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The Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund in Lebanon: An Overview

Hiba Abbani and Olivia Schmitz

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Following the Beirut Blast, UN Women, CARE, the UN Economic and Social Commission of Western Asia (ESCWA), ABAAD, and the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) conducted a rapid gender analysis in response to the many gender-blind reform plan developed by various international organizations (UN Women et al., 2020). The assessment was based on the following three data collection tools: A Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment (MSNA) of approximately 17,576 households affected by the Blast; An assessment of

damages to women-led businesses; and A Rapid Needs Assessment of approximately 1,242 households affected by the Blast.

This data was complemented by key informant interviews focus group discussions with key community members and actors.

The rapid gender analysis (UN Women et al., 2020) produced a number of important findings, among them that women with increased vulnerabilities—for example, women-headed households and elderly women—were disproportionately affected by the Blast. The analysis also highlighted the increasingly gender-blind reports produced by humanitarian actors at both the national and international levels and identified the damage that such reports were causing in terms of allocated resources and service provision to affected communities.

In response to this analysis, the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF)¹, an international funding mechanism, announced its first funding initiative in

and ensures coordination to implement the decisions of the Funding Board. WPHF donors currently include Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Estonia, European Union (Spotlight Initiative), Germany, Ireland, Japan, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. WPHF is actively supporting over 345 local women's organizations across 22 of its 25 eligible countries and has mobilized a total of \$58 Million USD for grassroots women's rights and women-led organizations working in settings of conflict and humanitarian emergency.

¹ About the WPHF:

The [Women's Peace & Humanitarian Fund \(WPHF\)](#) is the only global financing mechanism dedicated exclusively to supporting women's participation in peacebuilding and humanitarian action. WPHF is a flexible and rapid financing tool supporting quality interventions to enhance the capacity of local women to prevent conflict, respond to crises and emergencies, and seize key peacebuilding opportunities. WPHF is an innovative partnership between Member States, the UN, and civil society, with all stakeholders represented on its global Funding Board. UN Women provides secretariat support to WPHF

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Lebanon with the aim to mainstream gender equality and women's rights in recovery processes, and to make sure that women were able to meaningfully participate in both recovery programming and processes (WPHF, 2020).

Toward that end, the WPHF has awarded six organizations with funding to pursue projects that will enhance and support women in response and recovery programming related to the Beirut Blast (UN Lebanon, 2021).

Below, UN Women has profiled each of the six organizations who are implementing projects with funding from the WPHF.

Seeds for Legal Initiatives (SEEDS)

Introduction

SEEDS is a non-profit organization founded in 2016 that is based in Beirut, Lebanon. It aims to raise awareness about legal rights through campaigns and workshops, to ensure that the law is accessible to all using a simpler everyday language. The organization also provides legal advice and representation through its legal clinic, and advocates for legal reform through campaigns and law and policy drafts. The organization targets the public with a special focus on marginalized groups in addition to legal experts, policymakers, and other stakeholders.

“The Movement for Women’s Lives Matter”: Project Overview

The project aims to study the extent to which recovery programs that received funding following the Beirut Blast succeeded in promoting the participation of women in decision-making processes; considering the specific needs of women and girls including minority groups; adopting the recommendations of the Feminist Charter of Demands; and taking into account the goals of the Lebanon Reform, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework (3RF).

Project Outputs and Impact So Far

The project will produce a report and a media campaign showcasing the status of these recovery programs, which will be published along with specific guidelines that can ensure that aid efforts are more gender-inclusive of women and girls in Lebanon.

Although the project is still in its early stages, the initial literature review is revealing that although recommendations for gender-inclusive funding are often put forth in the aftermath of a disastrous incident, there is rarely any follow-up on the implementation of these recommendations. This makes this project a pioneering attempt to translate guidelines for gender-inclusive aid into action. SEEDS is interested in expanding this pilot project to develop comprehensive standards for gender-inclusive aid in Lebanon and to encourage funding and implementing partners to make sure that women and girls, including minorities, are included in all aspects of programming.

Reflections: What do you hope to see in terms of feminist funding for development projects in Lebanon in the future?

SEEDS strongly believes in the intersectionality of all human rights. As such, we believe that all funding, no matter what its priority goals are, should be designed and implemented in a way that guarantees the significant participation of women and girls and considers their specific needs.

Haven for Artists (H4A)

Introduction

Haven for Artists is a feminist art organization (NGO) based in Beirut, Lebanon, working at the intersection of art and activism. Haven combines creative and humanitarian methods to facilitate a safe space for the exchange of knowledge, tools, and skills in order to create a more just world.

Founded in 2011 by artists and activists, Haven for Artists (H4A) began with large events promoting local and regional artists, which grew to include annual exhibitions, a gallery, and a residency program with international, regional, and local artists. H4A renovated two heritage houses in Beirut which acted as a cultural safe space and shelter for LGBTQI and women's communities, hosting multiple and regular events, workshops, panels, and public discussions. By extending its network, skills, and tools to work on numerous campaigns for human rights, H4A provided a platform and network for talented creatives to extend the reach of art and activism.

H4A believes that art is uniquely able to explain complex sociocultural issues in an accessible way to a diverse audience in a non-confrontational manner. To this end, H4A connects talented artists from the Middle East with advocacy groups, activists, and NGOs striving to further human rights, particularly concerning LGBTQI persons and women.

After closing Concept 2092 in 2019, taking the streets, moving our activities online due to COVID-19, and turning into a relief organization after the Beirut Port Blast, H4A keeps evolving in 2022 with the opening of a new Cultural Community Center.

“Raising Voices of the Marginalized Majority”: Project Overview

On August 4, 2020, the Blast destroyed the Beirut Port and its surroundings, killing 220 people, injuring 7,000, rendering 300,000 people homeless and many more unemployed. This happened at a time when Lebanon was already suffering from an economic crisis and from the COVID-19 pandemic. 2021 is just an ongoing acceleration of the deterioration of the country's economy, social stability, and social “justice.” With shortages of electricity and fuel, out-of-control inflation, a local currency losing its value every day, and high rates of unemployment, among other issues, the population is collapsing along with the country, with no glimpse of hope of any political solution.

While the whole country has been affected by this disastrous situation, some communities faced more challenges. Women and marginalized communities have been heavily impacted by the blast, losing access to support or coping mechanisms with the destruction of the neighborhoods that contained their safe spaces, obliging them to be confined in unsafe places.

As documented in Oxfam's Policy Brief *Queer Community in Crisis: Trauma, Inequality, and Vulnerability* (2021), “the areas most severely affected by the Beirut Blast, particularly the neighborhoods of Mar

Mikhayel, Gemmayze, and Geitawi, were known for their reputation as the most queer-friendly neighborhoods in Beirut. [...] These areas allowed queer bodies to be safely visible, and offered an alternative space to develop non-heteronormative discourses and to gather, organize, and resist against all forms of oppressions they face.”

As a response to the Blast, HF4 aims to open a Cultural Community Center. The space will hold a free working space; a free meeting room; free access to WiFi and computers; and a community garden to host events, debates, and performances. Indeed, the space is being designed as a sustainable, socially, and environmentally conscious model. The center will also use solar panels so that we do not depend on government electricity provision, which amounts to only four hours of electricity a day. The intent behind this is that the center will remain functional regardless of the shortages and issues that Lebanon grapples with constantly.

We want this center to be a platform for women, artists, and marginalized communities to gather in a safe, functional space, where they can meet, create links, open sustainable conversations, work alone or together, self-organize, express and create, exhibit their work, exchange experiences, knowledge and skills through

conversations or workshops. We want this center to function as a platform that can support existing networks and initiatives as they find ways to deconstruct and dismantle the systematic oppression they face.

Reflections: What do you hope to see in terms of feminist funding for development projects in Lebanon in the future?

During these past two years, Lebanon has received a lot of external funding. In 2020 only, Lebanon received more than one billion U.S. dollars, and still, the country’s situation keeps deteriorating. 70% of this aid received in 2020 has benefited the UNHCR, UNICEF, and WFP.²

We want to call for international aid localization. In a study conducted by the Civil Society Knowledge Center between January and March 2021, data collected among 119 civil society organizations and initiatives showed that only 78% of the response to the Beirut Blast is led by local and national NGOs.³ However, local communities know their context and are the best placed to find the most appropriate solutions. Our communities have the skills and knowledge to conduct the local efforts that should be done.

We’d also like to call for flexible and core funding to local and national actors. Besides the impact on the effectiveness and efficiency of the funds, this would also allow

² Please see the Financial Tracking Services platform provided by UN OCHA for more details: <https://fts.unocha.org/countries/124/summary/2020>.

³ Civil Society Knowledge Centre. (2021). *Shrinking space, constraints, and fragmentation*:

Lebanon CSOs civic & operational space during the lockdown of January–March 2021. <https://civilsociety-centre.org/content/shrinking-space-constraints-and-fragmentation-lebanon-csos-civic-operational-space-during-0>.

residents to secure jobs and incomes, instead of channeling aid through international staff members whose salaries and rent are much higher than those of the locals, contributing to the inaccessibility and gentrification of some neighborhoods in Beirut.

Fe-Male

Introduction

Fe-Male is a feminist grass-roots collective, established by a group of young women, activists, and journalists in 2012. Fe-Male was established to reinforce the presence of young women and girls, especially in leadership positions; to promote feminism, and to achieve gender equality. Fe-Male works with women and girls to eliminate injustice through building young feminist movements, empowering agents of change, and campaigning together against discriminatory norms and policies.

Fe-Male's founders are human rights activists and advocates for women's rights. At the time that they decided to establish Fe-Male, there was a noticeable absence of young voices in the feminist movement, and a negative portrayal of women and girls in media and advertising. The founders of Fe-Male sought to initiate an organization that reinforces the presence of these young women, promotes feminism, and works to achieve gender equality. Through our strategic objectives, we aim to spread and deepen women's rights knowledge and activism, challenge discriminatory laws and practices and women's objectification in media and advertising and empower the capacities of women, girls, and activists.

Our strategic objectives for the next five years include:

1. Contribute to building a young feminist movement in the region through spreading and deepening feminist knowledge and activism.

2. Promote gender-sensitive media coverage and challenge inequalities and the stereotypical women's image in media and audio-visual sectors in Lebanon and the region.
3. Contribute to creating a safe and abuse-free digital media world where women and girls can enjoy their rights in accessing online information on social media platforms while advocating for driving up the numbers of women in technology and closing the gender gap in the ICT sector.

Fe-Male works with women and girls (offline covering Lebanon and online covering the Middle East and North Africa [MENA] region) from different backgrounds, including but not limited to refugees, rural areas, women and human rights defenders, Lebanese, LGBTQIA+ community, women with disabilities, and migrant workers.

“Beirut Blast: The Untold Stories of Women and Girls and their Role in Recovery”: Project Overview

Fe-Male plans to implement different activities that will work to close the gender gap and will showcase women and girls' roles in the crisis. The activities will shed light on the efforts of women who were on the frontlines of the response to the Beirut Blast and the impact they made. The project will also create spaces for highlighting their needs and challenges. The project activities will also discuss the ways that women can shape a just future for Lebanon, especially after the Blast, in addition to emphasizing women's involvement in the relief efforts

whether in service provision or decision-making processes.

The project includes the following activities:

1. A series of story-telling videos with women who were on the frontlines of the blast like journalists, nurses, doctors, and members of the Lebanese Civil Defense and the Lebanese Red Cross
2. Video walks with women survivors of the Blast, with a particular focus on stories of women with intersecting identities, including but not limited to refugees, migrants, LGBTIQ, and women with disabilities.
3. A gender audit evaluating the role of civil society organizations in mainstreaming gender during the recovery process and recovery programming following the Beirut Blast.
4. An advanced training workshop, targeting adolescent/ young girls, on storytelling and Mobile Journalism (MOJO) through the use of mobile phones.
5. A final event to promote the stories of women collected as part of this project.

especially strong networking nationally and regionally, supporting one another in times of crisis, and sharing solidarity. With the ever-changing situation, more work should be done on research and new assessments, which will allow us to adapt better.

Through SharikawaLaken, and through partnerships built while working on this project, Fe-Male will continue to work to give women and girls a place to voice their achievements and struggles. Fe-Male will continue advocating for basic women's and human rights, especially during these difficult times.

Reflections: What do you hope to see in terms of feminist funding for development projects in Lebanon in the future?

Sustaining our current activities is one of the main concerns we have right now. For that reason, we aim to secure flexible and long-term funds. Quality funding is highly needed for the feminist movement, which can help us address the most urgent needs and adapt to the changing context. In addition to funding, other resources might be of benefit

Auberge Beity

Introduction

The Auberge Beity Association, founded in 2004, is a non-government, non-profit, civil association that aims to promote sustainable social, cultural, and economic development in Lebanon through equality, direct service provision, empowerment of youth and women, and voluntary work. Auberge Beity's vision is for a healthy and strong society, where every person has equal opportunities to foster their capabilities especially for people who may be vulnerable like children, youth, women, and people in rural areas, to secure a better life for their future and the future of the societies they live in.

Beity works on sustainable social and economic development through empowering local communities, especially children, youth, and women by developing their capacity and equally involving all societal elements in the development process to build an effective, strong, and vital community. Beity's work centers around three pillars: governance through social accountability, social development (youth and women's empowerment), and sustainable development.

Beity's goals include:

1. Raise the cultural and educational levels and spread awareness in different subjects that lead to a better society, such as saving the environment, gender equality, human rights, and education.

2. Encourage voluntary work and exchanges between youth in Lebanon and other countries.
3. Encourage and support local development.
4. Capacity-building and development with an emphasis on children, youth, and women.
5. Enhance good governance through social accountability.

"Women's Participation in Disasters Management Accountability": Project Overview

The overall goal of Auberge Beity's project is to improve socio-economic recovery and the political participation of women and girls in peacebuilding contexts. In this project, Auberge Beity aims to address the poor response to disasters and crises due to poor planning, coordination, and the exclusion of local communities, especially marginalized and vulnerable groups like women, in disaster response. The project will propose solutions to these problems and will be implemented for one year to ensure a long-term impact in changing the way women and service providers think about inclusive governance in order to improve crisis management service.

Beity's project outcomes will include:

1. Women from local NGOs that participated in the Beirut Blast response are trained on inclusive governance and social accountability.
2. Improvement plans are jointly developed by members of the three service providers and the women's

groups, with strong community participation.

3. Initiatives to improve public services are jointly implemented and shared with the public.

Project Impact So Far

Although early, Auberge Beity has had a high commitment from women NGO participants. Beity has also had positive responses from the civil defense and the police. Finally, the project has produced a number of important informal learning experiences for participants through the first training conducted as part of the project.

Reflections: What do you hope to see in terms of feminist funding for development projects in Lebanon in the future?

We hope to see increased women's empowerment, women's participation in politics increased, and an increase in women's economic independence.

Madaniyat & ONDES

Introduction

Madaniyat is a Lebanese NGO aiming to respond effectively to the social change occurring in the country. Madaniyat believes that a diversity of forces will lead to a fairer and more inclusive and democratic society. Madaniyat's mission is to:

1. Actively contribute to gender equality in all designated and elected bodies.
2. Mobilize and unite women, youth, and men from around the country to work for political, economic, cultural, and social justice for all.
3. Advocate a new vision of politics that is accessible to women and youth by working with all political parties, promoting electoral reforms, and raising awareness about the impact of women's underrepresentation in politics.
4. Use art and culture as a vector for social cohesion, diversity, and for promoting human rights.

ONDES is a Lebanese NGO focusing on community development, citizen engagement in local governance, and youth and women's political participation. ONDES promotes socioeconomic development within communities and municipalities through consulting, capacity building, research, and public events. ONDES aims to increase citizen participation in local governance as an essential pillar of local development.

ONDES believes in the vital role of women as economic, social, and political actors, and works to promote their inclusion through development and networking programs at the local and national levels.

“REVIVE | WOMEN (Women organized mobilization, empowerment and networking)”: Project Overview

Madaniyat and ONDES aim to address the current marginalization of women in humanitarian action as well as in local decision-making and planning of initiatives by various stakeholders. The project will establish a women's hub that will serve as an enabling environment that enhances women's meaningful participation and engagement in decision-making through the needs identified in a women-led and targeted needs assessment. This project is based on empowering women to be agents of change in communities and to create a community of women supporters as women recover from this crisis and prepare for future ones.

The project outputs are:

1. Establishing women's committees to influence local decision-making and peacebuilding processes.
2. Supporting women to voice their needs and concerns, and to participate in discussions and consultations with stakeholders to inform local planning and decision-making.

Project Impact So Far

Two women's committees have been established in Sin El Fil and Bourj Hammoud.

The goal of this project is to support these two women's committees so that they can continue their work after the conclusion of the grant period.

Additionally, several women beneficiaries have participated in two training events. Finally, the project has also established a women's hub for local committee members to use and enjoy. This office is accessible to everyone.

Reflections: What do you hope to see in terms of feminist funding for development projects in Lebanon in the future?

We hope to see more funding for projects that have women head of households, women with local businesses, women entrepreneurs, and women in politics as their direct beneficiaries. Women's work should also be influential and visible in the media to positively impact people's perceptions regarding women and their participation in politics and various other topics. Our project aims to give the needed visibility for these women to be change-makers in their communities and in Lebanon more generally. It hopes to reverse normative gender stereotypes that limit women's participation in the public.

Dar Al Amal

Introduction

Dar Al Amal (DAA) is a Lebanese NGO that was founded in 1970. Dar Al Amal works in partnership with the public and private sectors, both national and international, and has an agreement with the Ministry of Social Affairs, and collaborates with Lebanese NGOs and municipalities. DAA's vision is a world in which all children and women's rights are protected. Our mission is to safeguard children and women against discrimination.

DAA's objectives include:

1. Supporting children and women to consolidate their identity, develop their potential and improve their living conditions.
2. Helping children in realizing a life project.
3. Empowering young girls and women. We support them through social rehabilitation and reintegration processes and mainstreaming gender equality.
4. Supporting children, parents, and communities in order to achieve positive changes in their environment.
5. Raising the voice of children and women and mobilizing others to support them and to promote gender equality.

“Creating dialogue between vulnerable communities and service providers to promote gender-sensitive interventions in areas affected by the Beirut Blast”: Program Overview

“Creating dialogue between vulnerable communities and service providers to promote gender-sensitive interventions in areas affected by the Beirut Blast” is a gender-oriented project that aims to create a safe space for women by establishing and empowering a women-led group to advocate for women's better access to services and enhanced participation in decision-making. It also aims at developing the capacities of marginalized women in Sin El Fil and Borj Hammoud/Nabaa areas on topics related to gender, gender-sensitive approaches, and women's political participation. With the support of this project, the women-led group will act as a focal point for service providers. This group will help map and assess the needs of vulnerable groups in the area and will support the creation of mechanisms for collaboration and dialogue to ensure better access to quality services for women and marginalized groups.

Reflections: What do you hope to see in terms of feminist funding for development projects in Lebanon in the future?

Dar Al Amal believes that working with and for women should be holistic and should address several things:

1. Individuals/families/communities
2. Institutional policies
3. State/laws

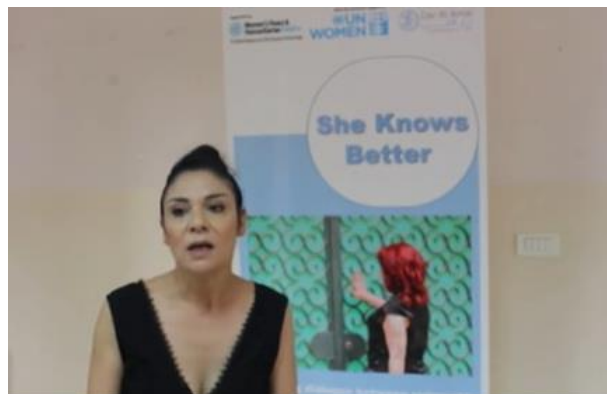
As an NGO that works on vulnerability, and with women that belong to the most at-risk groups—for example, sex workers, female prisoners and ex-prisoners, and

undocumented women—it is essential for DAA to continue its work with the women themselves through activities such as capacity building, empowerment, and psychosocial support services. The economic crisis will lead more women to resort to prostitution to ensure their basic needs and the needs of their families. Protection measures are therefore critical, including emergency financial aid, aid for children in school, and income-generating projects.

At the institutional level, work must be done to target the private sector in order to expand job opportunities for women, issuing policies against harassment and violence within institutions, and capacity building for law enforcement officers concerning stigma, discrimination, and torture.

Additionally, improving the situation of women in prisons is very essential. Living conditions inside prisons are lacking the minimum human rights standards.

Finally, targeting communities is very crucial. Raising awareness at the collective level will help change the norms and adopt positive social norms, for example, working with men and boys. Relatedly, work must be extended to the religious leaders and various other stakeholders.



"I used to think that violence is only physical, however, these training sessions taught me that violence can also be verbal, psychological, sexual, and economic. Every woman and girl should know her rights, specifically the right to protection from violence that she is subjected to due to the fact that she is a woman."

Ms. Nicole Kh., one of the workshop participants.

"كنت مفكرة ان العنف بس جسدي، بس هالدورات خلتنني اعرف ان كمان في عنف لفظي ونفسي وجنسي واقتصادي."