principles for grassroots initiatives operating in rural Idlib. The co-created training supported initiatives in adapting protection components to their context and developing their own Protection/PSEA policies.



Staff Care and Wellbeing



And as WND proceeds into the second decade of a very ardent journey, we are ever-so keen on addressing the urgent well-being and mental health needs of our own staff. Our team members are part and parcel of their local communities, are often survivors of mass atrocities, and are today mentally, physically, and spiritually exhausted after years of sacrifice and perseverance. As such, the Protection team placed a wide-ranging program for staff care/wellbeing and provided tailored support based on the priorities of each geographic team. Staff care included group wellbeing sessions, funding for individualized self-care, as well as one-to-one mental health sessions with specialists. All these developments were encompassed in a draft Staff Care and Wellbeing Policy established in 2022.

Empowerment

Education, Vocational Training, and Micro-Grants



Reem Haswani
Economic Empowerment Manager

"When I joined Women Now, I was in a state of despair with the sector and the work within it. However, WND had a different culture and space. Self-care, care for each other, and our communities are the driving force of our work. Working within this supportive space helped me regain my ability to dream of a better future for all Syrian women and men."

Background and Co-Created Impact

With prolonged socioeconomic deprivation affecting both Syria and Lebanon, and international funding simultaneously decreasing, poverty continued to wreak havoc on Women and Adolescent Girls in both countries. As such, WND prioritized the innovation and expansion of economic empowerment in response to the exigencies of each geography, despite the admittedly small yield of these practical survival mechanisms in the face of appalling structural realities. But it is the affected communities who demand for the continuation of these modest economic interventions as they struggle to make their ends meet every day.

During this year, our WGSS in Syria and Lebanon developed educational courses around Arabic literacy, English and Turkish languages, mathematics, and IT courses. Vocational training encompassed sewing, make-up, and hairdressing, amongst other activities based on studied markets and participant priorities. The total number of 569 Women and 356 Adolescent Girls that participated in economic empowerment activities in Syria and 608 Women and 328 Adolescent Girls participated in Lebanon.



Syria...



While WND has always co-created empowerment spaces with women and adolescent girl leaders within their communities, this year, the outreach of activities in Syria expanded to marginalized communities in an internally displaced persons (IDP) camp in the Northwest. Residents were forcibly displaced from all parts of Syria as a result of draconian military campaigns and now live in IDP camps in Idlib under appalling conditions. Women and adolescent girls residing there are particularly vulnerable to abject poverty and multiple forms of GBV. Delivered at the camps themselves, the activities were directly responsive and tailored to meet the emergent needs of displaced women and their broader communities. After holding consultations, WND provided sessions to support the planning and development of the participants' local business initiatives, consolidate their financial acumen, as well as enhance the numerical literacy of non-literate women. WND also provided micro-grants to qualified individual participants. One participant, Maryam, who took part in the co-created training program reported on the activity bringing limited albeit important impacts. This is not only because of the financial skills she gained, which have helped her improve her hairdressing business. But she also stressed the community that she built through this prolonged mentorship, and the relationships she fostered, which have slowly helped pull her out of social isolation and emotional distress.

We also expanded our work and supported women's rights and local leadership in Northeast Syria, as well as in regime-held areas where we bolstered initiatives focused on women's economic empowerment initiatives and MHPSS. Moreover, we partnered with a local Syrian initiative to produce various custom-made accessories that helped us celebrate and memorialize WND's ten-year anniversary.

Lebanon...



With daily struggles and setbacks eclipsing so much of the lives of Syrian refugee women and girls, the pursuit of art and entertainment has become a far-fetched luxury for many. As such, WND Lebanon focused on establishing art as a standalone activity in the WGSS. Working with an instructor, participants chose to train and pursue visual arts the results of which were showcased at an exhibition at the WGSS.

WND also focused on consolidating feminist interventions around the topic of the care economy by working with women health-care workers in Lebanon and helping customize care solutions for their much-overlooked needs. Working in collaboration with previous healthcare sector workers, WND supported Syrian and Lebanese women with a plan to establish a nursery to support the workers and their children. The group was provided with financial support which helped them better organize and coordinate with authorities to gain recognition and legitimacy.

Supporting Women's Leadership and Movement-Building



Lubna Al-Kanawati
Deputy Director

"I am the feminist I am today because of Women Now. The experience that I gained, the women on the ground that I met and worked with, and the problems that we faced together, have helped shape my definition of feminism."

Background



As Syrians continue to face multiple calamities, from socioeconomic deprivation and collapsed state services, to enforced disappearance and forced displacement, to authoritarianism and violent extremism, WND is adamant on sustaining its long-standing tradition of supporting the leadership of women on the ground. It is often women's social care interventions that are keeping communities together against the daily destruction of the fabrics of society. WND works collaboratively to uphold women's movements and grassroots initiatives in desired areas of expansion, be it the nourishment of personal skills or enhancement of community work taking place in local contexts. Given its history as a locally embedded organization and its years of experience, WND is careful to provide support that helps consolidate but does not strip the movements/initiatives from their feminist emergent nature.

Syria...



In Syria, WND supported the work of six Women-led Initiatives (WLI) in the Northwest, some of whom were in IDP camps, as well as within the broader population. The initiatives were selected via a carefully thought-out criteria intended for groups who are leading change in their communities but face challenges accessing larger grants due to their small size. The focus of the groups spanned different types of social care interventions within their communities from community awareness raising campaigns to localized educational activities to emergency responses. In addition to financial support, WND worked with the WLIs to co-create protection sessions through contextualizing the concept of Women and Girls Safe Space and implementing it. While WND is adamant on promoting protection principles, it does so in close collaboration with local partners so that concepts and knowledge are tailored to bring about tangible impact. Other sessions revolved around strategic planning, community mobilization, and power relations and gender roles in society. WND also offered technical training on financial management, HR, and MEAL to support the initiatives' internal function, growth, and sustainability.

Lebanon...



In Lebanon, support entailed initiating a second phase of a leadership project intended to strengthen the technical and financial capacities of WLIs. Based on the priorities of the groups, WND provided guidance on strategic planning as well as organizational and financial management with the aim of strengthening the groups' sustainability, independence, and ability to grow without losing their grassroots footing within society. A total of five initiatives received flexible seed funding to pursue their desired activities. WND also embarked on a leadership project with new women-led grassroots initiatives operating in Aarsal, Lebanon, a geography that is largely marginalized, underserved and hard-to-reach. And as per groups' desire to influence systemic issues, seven sessions were held with both Lebanese and Syrian women concerning their strategies for public participation.

Virtual



During the past year, WND implemented a virtual project with Syrian women residing in Syria's neighboring countries which involved critical engagement and capacity-bridging around feminist leadership. The project collaboratively supported 40 local women leaders interested in enhancing their knowledge and skills on leadership and advocacy through co-created feminist consciousness-raising training materials and sessions as well as discussions with feminist experts on various topics. Sessions included topics such as human rights and women's rights, gender and power relations, feminist theories and intersectionality, transformative leadership, amongst others. While these topics are considerably theoretical, WND prides itself on the learned ability to deliver important yet difficult concepts to women who have not had the privilege to access higher education.

Community Mobilization



Anas Tello
Advocacy and Campaigns Manager

"Every time Women Now advances its approach to community organizing, I become more confident that it is an effective and crucial step for consolidating people's agency. Indeed, Syrian civil society succeeded in taking back forms of community agency from the state's control, but often monopolized it without passing it on to local communities. Community organizing is about returning power to the people."

Let Us Keep Our Childhood Campaign



The adversities of Syrian refugee communities in Lebanon are multiple and overlapping, with communities having fled heinous structural violence and moving into localities filled with destitute and insecurity. At these localities, refugees often live in dire poverty, with many residing in camps under appalling conditions, where they are subjected to all sorts of harassment and violence, including deportation by authorities in Lebanon. Women and adolescent girls are particularly vulnerable, and it is in part because of these deteriorating conditions that child marriage has increased. And the knowledge of how to effectively engage societies to counter this egregious human rights violation lies in the hands of those most affected by it.



Accordingly, WND is committed to sustaining its now four-years-long relationship with Let Us Keep Our Childhood, a grassroots campaign based in the Central Bekaa Valley, Lebanon. This locally embedded social intervention is spearheaded by individuals who are either survivors of child marriage or at risk of it. It is predominantly led by women and adolescent girls, followed by men and adolescent boys. Campaign members are mostly from the Syrian communities in the Bekaa, but also from Lebanese and Palestinian communities. Over the years, the campaign has utilized and developed methods of community organizing and participatory leadership, which intersect with WND's transformative feminist approach and strong conviction in the power of local communities to bring about social change. The campaign has so far succeeded in canceling 109 engagements and postponing 90 engagements. Moreover, it also put pressure on the Sharia Court to publicly commit to activating a law against child marriage and punish informal clergy that allow it.



In 2022, WND dedicated much of its support to the campaign's development of a new strategy, centered on mobilizing adolescent girls in contrast to the previous focus on mobilizing fathers, and men more broadly, against child marriage. The strategic approach has shifted in attempt to consolidate the feminist underpinnings of the campaign and further center grassroots mobilization and leadership on those most likely to bear the consequences of child marriage. Moreover, WND supported the publication of a case study that showcased the campaign's work from 2019-2021 and provided evidence-based analysis of its transformative impact and the importance of its continuation.

Other Efforts

WND continued to slowly integrate the tactics of community mobilization in other aspects of its work, though these efforts have not yet culminated into a fully developed vision or project. There are slow but steady endeavors around building a community-mobilization unit in both Lebanon and Syria focused on training local leaders to build strategies and practices from the outset of conceptualization to implementation. During 2022, Women Now and local communities in the Syrian Northwest envisioned a project around the utilization of the community-mobilization to counter gender-based violence, including domestic violence. And given WND's years-long partnerships with grassroots victim associations, we have provided Families for Freedom with support on strengthening a community mobilization approach as well as delivered training to the Caesar Families Association through a co-created workshop.

التضامن النسوي طريقنا...
يوم المرأة العالمي

Justice and Accountability



Mona Zeineddine
Former Advocacy Manager

"We have worked tirelessly on expanding our understanding of justice beyond the court. Working with women and feminists on the ground, we assessed how justice is very much about the relations within the family, the neighborhood, and the broader community. Justice and a durable peace are intertwined and are not possible without comprehensively addressing the inequalities between genders, classes, ethnicities, and other categories, and all the intersections between them."



Local Syrian and international entities that formally designate their work as justice and accountability efforts pertaining to Syria have largely focused on documentation, investigations, and litigation initiatives. The small albeit important victories achieved by these efforts grew out of local victim associations and with the advocacy and perseverance of women-led groups in particular. WND prides itself on having consolidated these endeavors and continues to think collectively on new pathways of support. While the outcomes of these mechanisms and initiatives should be hailed, WND focuses its work with local women communities on the exploration and expansion of the concept of justice and ways to achieve it. Delving into the structural underpinnings of mass atrocities committed in Syria, we realize that they did not emerge from a vacuum but are the result of overlapping systemic violence that pre-existed conflict.



With components of feminist consciousness in mind, WND and local communities aimed to better understand and contextualize Housing, Land, and Property (HLP) rights from a gendered perspective, given that violations of these rights particularly affect women. The project targeted different Syrian geographies, including the North, East, and West, and encompassed multiple partners including WND. As part of its role, WND co-produced learning materials around HLP rights with a focus on the intersection of HLP and gender. The material was created by lawyers and specialists in collaboration with WND. Facilitators identified forcibly displaced women in the Northwest of Syria and invited them to join groups to help bridge capacities regarding awareness of HLP, and more specifically HLP rights in Syria, HLP violations and their gendered impacts, gender in everyday life, as well as transitional and transformative justice. Women expressed a considerable multiplying effect in the aftermath of the project, with some providing awareness sessions to other women in camps and others integrating new knowledge gained into the initiatives that they lead.

WND's justice efforts have also extended to Northeast Syria, where we work with community-led initiatives on creating feminist interventions for countering violent extremism. Rather than focusing on de-radicalizing individuals, these interventions work on addressing the needs of the community economic and psychosocial that in the long-term help avert extremism.

As aforementioned, WND continued its in-depth support for survivor/victims by collaboratively developing a psychosocial support program specializing in the topic of complex bereavement, which is and of itself an expansion of justice. Such a program developed out of the need for further contextualized development of psychosocial support driven by the particular and emergent issues within communities affected by enforced disappearance. This was largely developed through WND's support for Families for Freedom where the topic of sudden loss and complex bereavement proved to be a dire issue for which little advanced psychosocial support existed. In addition, WND has also supported a total of six victim/survivor associations in 2022, providing co-created capacity building and technical support.

Feminist Knowledge Production



“Establishing a department for feminist knowledge production is a realization of a personal dream of mine as well as a collective aspiration here at Women Now. Our goal is to be able to speak and write outside of prescribed political, social, and academic norms and to experiment together around how to do so. Through trial and error, we learn and advance our concepts and tools. We aim to write with the words of Syrian affected communities, to constructively criticize, and to unearth a feminist history of realities and dreams that have until now been buried deep into the ground.”

N.H.
Research Manager

Women Now's Feminist Research Unit (FRU) is primarily concerned with the production of participatory research that bridges the gap between feminist theory and Syrian women's needs, demands, and aspirations. The unit relies heavily on intersectionality, stand-

point theory, and de-colonial concepts in its analysis, and utilizes oral history, discourse analysis, participant observation, feminist ethnography, as well as interdisciplinary and integrative research approaches. In the year 2022, the FRU hired a full time Research Manager who consolidated a unit strategy and worked on institutionalizing the research methodology.

WND also launched the 'The Justice of Places' research project, focused on the narratives of Syrian women grappling with forced displacement. The project aimed to create an alternative path to the current mainstream narrative around the war and mass crimes committed in Syria. Using storytelling as our compass, the FRU carried out 27 interviews with displaced women from various Damascus suburbs, seeking to unravel a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the impact of forced displacement. The project aimed at the meaningful exploration of displacement and how it permeates every aspect of life particularly affecting the lives of vulnerable women. Each of the stories transcribed in 2022 became a vital piece of this alternative narrative-highlighting not just the challenges faced, but also the resilience and strength that emerged from these experiences.

الشخصي سياسي دليل تدريبي

جاء هذا الدليل إنطلاقاً من إيمان المنظمة بأهمية العمل على الإنتاج العربي النسوي، لا سيما في ضوء قلة الموارد العرفية التي كتبت بأقلام نسوة باللغة العربية وأثبتت من تجارب النساء الشخصية في المنطقة العربية. وتُشدد على كلمة "التجارب الشخصية" لأن هذه المواد وما تحتويها من أمثلة تتبع من الواقع بشكل مباشر ومن معاشنا اليومي كنساء ومما نواجهه من جميع أشكال العنف المباشر أو الهيكلي على اختلاف تقاطعاته وتأثيراته على حيواتنا، سواء

ضمن أسرنا أو في فضاءات العمل أو في المجتمع. لذلك نؤمن بأن الشخصي هو سياسي بامتياز لا سيما حين يتعلق بحياة النساء والفئات المهشمة سياسياً ومجتمعياً

Women Now For Development
النساء الآن للتنمية

The FRU has assumed responsibility for the research component of the HLP rights project. We carried out nearly 16 focus group discussions with women from Ez-zaz, Maree, Salqeen, and Sarmada. Subsequently, all the FGDs were meticulously transcribed and analyzed. The initial draft paper, titled “My Property is My Right” was submitted for review in December. Furthermore, the FRU Manager assumed the position of a Gender Consultant for the whole project. Her primary responsibility is to ensure that the writing of research papers and the implementation process are gender-sensitive and contextually relevant. This involved conducting training sessions on gender concepts, integrating gender considerations into program activities, instructing on feminist research writing, and implementing feminist research methods. Additionally, she oversaw the review

of all documents generated by the partners, ensuring that the content demonstrated a critical understanding of the context and incorporated gender sensitivity in both design and analysis.

In collaboration with the University of Vienna, WND published ‘A Holistic Approach to Survival: Transforming Research Strategies in Contexts of War and Conflict Zones.’ By foregrounding Syrian women’s readings, analyses, and strategies of research, WND proposed a ‘holistic approach to survival’ as a transformative research strategy under the conditions of mass displacement and war. Using its own research experiences, WND demonstrated how such a transformative strategy relies on creating a collective space of reflection between (field) researchers and interview partners. Because of shared trust and closeness, women were able to create spaces of resistance that rendered the existence of counter-narratives possible, as can be impressively demonstrated in the emergence of the grassroots women-led victims association, Families for Freedom. Knowledge producers united around issues such as enforced disappearance and foregrounding of women’s voices in public debates, with the collective leading the process of research and defining its purpose and strategies.

Also in 2022, WND published research that holistically examines the situation of one of the most vulnerable groups in conflict contexts - adolescent girls- in the Northwestern areas of Syria. More specifically, the study aimed at better understanding the life of adolescent girls from an intersectional and contextual perspective by exploring possible risks and protective factors experienced by the girls within their community as well as examining the existing multi-sectoral response addressing their needs.

And finally, WND published the 'Women Safe Spaces as Facilitators for Justice Visions in the Syrian Context' research paper based on a participatory project designed and implemented in 2021-2022. This paper studied justice from the perspective of a select group of Syrian women and aspired to (re)define 'safe spaces' and explore whether Women Safe Spaces (WSS) can be viewed as venues that give rise to different perspectives on justice and facilitate transformative effects. Feminist-facilitated WSS can provide participants with a modicum of protection, helping them connect with other women with similar experiences and share anecdotes, express opinions, challenge one another, and receive and provide support more readily. The safe space allowed project participants to transform their thoughts and consciousness and helped cultivate dialogues that developed into critical discourses on human rights violations endured in Syria and women's experiences of the conflict.

International Advocacy



Maria Al-Abdeh
Executive Director

"Like all our work, our advocacy efforts aim to create platforms and to bridge gaps between the international arena and local priorities and demands. Rather than being 'a voice for the voiceless,' we aim to support and amplify the already existing strong opinions and viewpoints of women and feminist movements on the ground to ensure that they reach the strongest stakeholders."

Through a consolidated advocacy strategy, WND maintained efforts around bridging local needs and demands at various levels of influence and decision-making. This took place through different events including panel discussions, conferences, dialogues, and interventions, in the hope of sensitizing stakeholders to act in line with the priorities on the ground.



During this year, WND attended the first Syria-specific conference on HLP, hosted by The Day After, where it advocated for an intersectional gender perspective to help understand the root causes of why women experience HLP violations differently, to effectively address them. WND supported a victim-led campaign for establishing a UN mechanism concerning Syria's forcibly disappeared. We attended several meetings during which we pushed for a survivor-centered approach as well as shed light on the gendered impacts of disappearance.

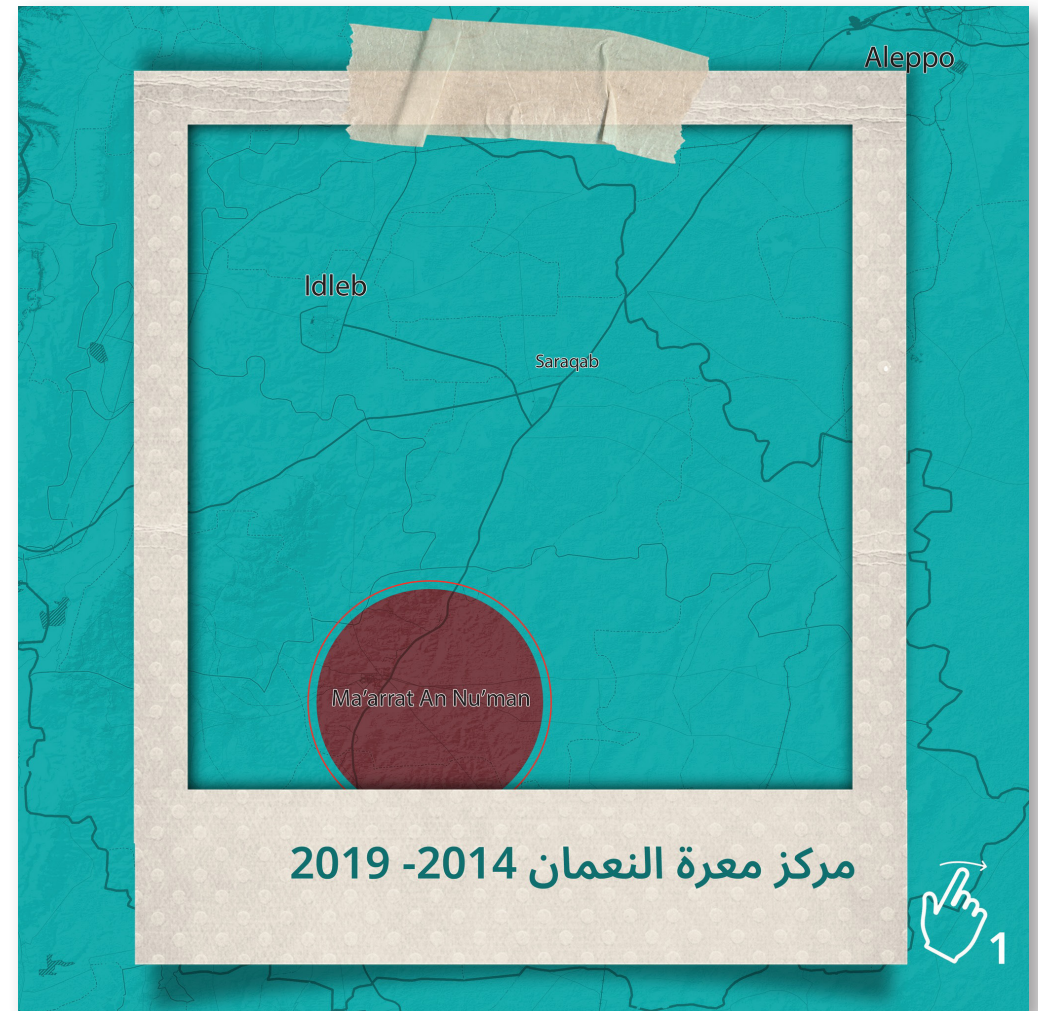
As for the 2022 Brussels conference, WND took part in numerous dialogues and participated in a panel on Syrian refugees in Lebanon, as well as two side events the first concerning localization and the second on combating violent extremism through localized feminist approaches. Moreover, WND participated in a side event focusing on return scenarios from an intersectional gendered perspective.

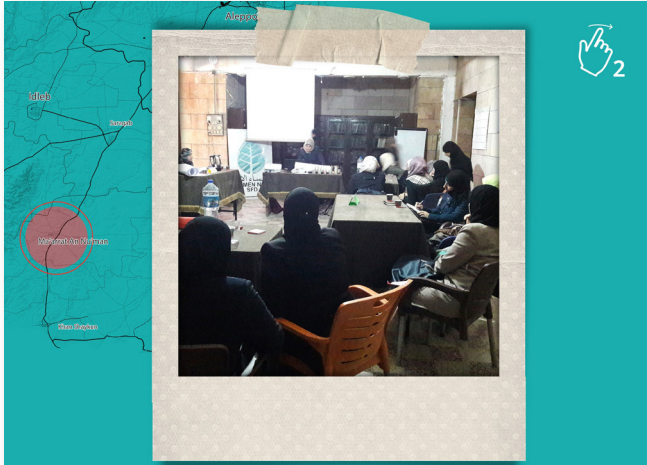
In June of 2022, we joined a live webinar with Al Asfari institute to discuss WND's work on shifting mindsets particularly on the topics of political participation, leadership, and justice. Also in June, WND participated in the first Association of Middle Eastern Women's Studies in Beirut, organized by FES. The conference hosted feminist scholars from across the MENA region to present their work through various panels as well as practitioners to help bridge the gap between academia and activism. WND also took part in the live webinar for the launch of the report *Deadly Disinformation*, which demands that social media companies protect Syrian human rights defenders from disinformation, hate speech, and abuse on their platforms.

Moreover, WND participated in a webinar organized by Impunity Watch, where Deputy Director Lubna Al-Kanawati shared her experience as a Syrian feminist and activist and provided recommendations for cementing solidarity with the people of Ukraine, and how the international community can improve its response.



Meetings were also held with several heads of diplomatic missions in Beirut during which possibilities for cooperation were discussed. This includes the French ambassador for the Syrian file and the Director of the Irish Aid fund via Trocaire. WND Lebanon also met with the President of SIDA, the Swedish ambassador, and the Swedish Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, as well as the UK Special Envoy for Syria, and the British Minister of Development. As for networks and coalitions in Lebanon, our old alliances continue and WND recently established a new one with The Lebanese Feminist Platform with the support of UN Women.





افتتح مركز النساء الآن في معرة النعمان في شهر آذار من عام 2014، وتم إغلاقه في شهر كانون الأول من عام 2019 بسبب التهجير القسري وسيطرة قوات النظام السوري على المدينة. خلال فترة نشاطه، قدم المركز خدماته لما يزيد عن 6500 امرأة وفتاة.



قدم المركز ورشات عمل ومحاضرات تتناول مواضيع اجتماعية وتمكين نسوي وتعليم، كجلسات الدعم النفسي، والتوعية بصحة النساء وسرطان الثدي ودورات محو الأمية ودورات اللغة الإنكليزية وصيانة الحاسوب وصناعة المواد الأولية لتلبية الاحتياجات اليومية.



في عام 2016، قدمت المدربة نعمت بدوي دورة مهنية للفتيات والسيدات اللواتي يعانين من إعاقة سمعية ولكن لشدة القصف أجبرنا على إيقاف النشاطات في المركز مرات عديدة واضطر العديد من الأهالي إلى ترك المدينة.

Communications



Zeina Kanawati
Communications Manager

“For the past decade, my involvement with the Women Now team has imbued my life with purpose. It has enriched my understanding of feminism and instilled in me a profound appreciation for solidarity. While I lament the necessity of enduring the traumas of war, our collective strength enabled us to confront, discuss, share, and preserve these experiences. As a Syrian woman, I couldn’t imagine a more fitting place to be than alongside the Women Now team.”



تؤكد النساء الآن على استمرارها في العمل من أجل حقوق النساء في جميع أيام العام ودعمها لإيصال أصوات النساء والفتيات السوريات في الداخل والخارج رغم اختلاف ظروفهن.

يوم المرأة العالمي



في مثل هذا اليوم عام 1908، خرجت الآلاف من عاملات النسيج في شوارع نيويورك للاحتجاج على ظروف عملهن اللاإنسانية. حملت النساء قطعاً من الخبز اليابس وباقات من الورد في خطوة رمزية لحراكهن واخترن شعاراً لهن "خبز وورد"

يوم المرأة العالمي



من أهم مطالب هذه التظاهرة، تخفيض ساعات العمل وتوقيف عمالة الأطفال ومنح النساء حق الاقتراع. شكلت مظاهرات "خبز وورد" بداية تشكل حركة نسوية داخل الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية وانضمت إليهن نساء من الطبقات الاجتماعية الأخرى تطالبن بالمساواة والإنصاف والحقوق السياسية.

يوم المرأة العالمي



في العام التالي، بدأ الاحتفال بهذا اليوم كيوم المرأة العالمي تكريماً لخروج مظاهرات نيويورك، وقد ساهمت النساء حينها في دفع الدول إلى تخصيص هذا اليوم للاحتفال بالمرأة على الصعيد العالمي.

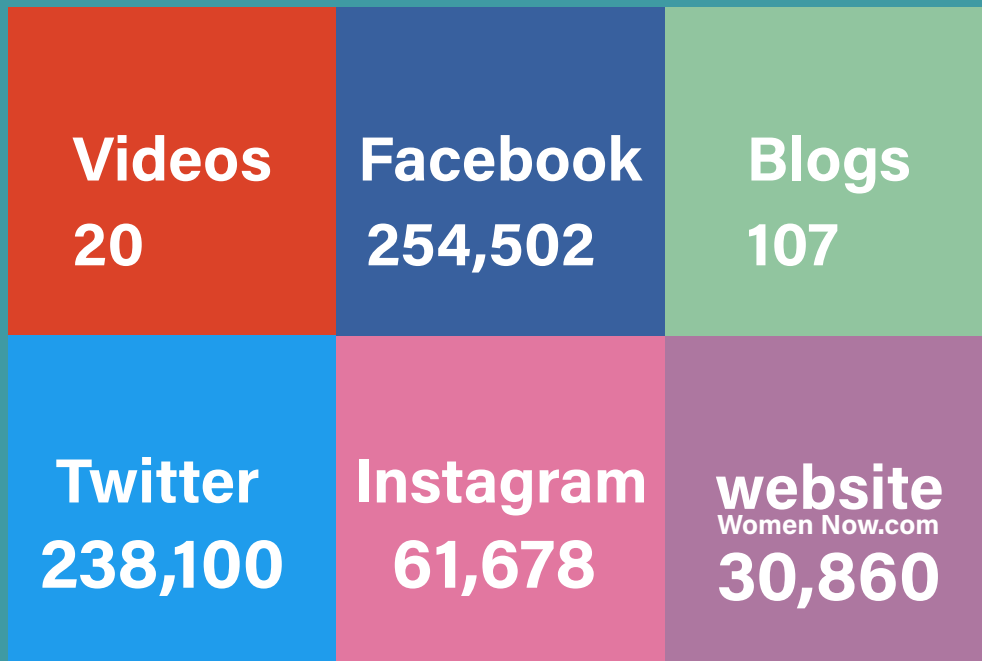
يوم المرأة العالمي

The Communications team played an integral role in the celebration of WND's ten-year anniversary through the planning and execution of multi-media publications. The publications included infographics that honored WND's previously existing WGSS in different geographies which were subjected to brutal military campaigns and whose staff were forcibly displaced. WND also commemorated the loss of a team member, Malak Khabia, as a result of aerial bombardment in Eastern Ghouta in 2017. Moreover, we spotlighted the stories of women participants and their narratives around personal transformation. And finally, WND produced a short film, directed by Guevara Nimr, that portrayed WND team members sharing their perspectives on the past ten years and the importance of the Syrian feminist movement.

During this year, WND continued to transform its approach to communications, based on years of accumulated experience, engagement with Syrian women and the WND teams themselves, and building on carefully assessed follower feedback. WND focused on different factors that contributed to the revitalization of social media pages and increased the interaction of followers with published materials. Through stories, testimonials, and quotations, and the use of visual design, WND was able to genuinely engage a larger audience in the stories and plights of women communities on the ground.

In line with a cross-cutting survivor-centric approach, WND published women's testimonies through a trauma-informed storytelling approach that connected the personal to broader structural inequalities that disproportionately affect vulnerable women. Interviews were first carried out with participants in both Syria and Lebanon, then written as stories of change and transformation and matched with drawn paintings that expressed the narrative behind each publication. As a result, WND received positive impressions and communication from women who expressed recognition, confidence, and appreciation for the creative expression.

Women Now's Communications department **1 million people** more than 1 million people across all its digital channels **in 2022**



Policies and Practices

As for the HR department, the HR Manager developed policies concerning holidays/vacations based on the laws of each of the countries that WND operates in. And working in collaboration with the Protection Advisor, the PSEA policy was further developed. Moreover, the HR department combined policies concerning social security, duty of care, as well as some protection policies to produce a more comprehensive staff wellbeing program. A consultant also worked with the HR Manager to develop a work assessment document. During the strategic retreat, HR focused considerably on fleshing out the new hierarchy, the decentralization process, and how the organization's different geographic offices will implement it. And importantly, WND was able to successfully register in Germany which has helped ease many operational and financial procedures.

In 2022, WND expanded the financial team by hiring a Financial Coordinator in Lebanon and Financial Officer in Turkey, and a part-time Financial Coordinator was hired for WND in Germany. We continued to strengthen financial management and improved coordination between the financial department and the rest of the operations and program departments. Various sessions and discussions were held to clarify roles and workflow mechanisms. Moreover, WND established a new database for the organization in Germany to record the accounts of the new branch and successfully completed an annual audit of WND's accounts in Lebanon for the year 2021.

Also in 2022, the Procurement department worked on developing procurement templates. The Procurement Manager worked with procurement departments in other WND geographies to enhance all departments' capacities and to streamline procedures, while taking into consideration each country's regulations, challenges, and requirements. The Procurement department in France has finalized over 60 procurement requests.

Partners and Donors

WND is indebted to its partners and donors who have provided us with funding that has allowed us to continue our much-needed work on the ground. We are thankful to those who have endowed us with sustained flexible funding, crucial to our ability to respond to emergent priorities and to employ the necessary interventions and provide services based on the demands of our communities. We are also thankful for the partnerships that have allowed us to bridge our capacities and learn and grow as a feminist organization. We would not be where we are today without your care and generosity.



**Women Now
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Thank you for your trust and support!



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Design and illustration by Tammm Alomar