



Women Now  
For Development  
النساء الآن للتنمية

# ANNUAL REPORT 2023



# Contents

Opening Message from the Executive Director .....	3
Our Story & Approaches .....	5
Vision, What We Do & Programs .....	6
The Challenge of Maintaining our Safe Spaces .....	9
<b>Syria and Turkey</b> .....	10
The Earthquake and our Feminist Response .....	13
Protection: Mental Health and Psychosocial Support and Gender-based Violence Responses .....	18
Economic Empowerment: Education, Vocational Training, and Grant-Making .....	22
<b>Lebanon</b> .....	24
Protection: Mental Health and Psychosocial Support and Gender-based Violence .....	25
Economic Empowerment: Education, Vocational Training, and Grant-Making .....	26
Supporting Women's Leadership and Movement-Building .....	28
Community Organising .....	31
Justice and Accountability .....	34
Feminist Knowledge Production .....	39
International Advocacy .....	43
Communications .....	47
Policies and Practices .....	49
Our Donors .....	50

## Opening Message from the Executive Director

Reflecting on the year 2023 comes with a pain that cannot easily be put into words and statements, to say the least. During this year, both our teams and communities in Syria and Turkey endured yet another calamity exacerbating layers of suffering which we had thought could no longer be surpassed. Indeed, the earthquake plunged us deep into the abyss, affecting our abilities to persevere as a service-providing organization with team members who are part and parcel of local communities. It forced us to seriously question our burnout and exhaustion, resulting from years of continued responses to multiple catastrophes. Our teams on the ground as well as the diaspora bear the brunt of ongoing violations, suffering, and loss, coupled with the necessity and desire to continue servicing. While our organizational efforts did resume, we began to seriously reassess our own needs in order for our work to effectively carry on. For this reason, we substantially invested in the healing and recovery of our team members, both in the earthquake affected areas and elsewhere. It is our strong belief that a holistic approach to self-care is a long-term commitment to sus-

tainability and the broader community's well-being.

While the earthquake response was indeed one of distress and hardship, at the same time, it added further credence to our practices as a feminist organization and our commitment to consolidating the work of women-led grassroots initiatives. Our response was a feminist one as we delivered our emergency services to the broader community largely through the efforts of women's grassroots initiatives with whom we had cultivated strong relationships over the years. Rather than employing a top-down approach, we provided a response based on mutual aid and solidarity, and held full trust in the expertise of women on the ground. The work of women's initiatives further evidenced that it is their steadfast efforts that continue to uphold societies torn apart by years of heinous man-made atrocities and the wrath that nature brought about as well. We also felt the utmost importance of the compassion and collective care that we gave to one another. Without this reciprocated feminist solidarity, it would have not been possible to endure yet another seismic catastrophe.

This year both began and ended on a very harsh note, with the ongoing wars in the region inflicting the worst of misery on populations that have endured decades of unfathomable suffering. We reaffirm our solidarity beyond our borders and extend our compassion to those enduring aerial bombardment, mass displacement, starvation, and the non-stop grief that we Syrians know very well by now. It is only this solidarity that can keep us afloat amidst the ever-growing dark realities and the complicit governments that refuse to put an end to this unspeakable cruelty. Only through this commitment to collective care can we persevere in a political climate that has failed us on so many levels. And for the international stakeholders who are choosing to stand on the right side of history, we urge you to remain committed to the efforts of those on the ground chief among them feminist and women-led actors whose work responds directly to their communities' emergent needs and priorities.





## Our Story & Approaches

WND's journey began in 2012 amidst the first wave of MENA uprisings that encompassed Syria and brought about widespread protests and civil society activism. While the civil society work that flourished across the country was largely grassroots and unprecedented, it often did not meaningfully incorporate the visions and aspirations of Syrian women. The Syrian uprising was met with a brutal response from multiple actors, with the majority of violations committed by the Syrian regime and its allies, Russia and Iran. These actors cracked down on protestors and perpetrated mass human rights violations. ISIS, Turkish-backed armed groups, and Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) have also committed serious human rights abuses during the conflict, further jeopardizing the safety and security of Syrian civilians, particularly women and girls. This complex situation highlighted the urgent need for meaningful inclusion of women in local and international decision-making processes to ensure a peaceful and just resolution to the conflict.

WND has grown immensely over the past 13 years, but despite its expansion, it remains a locally embedded organization and grassroots leadership is at the core of all the organization's 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.



# VISION



Our vision is of a Syrian society in which feminist principles 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

## Women's Leadership and Movement-Building

Consolidating women's leadership and women/feminist local initiatives

## Community Mobilization

Supporting the work of community-led campaigns for social change

## Justice and Accountability

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

## 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

# The Challenge of Maintaining Our Safe Spaces

A significant part of WND's legacy emerged out of Women and Girl Safe Spaces (WGSS) inside Syria and in the Bekaa region of Lebanon. Beyond places for educational learning and vocational training, WN considers these arenas political spaces for cultivating common ground among diverse groups of women, building resistance, and enhancing movement-building processes. However, maintaining our WGSS has been an insurmountable challenge over the past decade, and this year was especially difficult for all our geographies of operation.

Over the years, WND's Syria WGSS have been under the constant threat of Syrian and Russian military campaigns, as well as military assaults by various armed groups, who have threatened with the closure of our spaces. Our teams have been subjected to multiple forced displacements, dislodging them from Eastern Ghouta to Idlib, and driving them out again into other parts of the Syrian Northwest. The 2023 earthquake has also imposed displacement on our staff in Syria and Turkey, wreaking havoc on a vulnerable community of mostly women already

subjected to layers of disenfranchisement and destitution. After the earthquake hit, the center and office in Syria and Turkey stopped their activities due to financial and safety concerns. It took a considerable amount of effort to restart WGSS activities, given the extent to which teams in both Syria and Turkey were so deeply impacted. And once activities resumed, there remained the issue of balancing the maintenance of emergency response services with the provision of the regular activities of the WGSS and the original mandate of the spaces. Moreover, the geopolitical context of the Syrian Northwest remains dangerous and unpredictable, with recent events threatening the security of the WGSS, including renewed shelling, air strikes, and internal clashes between various armed groups.

While Lebanon was not impacted by the earthquake nor has it suffered from the same levels of militarized violence as Syria, Syrian refugees remain under constant threat of forced deportation and face continued harassment. This level of insecurity has spread to the operation of non-governmental organizations working with Syrian refugees, who endured increased threats this year concerning forced repatriation measures, threatening their very presence in Lebanon and that of their staff members. WND Lebanon has not been immune to these dangers and its team, like the rest of the community, have dealt with the psychosocial, physical, and financial pressures that come with the possibility of WGSS closure and deportation.

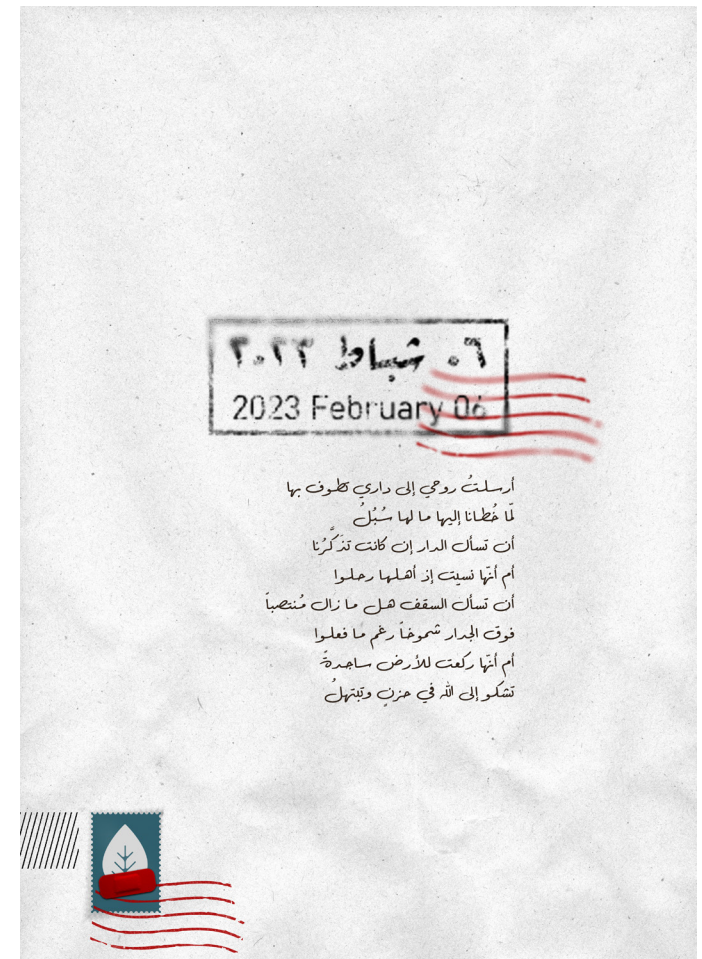
# Syria and Turkey



## Our Staff on the Ground

When it felt that Syrian society had witnessed utmost suffering over 12 years of conflict from aerial bombardment and forced mass displacement, to enforced disappearance and brutal torture, to abject poverty and the collapse of state services yet another tragedy took place. A 7.8 magnitude earthquake shook the ground in both Northwest Syria and Southern Turkey, taking the lives of over 50,000 people and displacing many more. Although a natural disaster, it affected people differently, depending on their advantages/disadvantages and their access in society prior to the catastrophe. Having taken place in the aftermath of accumulated human rights atrocities, the earthquake took an unfathomable toll on the lives of those it affected at the physical, psychological, and spiritual level.

While the earthquake impacted everyone present in the geographies, it devastated many women and girls, amongst other marginalized communities, due to preexisting political and socioeconomic structural hegemonies that disproportionately affected them. Firstly, they were subjected to the gender-based vulnerabilities of mass displacement and loss of housing resulting from the earthquake. Moreover, many women and adolescent girls experienced dire circumstances around maternal and reproductive health, overbearing psychological impacts, as well as the general lack of resources due to the socioeconomic deprivation resulting from protracted conflict.









# The Earthquake and Our Feminist Response

Being a locally embedded organization with a Women and Girl Safe Space (WGSS) based in the Syrian Northwest and an office in Gaziantep, Turkey, WND's mostly female staff faced the same detrimental consequences of the earthquake as their fellow community members. WND is neither a humanitarian organization nor one that provides relief services. But given the scale of the disaster and its impact on so many team members (73 in the Syrian Northwest and 22 in Gaziantep), the organization felt both a feminist and professional obligation to focus the first aspect of its response on its staff. Realistically, WND was unable to physically and mentally attend to the needs of others before supporting its own in recovering from the shock and damage of this unforeseen event. And accordingly, we devised an intersectional and holistic feminist response to the exigencies of the situation, delivered through multiple phases.



As a first step, WND formed an emergency taskforce composed of EU team members as well as ones in unaffected areas in Turkey. Our response management team worked with awareness and sensitivity to both the gendered and mental health impacts of the disaster on the team members (including the executive team) and the broader community. As such, we sought to support our colleagues in a comprehensive manner attending to their multifaceted needs and providing contextualized and tailored support. While the response did encompass emergency cash allowance, other factors deemed crucial for survival, and for the survival and well-being of women in particular, were attended to. This included alternate housing for those that had lost their homes, multidimensional MHPSS, maternity support for pregnant team members, as well as urgent rehabilitation for our damaged WGSS. And above everything, our response was built on the concept of collective solidarity. For instance, rather than employing a one-sided and compartmentalized approach to psychosocial support, check-in sessions were conducted throughout the response among the team and in the centers (with participants) for the purpose of connecting and mutually uplifting each other emotionally and spiritually.





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# Expanding the Response Through Local Leadership

Only after supporting team members and attending to their urgent necessities did WND feel ready to extend its support to the rest of the community. The team took the first initiative of distributing dignity and infant kits, cash for protection, and providing psychological first aid at different shelters. The rest of our response was carried out with the feminist commitment to treating women on the ground as key experts on the needs of their communities and leading respondents, rather than simply victims of a natural atrocity. As such, our support manifested itself through the consolidation of **15 grassroots women-led initiatives (WLI)**. This approach both amplified and strengthened the local leadership, agency, and expertise of WLI, and by extension provided context-specific material, financial, and psychological support to women and girls in the aftermath of the earthquake. Such efforts included building emergency shelters and supporting displaced families in finding accommodation. This included dignity and infant kits as well as the other forms of assistance that were provided to our team around cash allowances, maternity support, and MHPSS. Our response team abided by the highest protection

standards to mitigate SGBV during disaster management and circulated information on social media platforms about the increased risks of SGBV in disaster response and recommendations for mitigation.

By employing a feminist approach to the earthquake response, we both uplifted already established on-the-ground initiatives and developed key relationships with local/regional emergency management groups and first responders, which helped ensure effective coordination and implementation. We also became more capable of implementing substantive community outreach and awareness campaigns that informed the international community about the impact of the earthquake and its aftershocks, and particularly on women.

Moreover, WND published a learning paper titled Feminist Crisis Response to Natural Disasters in Complex Crisis: Case Study on the Earthquake Response of Women Now for Development in Syria and Turkey. The learning paper documented WND's earthquake response, with the goal of modeling femi-

nist crisis response in action. The paper documents an internal reflection and learning process at WND on the earthquake response. It seeks to model how feminist values and a gender sensitive emergency response can be operationalized in the context of Northwest Syria. It seeks to contribute to ongoing transnational localisation and humanitarian discourse by defining a contextualized concept of feminist crisis response. Finally, it seeks to share our experience of the response with peer organizations looking for evidence and practice of the impact and power of feminist crisis response.



## Protection: Mental Health and Psychosocial Support and Gender-Based Violence Responses

The unforeseen earthquake and its immense impacts on women and adolescent girls presented immediate and complex MHPSS needs. Our own team members in Syria and Turkey, like their fellow community members, bore the mental burden of years of accumulated suffering resulting from widespread human rights violations that breached their political, social, and economic rights. The mental health impacts of the earthquake added yet another level of trauma, depression, and anxiety to over a decade of psychological pain.

In response, WND implemented a multidimensional approach for its team members consisting of three tiers: first aid psychological sessions, group psychosocial support sessions, and in-depth and advanced one-to-one sessions. In an effort to consolidate a collective and holistic healing process, group psychosocial support and one-to-one sessions were extended to the team's family members also affected by the shock of the earthquake. And to mitigate the magnitude of impacts on the vulnerable psychology of the child, psychosocial support sessions were provided to children to help deal with trauma,

fear, attachment, amongst other issues. The sessions were offered for all age groups, including those under seven years of age. They included mothers as well to support them in dealing with their children's psychosocial stressors.

Given the scarcity of psychological support specialists in Northwest Syria and Turkey, WND partnered with an organization specialised in MHPSS services. Thirty-six specialists provided group and individual support helping to initiate the healing process of our own team members and their families. By prioritizing our own staff members and empowering them to cope with trauma and other psychosocial stressors, we became more capable of attending to the mental health needs of other community members.

After ensuring the healing of our team members was well underway, we felt ready to extend our services to the camps through the delivery of psychological first aid. Our approach was direct and immediate, addressing the urgent needs created by displacement and loss. And by consolidating the ef-



forts of WLIs, group sessions focused on awareness and psychosocial support were provided, alongside case management training. Given the precariousness brought about by the earthquake, women and adolescent girls were at high risk of harassment, exploitation, amongst other forms of SGBV, and the need for protection services was adamant. Therefore, financial assistance in the form of cash for protection was provided to support and safeguard their wellbeing. The criteria for selection were amended according to the exigencies of the situation to ensure protection for the most vulnerable. Simultaneously, WN maintained its protection services for its own WN's team members throughout this period.



## WGSS Protection Activities:

While the MHPSS needs that emerged from the earthquake remained a challenge throughout the year, the Syria/Turkey team was adamant on reestablishing WGSS activities and made strides in developing MHPSS programs. But considering the mental health stressors resulting from the catastrophe, we firstly equipped our staff with psychological first aid training to ensure that participants are safeguarded and referred if necessary.

During 2023, we were able to support 2,211 Women and 807 Adolescent Girls with one-to-one and group psychosocial support activities as well as awareness sessions. We continued developing our programs centered around adolescent girls, given the central importance of this period of youth and how violated and forgotten it has become amidst a climate of protracted conflict and suffering. We revised the Psychosocial Support (PSS) for Adolescent Girls draft program, with a steadfast commitment to understanding the on-the-ground challenges faced by adolescent girls in Northwest Syria, and co-creating tailored interventions capable of tangible change. Simultaneously, we have forged new paths and began implementing the Health Awareness for Adolescent Girls program focused on raising awareness around physical and mental health needs, menstruation and personal hygiene, amongst other relevant topics for teenage girls.


We also developed our Young Motherhood program, which empowers young women and adolescent girls through tailored information and activities relevant to their particular circumstances. This program has been developed over five years now and is of vital importance. It targets the very much neglected community of young mothers under the age of 20 in the context of war and deprivation, which exponentially exacerbates the already insurmountable challenge of motherhood.

WN's also continued with its efforts in Northeast Syria, where we work with community-led initiatives on creating feminist interventions for countering violent extremism. WND supported civil society organizations to prepare WGSS in various locations that are able to provide psychosocial support, educational and vocational training, as well as referrals.





 Women Now - Lebanon

 women\_now.lebanon

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# Economic Empowerment:

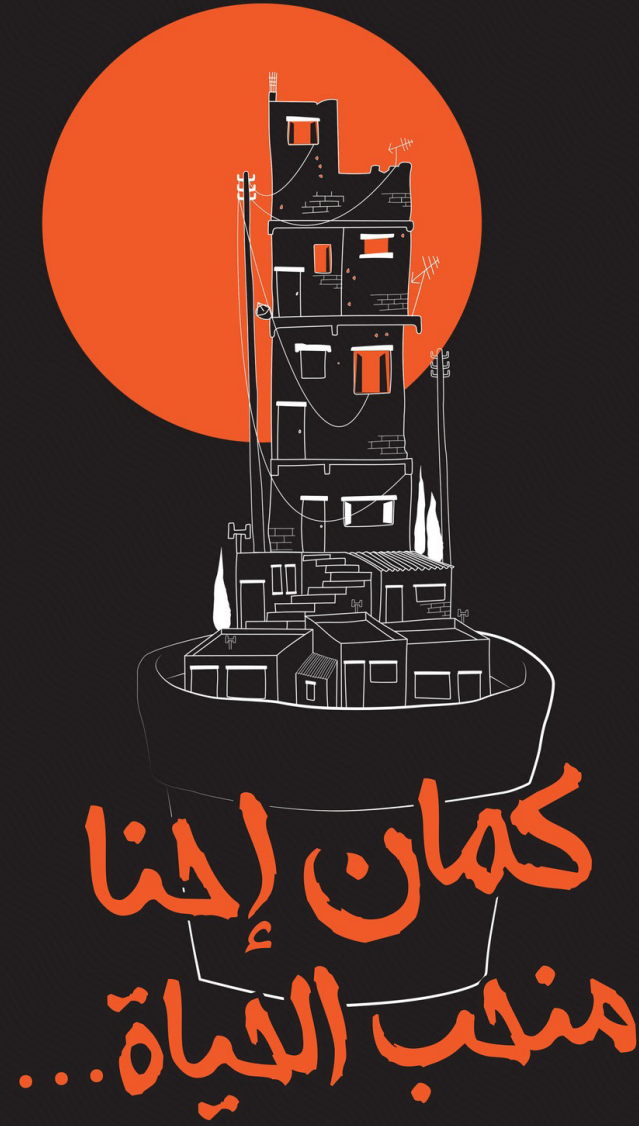
While the Earthquake took an immense toll of the energy and wellbeing of our teams on the ground, it is the teams themselves that insisted on persevering with WGSS activities. This is in part to continue their mandate but also admittedly as a coping mechanism to help deal with trauma and suffering. During this year, we successfully provided educational and vocational training to a total of 647 Women and 281 Adolescent Girls in both our WGSS in Northwest Syria.

Educational activities included Arabic literacy, English and Turkish language lessons, ICDL, and mathematics. Vocational training included sewing, handicraft, recycling, hairdressing, and detergent making. It also included nursing courses and first aid training.

In 2023, WND continued its commitment to co-creating training for non-literate women both in IDP camps as well as our WGSS. The training aimed to support women's small business initiatives, by offering financial literacy and accounting sessions, as well as endowing them with micro-grants. While the

revenue coming from these initiatives does not counter the toll of structural economic collapse and destitution, it does provide modest support for women participants and their families. The WGSS also held an exhibition to showcase the works of recycled materials produced by participants. In addition to vocational training, women in the workforce were also offered training in MEAL, HR, and project management to enhance their skills and better their chances at upward mobility in their organizations.





# Lebanon

The years-long political and economic malaise persisted in Lebanon, bearing heavy impacts on the population as a whole, with disproportionate impacts on refugee communities, and particularly women and girls. The Lebanese Lira continued to deteriorate, affecting much of the population reliant on local jobs. Moreover, Syrian refugees have been subjected to increased deportation, with the registered forced repatriation of some 874 Syrians between April and June 2023 only. Such accumulated human rights violations have taken an immense toll on the mental health as well as the broader security and well-being of Syrian women and girl refugees in Lebanon, including our own team members.

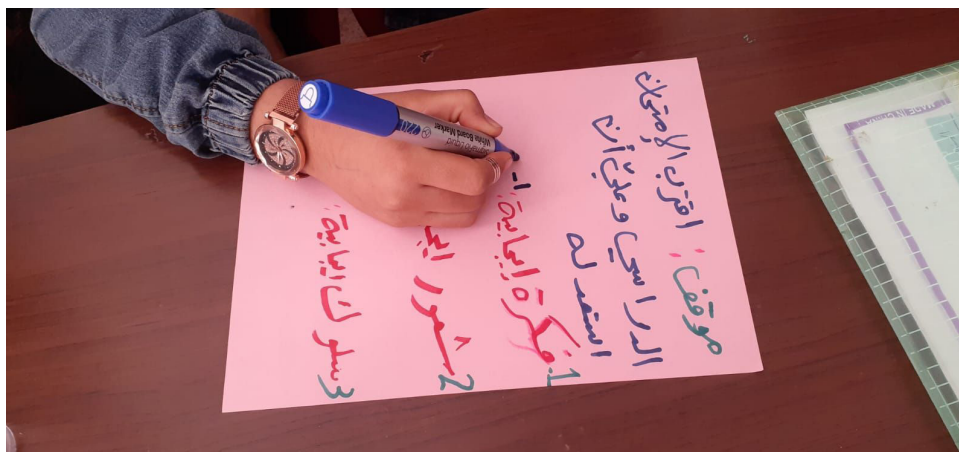
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Protection:  
Mental Health and Psychosocial  
Support and Gender-Based Violence Responses

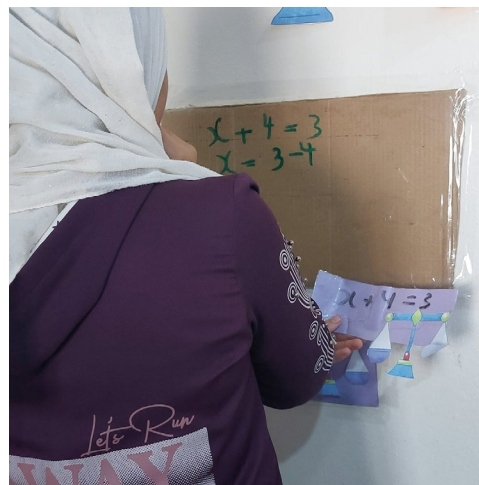
In Lebanon, the Protection team continued with its MHPSS provision and successfully delivered psychosocial support and awareness sessions, as well as one-to-one mental health sessions to 1136 Women and 839 Adolescent Girls in Lebanon. In addition, the team developed already existing response mechanisms around increasing gender-based violence, a consequence of broader deteriorating structural conditions. The GBV response was managed by two caseworkers one in each WGSS. To expand capacities, the case workers were provided with further training, and a criteria for cash protection was finalized, based on both international protection guidelines as well as the knowledge obtained from hands-on experience. Moreover, the team worked on the digitalization of information and professionalization of standards, at the same time ensuring leeway for a feminist response to emergent issues.





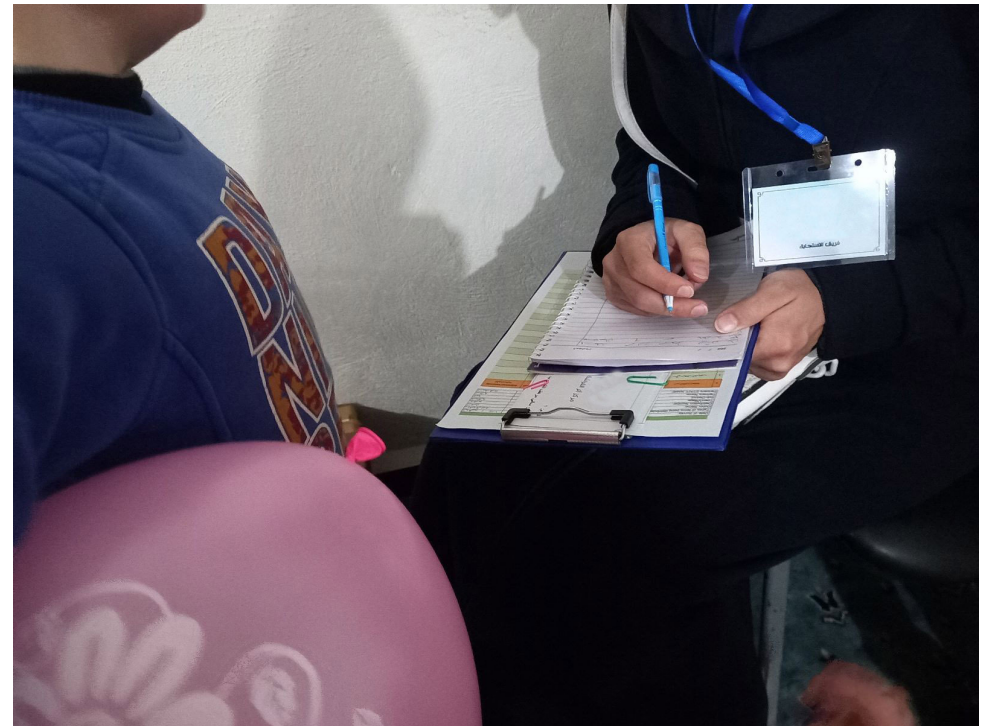
# Economic Empowerment: Education and Vocational Training

Given the continued socio-economic regression and political insecurity in Lebanon, the team remained adamant on supporting women and adolescent girls through multiple empowerment projects. This year, we were able to provide education and vocational training to a total of 834 Women and 268 Adolescent Girls. Lebanon developed educational courses around Arabic literacy, English, mathematics, and IT courses. Vocational training included sewing, make-up and hairdressing, amongst other activities based on studied markets and participant priorities. This year the team worked on adding detergent-making, carried out through an environmentally-friendly way, to the list of vocational options. The project was considerably successful and was able to bridge some of the urgent needs of participants in an attempt to make ends meet. Moreover, the team worked on mainstreaming financial literacy for all vocational activities offered at the WGSS.



# Capacity-Bridging for the Team

The team continued to cultivate its skills in various aspects. This included developing MEL skills developing participatory tools and methods beyond numerical indicators and removing barriers to participation. Capacity-bridging also revolved around emergency planning and safe programming, further ensuring that team members possess the 'know-how' of preparing for unexpected and high-risk situations as well as ensuring that ordinary programming integrates a competent level of safe-guarding. And lastly, the team worked together on building a fundraising strategy.



# Supporting Women's Leadership and Movement-Building

While WND has worked for over a decade on buttressing the efforts of women's leadership, initiatives, and broader movements, this year proved a particularly monumental one for our commitment to the grassroots. During 2023, the bulwark of our earthquake response work came through the consolidation and investment in WLIs. The ability to invest immediately in the WLIs came from years-long relations with these groups, co-created capacity bridging and mentorships, and mutual understanding of the complexities of the context.



# Syria...



In addition to the support of WLIs in connection to the earthquake response, WND also bolstered important efforts taking place in IDP camps in Northwest Syria by providing capacity-bridging activities to women leaders at the camps. The training involved concepts related to protection, safe spaces, as well as gender roles in local society. Activities were carefully co-created with leaders in order to address subject matter of real value to women and carefully contextualized to bring out actual change. WND provided support to six initiatives which worked on various different projects based on the surveyed needs of women in the camps. The WLI interests revolved around advocacy, networking, as well as a focus on different causes detainees, cross-border aid, the earthquake, amongst other topics. In addition, the groups developed draft policy briefs as well as advocacy plans.





# Lebanon...



In Lebanon, women's leadership empowerment worked at various levels, including continuation of training and financial support for graduate participants of previous years. Moreover, there existed the consolidation of creative forms of leadership and advocacy through the arts, and more specifically through theater production. Also in 2023, 40 women were selected to participate in a learning endeavor, with topics selected through participatory focus groups which included political and social participation and context-specific economic issues. The learning endeavor also encompassed reading, writing, movies, and music. The whole process has been observed and documented by a researcher who is in the process of drafting a case study.







# Community Organizing

As the socioeconomic, political, and security situation in Lebanon continues to devastate society, and particularly its refugee communities, safeguarding girls from child marriage has become an increased challenge. While patriarchal and religious convictions play a central role in perpetration of child marriage, abject poverty, coupled with displacement and political insecurity are also crucial for understanding the root causes of this human rights violation. And in order to effectively challenge the perpetration of this crime, it is vital that we consolidate grassroots community efforts strategized and led by those most affected by it.



The background image shows a group of women, mostly wearing hijabs, seated at a long table in a meeting room. They appear to be engaged in a discussion or collaborative work. A projector screen is visible in the background, displaying some text. The lighting is soft and indoor.

## Let Us Keep Our Childhood Campaign

WND continued nurturing its now 5-year partnership with Let Us Keep Our Childhood, a grassroots campaign based in the Central Bekaa Valley, Lebanon. Since its establishment, the campaign has managed to produce tangible results through its ability to mobilize survivors of child marriage or those at risk of it to advocate against it. Women, adolescent girls, in addition to men and boys, have advocated against the crime to families and clerics, amongst other community stakeholders, and have managed to persuade hundreds of families over the years to cancel/postpone child engagements and marriages.



During 2023, WN supported the campaign's development of a strategic plan, which focused on integrating adolescent girls the segment of the population most at risk of child marriage to become part of the campaign structure. Accordingly, adolescent girls were recruited and trained on becoming core members, rather than simply external advocates. This step invited a new young new generation and brought a fresh outlook and flow of ideas into the campaign. A second focus of the organizers was on mobilizing segments of the population to support the campaign, though not necessarily be a direct part of it. The ultimate goal is find ways to persuade decision-makers—be they parents, extended family members, clerics, amongst others to stand up against child marriage.

Through its adamant and consistent organizing and community mobilizing tactics, the campaign successfully managed to conduct over 1000 meetings between family members and children throughout the year. This culminated in the cancellation of 286 engagements and 296 engagement postponements as well as the signed pledges of 566 parents committed to not marry their children under the age of 18. The second part of the campaign case study was also published in 2023.



# **Justice and Accountability**



Over the years, WND has cultivated a feminist and transformative approach to justice that views wartime mass atrocities as having deeply entrenched root causes that emerge in times of peace. Long existing systemic inequalities brought about economic discrepancies between genders, laws that favored men and boys over women and girls, and particularly limited political opportunities for women. These structural discrepancies are what make the experience of women and girls of war-time violations so different. WND is therefore committed to working with marginalized women and girls on the ground to expand the vision of justice to one that speaks directly to their needs and demands.

As such, we continuously work on developing a victim-led approach that cross-cuts all our work and projects. Amongst our endeavors to broaden the horizons of justice is our commitment to much needed contextualized, decolonized, and transformative provision of psychosocial support to the families of the forcibly disappeared. Our Protection team has collaboratively customized material, which has culminated this year into a full-fledged program addressing sudden bereavement and the specific psychological needs tied to enforced disappearances. Working alongside specialists in psychology, we tailored a gender and culturally sensitive approach to sudden bereavement support, with also a political consciousness in mind--directly linking it to rights violations and enforced disappearance.





Through its safe spaces, WND implemented a project encompassing gender-sensitive, holistic support to women-led victims associations and female survivors of conflict-related atrocities in Syria. This project provided context-driven MHPSS for members of Families for Freedom (FfF), delivered a feminist leadership training program for members of Syrian women-led victims associations, and conducted feminist research studying the impact of chemical weapon attacks in Syria from a survivor-centric approach. Additionally, out of the leadership training program, a specific group of participants actively collaborated with the guidance and coaching of an advocacy workshop expert to formulate a comprehensive campaign concept. The primary objective of this campaign is to develop and provide recommendations for integrating gender-sensitive methodologies into the operations of the IIMP in Syria. Moreover, we bolstered the advocacy efforts of Families for Freedom, alongside other associations. This included co-created training and mentorship, financial support, as well as the provision of psychosocial support. We also supported the demands of the Truth and Justice Charter a common vision on how to advance victims' rights and the cause of justice and truth in Syria developed and led by the victims and families of the forcibly disappeared. Our support was centered on consultations around the Independent Institution on Missing Person (IIMP) on national and international levels.



During this year, we developed the Housing, Land, and Property (HLP) project to better understand the violations from a localized Syrian perspective intersecting with a nuanced gendered perspective. WN took part in an expert platform which concerned detainees, women, as well as matters specific to the Kurdish community. Furthermore, women's advisory committees were devised with a selection criteria based on passion, subject matter, knowledge, and the capacity for active participation. WND provided the advisory committees with co-created capacity-building as well as a platform for women to flesh out issues related to their advocacy. And finally, a number of exhibitions were held, showcasing photos of the houses that women left behind as well as items that women took with them. A total of 40 stories were compiled, which WND is working on assembling into a literary production.

The Global Survivors Fund (GSF), in collaboration with Woman Now for Development (WND) and the Association of Detainees and the Missing in Sednaya Prison (ADMS), conducted a study to identify the reparations' needs of survivors of CRSV in Syria, as well as the opportunities for delivering reparations to survivors through judicial and administrative processes. The study presents and analyzes survivors' perceptions of and expectations for reparations. It offers practical, concrete, and context-specific recommendations to policy makers and other relevant actors at national and international levels to pave the way for future reparation programs, while taking measures to respond to victims' current needs.

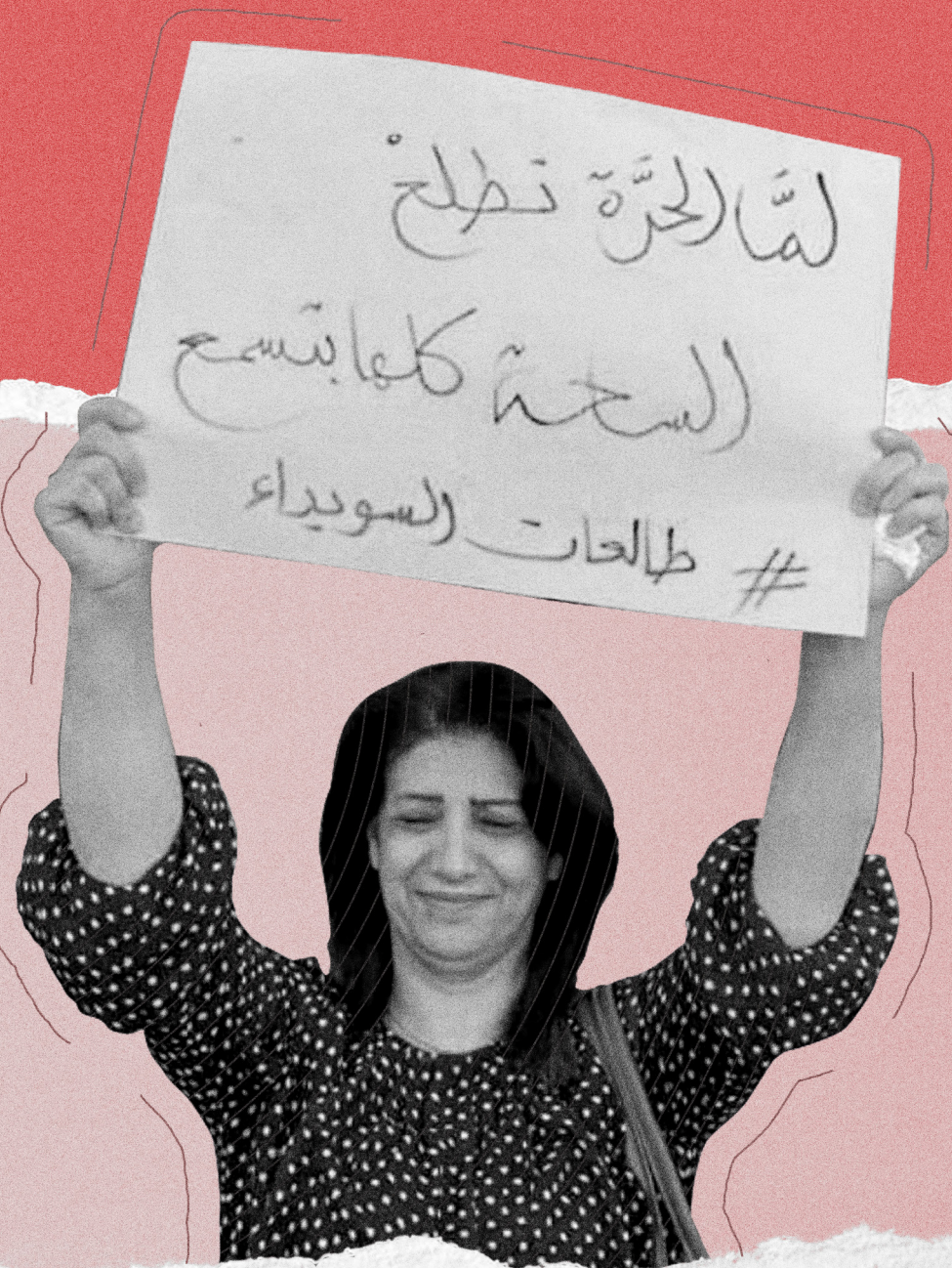




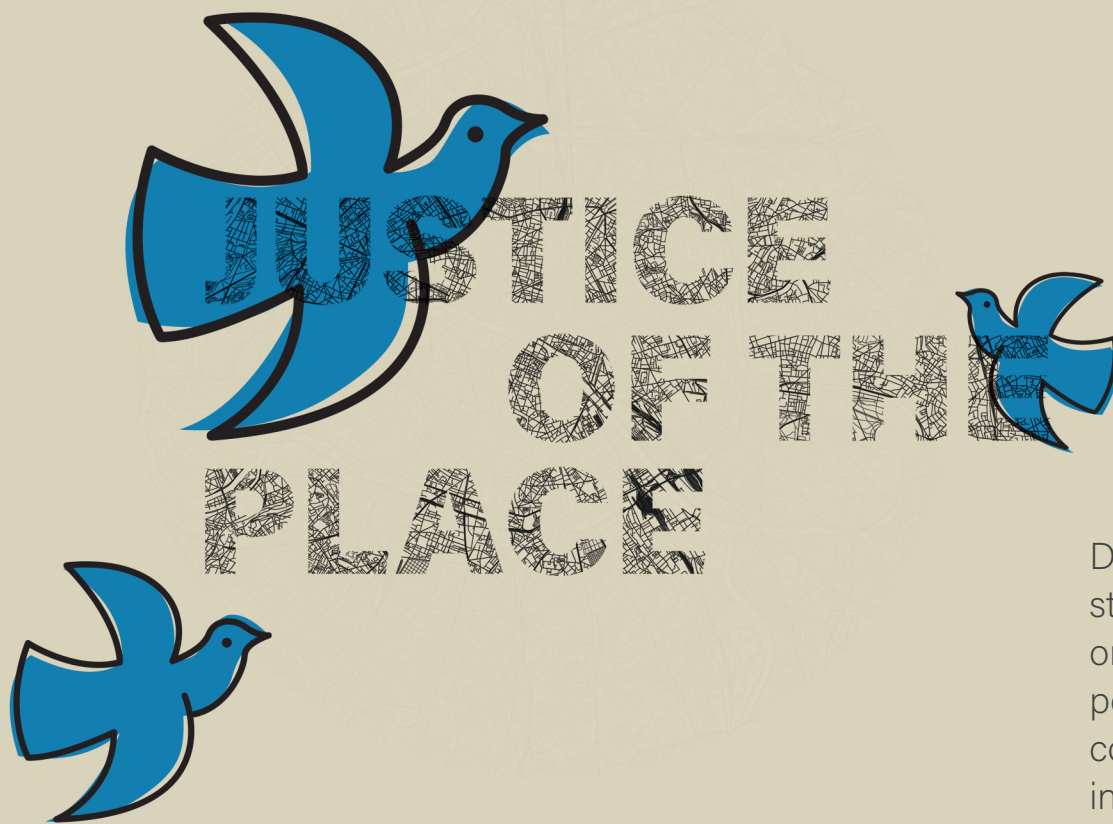


# Feminist Knowledge Production

Women Now's Feminist Research Unit (FRU) is primarily concerned with the production of participatory research that merges feminist theory and Syrian women's needs, visions, and aspirations. The unit uses intersectionality, stand-point theory, and de-colonial concepts in its analysis, as well as oral history, discourse analysis, participant observation, and feminist ethnography. It also utilizes interdisciplinary and integrative research approaches. In 2023, the FRU hired two research assistants to work alongside the full time Research Manager.







During the year, the FRU outlined a plan for a survivor-centric study titled 'The Long-lasting Impact of the Chemical Attack on Eastern Ghouta: A Feminist Analysis of the Survivors' Experiences and the Pursuit of Justice.' The study encompassed communities' experiences of multiple atrocities that took place in Eastern Ghouta, in the suburbs of Damascus. In line with WND's cross cutting approach, the research plan incorporated trauma-informed and gender-sensitive interview processes with female and male survivors, medical and paramedical staff, rescuers, amongst others. The research relied on creative story-telling sessions carried out by a specialist as well as in-depth documentation focused on specific areas in Eastern Ghouta.





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We also continued working on the 'Justice of the Place' project, which is focused on the narratives of Syrian women grappling with forced displacement. The project aims to create an alternative path to the current mainstream narrative around the war and mass crimes committed in Syria. The developed narratives/stories were returned to the participant women, who then worked on editing the pieces and making amendments as necessary. Women also shared photos and worked with an artist to help depict in drawing both their thoughts and emotions of homes left behind. The project is currently in the process of design and will manifest itself in the form of a book encompassing six stories.

The FRU also managed to finalize a paper titled My Property My Right as part of the project concerning HLP rights. In April of 2023, a first draft of the paper was presented to the partners of this project and we are currently in the process of finalizing the Arabic version as well as working on an English version to be printed and distributed.

The team is also currently supervising components for a project concerning Syrian women's social and political participation in Lebanon. The research team finalized a report summarizing eight focus group discussions with Syrian and Lebanese women in the Bekaa with the goal of this report to be the primary source for designing their program. We also hired a researcher in Lebanon to lead the research component in the upcoming years who will produce papers on specific critical topics concerning this project.

Moreover, we continued fostering our partnerships with international universities and research centers such as Marseille University and French National Research Institute for Sustainable Development, through joint workshops and continued cooperation.



# International Advocacy

WND persevered with its international advocacy efforts, focusing throughout the first half of the year on garnering support and raising awareness of the impact of the earthquake, and especially on women.



In line with its years-long tradition of supporting victims' association, WND focused on consolidating efforts concerning the process of defining the TOR of the new IIMP, adopted by the UN General Assembly (GA) through Resolution 77/301 in June 2023. We attended both the official consultations meetings organized by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Switzerland and the informal meetings organized by Syrian organizations in Berlin and Paris, as well as virtually. Furthermore, we also held a special session on the IIMP within the Women's Leadership project for victim groups to ensure that the participants understood the institution well and provided recommendations. WND's role throughout this process focused on consolidating the associations' visions and ensuring that their leadership is centered in the new institution. Working in partnership with Impunity Watch and several Syrian organizations, WND produced a recommendation paper highlighting the importance of MHPSS for the resilience of victim groups in advocacy efforts for justice.





At the 2023 Brussels conference, WND conveyed key messages and contributed to meaningful discussions with the hope of shaping future initiatives in the areas relevant to the conference. And importantly, WND's Deputy Director, Lubna Al-Kanawati provided a powerful intervention at the UN Security Council this year, and her words sparked a remarkable level of organic reach on our social media platforms. Moreover, WND team members have been actively engaged in various significant events including chemical attack solidarity protests held in Germany, the UK, and France. In November 2023, WND participated in the Syrian CSO Conference on Chemical Weapons, which brought together Syrian CSOs, victims groups, survivors, international experts, and state representatives to discuss the use of chemical weapons in Syria. WND particularly highlighted and elaborated on the multidimensional gendered impacts of chemical weapon attacks on survivors.

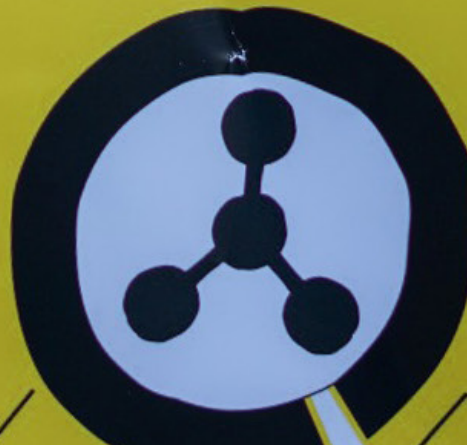


<https://x.com/LubnaAlkanawati/status/1694487607932039247>

**Who is responsible for  
chemical attacks?**

**98%**

**were committed by  
the Syrian regime's forces**



**2%**

**were committed by  
the Islamic State ISIS**

# Communications



Given the impact of the earthquake in Syria and Turkey, and its effects on the team members and broader community, much of the communication work of this year focused on the Earthquake response, the gendered impacts of the catastrophe, as well as the much needed international solidarity. Communication work for 2023 was largely focused on amplifying the voices of women who have been affected by the event.

As such, WND worked on collecting the stories and blogs from women who have experienced the earthquake first hand and shared powerful testimonies of suffering, survival, solidarity, and the urgent need for support. The stories made considerable impact as they not only raised awareness about the challenges faced by women in the aftermath of the earthquake but also sparked important conversations and actions. And importantly, we launched the Earthquakes Know No Borders campaign, which worked to shed light on the humanitarian crisis from a gender sensitive perspective, focused on the needs of affected women in Syria and Turkey. Through multimedia approaches, including public videos by influential Syrian women, the campaign amplified the needs and demands of the most marginalized of women to the international community and donors. We managed to produce 10 reel videos which reached 721,686 followers, of which 8,474 are current followers of the account. Audiences responded with compassion and solidarity, demonstrating the strength of collective support. But despite that, the challenges persist and access to resources and services remains a pressing issue for many women in the affected areas.

Also during this year, our campaign against femicides continued to gain momentum as we built outreach to women activists from various parts of the MENA region, fostering discussions and raising awareness about widespread gender-based crimes.



# Women Now's Communications department outreach More than 1 million people in 2023

<b>Videos</b> <b>93</b>	<b>Facebook</b> <b>Followers</b> <b>98,100</b>
<b>Instagram</b> <b>Followers</b> <b>4,386</b>	<b>Instagram</b> <b>Outreach</b> <b>731,000</b>

Our efforts have been multifaceted involving social media, traditional media, graphic design, and various other platforms. We managed to publish five impactful videos featuring speakers from Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt which shed light on acts of femicides and garnered significant attention and meaningful engagement from our audience. We have developed a long-term strategy to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of our campaign working towards our goals of increasing awareness, advocating for societal transformation, and ultimately reducing the incidence of femicides in the MENA region. And lastly, we launched our 16 Days of Activism Against GBV, which focused on spotlighting and amplifying the immense challenges and achievements of WLIs that worked on the earthquake response. As part of the campaign, we presented 4 dialogue sessions on our Instagram account, part of which were shared as reel clips reaching a total of 5,263 followers.

Our Communications Outreach in Numbers:  
Facebook and Instagram: 229 posts and 93 videos  
Instagram Outreach: 731,000  
Instagram Followers: 4,386  
Facebook Followers: 98,100

# Policies and Practices

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During 2023, WND made important strides in advancing its Safeguarding Policy. The policy has been focused on the creation and maintenance of our safe spaces, and consolidating commitment to the protection of our own staff and the communities that we serve. Moreover, our Staffcare and Wellbeing policy has been localized to the specific needs of our teams, recognizing that care for the caregivers is as incremental as it is for the broader community.

Also during this year, the HR department took considerable steps in conducting participatory training for staff in its different offices. Through brainstorming and coaching sessions, different modalities and scenarios for personnel related matters were presented. The training also encompassed performance evaluations, covering all matters from purpose to execution of performance evaluations. Moreover, there was the streamlining of holidays and leaves, in a matter of equitable distribution across the organization and geographies. In addition and in collaboration with Finance Management, a Travel and Per diem Policy was drafted and delivered.

And lastly, the Finance team worked on creating a new template for salaries and for overseeing the annual plan. In collaboration with the Procurement Manager, both teams worked on creating new procurement templates. Moreover, the Procurement Manager has worked on drafting a new policy in 2023 still under and expected to be implemented in 2024.

# Partners and Donors

WND is indebted to its partners and donors who have generously 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  
For Development**  
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/ ANNUAL REPORT 2022 / 51



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