



# LOUDER VOICES

FOR A JUST FUTURE



**OUR FIRST FIVE YEARS  
PROGRESS REPORT 2012-2017**





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# A WORD FROM THE FOUNDERS

There was something quite peculiar to notice as we sat in front of our computer screens, editing and publishing news for a research group we worked for together. Day in, day out, our eyes hovered over investigative reports that told us something: women's rights were hardly given a mention in the pile of stories getting published; women were treated as commodities in the media and the advertising industry; they were attacked, objectified and victimised. All went unnoticed.

**We were fed up.** We thought what was happening was too shameful to overlook, so we decided to do something about it.

With a burning desire to change a societal view about women and end a stigma surrounding women's issues and feminism, we rolled up our sleeves and set out to build a world of feminist leaders ready to spread the word.

As you will read in the pages of this report, our journey to create a feminist world began with **Sharika wa Laken (or, in English, A Partner: Not Yet Equal)**; a radio programme that created a space where human rights in general, and women's rights in specific, can be discussed before the nation. The programme gave a voice to those who, otherwise, would have never opened up.



The success of the programme inspired us to go the next mile and start an organisation that turns words into actions. In an Arab World where patriarchal norms dominate nearly every aspect of our lives and women's rights are dealt with little interest and great indifference, we knew the wall was too big to break down.



A group of young, enthusiastic feminists came together to create **Fe-Male**. It was amazing to see this group growing in number and influence, challenging offenders and drawing a line.

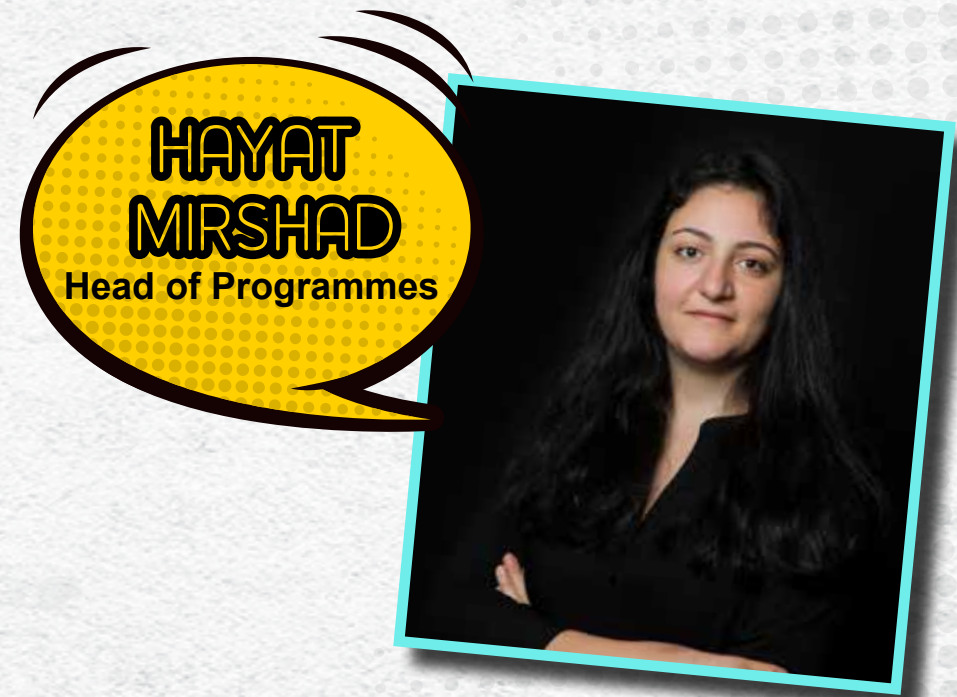
As we celebrate the first five years of **Fe-Male**, we take the chance to thank our group of volunteers who redefined the culture of voluntary work, by their constant, limitless support.

The participatory transformative leadership at **Fe-Male** has given power and voice to every single member. Today, our decisions are taken based on the members' vote. Together, we explore new opportunities, create innovative projects and celebrate success for women.

We welcome the second half of our first decade with a lot of excitement and optimism. **Fe-Male**, with relatively limited resources, has established for itself an identity in the world of feminism- not just in Lebanon, but across the Arab World.

*We hope that louder voices for a just future will give a brief glimpse into the long hours that Fe-Male with its team of volunteers spent over five years working towards a just world in which women and men are able to equally access their rights, wherever they might happen to be; a world driven to abolish the patriarchal ruling; where women are fully aware of their rights and the strength that lies within them.*

**Thank you**





# ABOUT **FE-MALE**

## WHO WE ARE

**Fe-Male.** The name alone suggests an aura of gender equality and self-preservation. But we are so much more than that. **Fe-Male** was born from a group of eager young women and human rights activists in **2012** who envisioned a brighter future for women in Lebanon.

Along with the Human Rights Charter, our non-profit civil organisation breaks down gender barriers and strives to make women's rights synonymous with human rights. **Fe-Male** is here to fight injustice, break down barriers and raise women's voices. Our feminist movement relies on the youth's energy and zest. We motivate young people to demand change and to make it happen.

In practical terms, **Fe-Male** is a **civil feminist collective** working with women and girls to eliminate injustice through



building young feminist movement, empowering agents of change, and campaigning together against discriminatory norms and policies.

**We don't simply shout and hope  
for the best. We act.  
We make that change our own.**



Heroines come in all shapes and sizes. They don't always wear capes or run at super speed, but their greatest power is their undying resolve and sense of leadership in the face of hardship. **Fe-Male** follows a transformational leadership style, in which the heads of programmes, advocacy and campaigning, and finance form a team to identify the necessary change the organisation seeks in Lebanon, formulate a plan to guide the change through inspiration, and execute the plan by collaborating with committed members and volunteers. This leadership team acts as a role model, teaching, motivating, and challenging young girls and women to own their activism.





## IN THE FACE OF SEXISM

You've heard the story before; after all, it's a tale as old as time: stereotyping and objectification of women in media, the existence of laws which deliberately discriminate against or exclude them and the silencing of their voices. These are precisely what we aim to stamp out, utilising mass and social media as our most vital tool.

We stir things up. We initiate debate. We encourage and activate dialogue. We listen to stories and share them. If there is one thing we've learned, it's that we can't hold a discussion about women's rights without somehow opening up the decades-old wound of women's image in the media and advertising. It's a conversation that never seems to end.

**Fe-Male is the first feminist NGO in Lebanon** that works towards changing stereotypes of women perpetuated in the media. They are often seen as objectified, sexualised, inferior beings subject to unyielding abuse.

Our campaigns to change women's image in the media have become a reliable source for those looking for a compass to navigate their voyage in the big ocean that is feminism and media. The younger generation is becoming more and more aware of their means for redemption and are fighting

with greater fervour; in fact, many of these young women and girls became **Fe-Male's** first volunteers, a tribute to the impact we have made over the last five years.

In the words of **Dr. Nawal El-Saadawi**, the inspirational Egyptian feminist writer, "to be creative means to connect. It's to abolish the gap between the body, the mind, and the soul, between science and art, between fiction and nonfiction." **Fe-Male** strives more than anything to create networks and alliances with other feminist-led initiatives and organisations. What sets us apart from the rest, however, is a dedication to using the media to our utmost advantage, as it opens the gateway to so many possibilities for positive change and allows us to embrace our full potential.



## WE ARE NOT ALONE

As part of our fundamental message, **Fe-Male** has partnered with entities that have helped shape our own structure and engage with a wider audience. **Fe-Male** has joined forces with NGOs and civil organisations anchored by a common goal: to alter the way the world sees and hears women, avoid harmful stereotyping in the media and recognise their voices as meaningful and essential to the future makeup of our world. Our work complements and supports those organisations through awareness-raising campaigns or by advocating on the ground. For example, **Fe-Male's** role was substantial in the campaign aimed at protecting women from domestic violence, as well as in the campaign for the **Lebanese Woman's Right to Nationality** and many others. We observe these strategies and weave our own creative twists on them.

Of course, like any unique endeavour, we must overcome many setbacks, both internally and externally. In the next three years, we hope to build more connections with partners and donors, solidify financial support so that we can centralise in private offices, and attract more volunteers at **Fe-Male**. Our goals include advancing our radio programme into a feminist WebTV, continuing our work in battling women's image in the media and

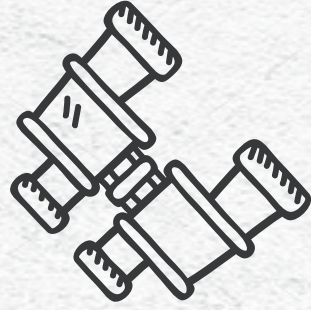
advertisements, and getting women and young girls to be more media literate and knowledgeable about cyber security. We want to illustrate our strength in raising awareness about women's rights and further our support for more women's rights groups and NGOs. Achieving these main targets would catapult us towards developing a strong and skilled team of competent, committed, and confident feminist activists and leaders who are ready and willing to spread the knowledge and lead the way in a feminist movement with a clear mission to stand up and say "**No More Injustice!**"

**Fe-Male** is recognised by the **Lebanese Government** and registered at the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities under the number 867.





# VISION AND MISSION



## WOMEN AND GIRLS LIVE IN DIGNITY IN A JUST WORLD FREE OF PATRIARCHY

Dictionary identifies Patriarchy as a “**system of society or government in which men hold the power and women are largely excluded from it.**”

The word is not only hidden among dictionary chapters or lost in the electronic pages of the internet; it is buried deep in the back of many people’s mind, shut behind doors and never allowed to come out.

**Our mission is to bring that ideology to the surface, expose it, and tear it into pieces.**

This can only happen if **we contributed to making** women’s voice heard.





# FIVE YEARS OF MILESTONES



**Sharika  
wa  
Laken**  
broadcasts  
the first  
episode

**MAY  
2012**



**Image  
upon  
Request**  
documentary  
released

**DECEMBER  
2014**



Documentary on  
**sexual  
violence**  
released

**NOVEMBER  
2015**



**website**  
www.  
sharikawalaken.  
media  
**goes live**

**MARCH  
2016**



**Monitoring  
Women's  
Image in  
Media and  
Advertising**  
report released

**DECEMBER  
2014**



**A feminist  
march for the  
occasion of  
International  
Women's  
Day**  
joined by  
**thousands**  
calls for recognition  
of human rights in  
Lebanon

**MARCH  
2017**



**2012**

**Fe-Male**  
founded by  
a group of  
young women  
activists



**JANUARY  
2014**

**"Sell Your  
Product,  
Not Her  
Body"**  
campaign  
launched



**SEPTEMBER  
2015**

**"Sell Your  
Product,  
Not Her  
Body"**  
graffiti  
appears on a  
wall in Beirut



**DECEMBER  
2015**

**Towards a  
Balanced  
Image of  
Women in  
the Media**  
study released



**AUGUST  
2016**

**Code of  
Conduct**  
issued by  
Fe-Male and  
signed on by  
prominent  
partners



**NOVEMBER  
2016**

Fe-Male launches  
the  
**National  
Network  
to Change  
Women's  
Image in  
Media and  
Advertising  
in Lebanon**



**APRIL  
2017**

Fe-Male hosts  
Egyptian  
feminist writer  
**Dr  
Nawal El  
Saadawi  
in Beirut**



# FE-MALE IN NUMBERS

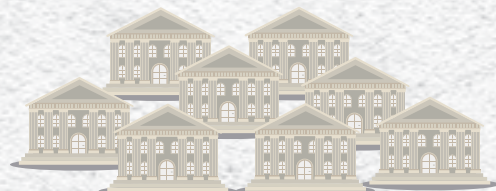
840,000



People reached  
in our online  
campaigns

8

Universities that worked  
with female all over Lebanon  
on different activities and projects



Growth in number  
of members and  
volunteers dedicated  
to Fe-Male's cause

840



University students  
mobilised in different  
advocacy activities and campaigns

12

University Student Councils  
mobilised to support  
our campaigns



1,643



People mobilised  
through awareness  
-raising sessions

More than

2,000



people mobilised to march  
for women's rights on the  
International Women's  
Day 2017.

STOP



628

People took part  
in discussions  
about  
domestic violence

64



Big media reports  
covering Fe-Male's work

15



journalists and reporters  
trained on gender-sensitive  
media coverage and

133

journalists engaged  
in different activities

155



recorded episodes,  
reports and articles  
produced by  
Fe-Male  
as a feminist source  
of knowledge

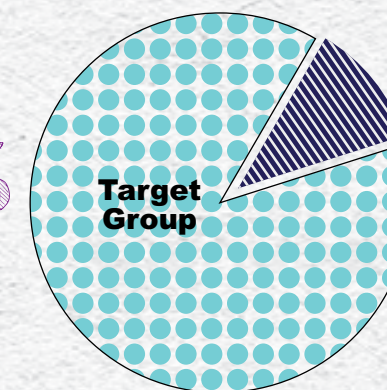
140

Women survivors



of domestic  
violence supported

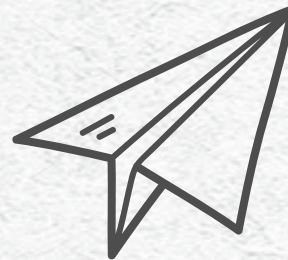
81%  
below 30



19%  
above 30



# THE MISSION



## WHY FEMINISM AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS MATTER

Have you ever asked yourself why we still speak about feminism and women's rights? Why, after decades of discussions, initiatives and advocating for change are the issues that feminism deals with still exist in 2017? What kind of world do we want our daughters- and sons, for that matter- to live in and what lessons do we want them to learn? Their voices matter, they are a force to be reckoned with, and they should never be made to underestimate their own power.

*"Feminism is about giving women choice. Feminism is not a stick with which to beat other women with. It's about freedom. It's about liberation. It's about equality."* Emma Watson, UN's ambassador for women's rights.

As long as men feel that they must control and exhibit a brave and macho demeanour in order to adhere to an image set forth for them in the media, so too will women feel compelled to submit, permit themselves to be perceived as weak, and allow their bodies to become absolutely detached from their minds. The conversation is far from over. It is more important than ever. Realising this entails overcoming complex challenges inherent in an unstable region. For instance, terrorism and security threats have defined this region's image for many years, especially with the rise of ISIS and other extremist groups. ISIS executed 250 Iraqi women in April 2016 for refusing to be made into sex slaves; if this is not a cry for help, what is? Not only is this extremism a threat to women's rights, but they threaten to incapacitate humanity, men and women alike, to derail us both physically and psychologically.

Terrorism, war, instability and poverty are evils that tarnish Lebanon's political, economic, and social landscape. Unfortunately, women's rights are often considered a **secondary priority**, as the country has struggled in the

last few years with political upheavals, illegal extensions of Parliament, a garbage crisis that required immediate attention, corruption, patriarchal laws and traditions, stereotypical images of women reflected in the media, etc. Nevertheless, we've made significant leaps and bounds regarding women's rights in this country, and such trials only drive us to keep pushing on.

Giving up  
is not  
an option.



## HOW WE DID IT

- We spoke.
- We fought.
- We encouraged.
- We punched over our weight.

This is how we  
did it, for  
**FIVE YEARS.**



# OUR PROJECTS



## BRINGING THE UNSEEN

There are different ways to get any message across. Since 1836 the year the first advertisement appeared in a newspaper, media and advertising have been primary mediums through which individuals, politicians, corporates and campaigners reach out to the outside world. The objectives are numerous, but there is one common goal that everyone would put up a billboard for: **to sway the public opinion in their favour.**

In Lebanon, advertising on the streets and in the media is a vital tool often used to propagate parties, promote products and raise awareness. Small and giant corporates have taken competition to the street, brandishing billboards marketing their industry and calling for customers to join their campsite.

In the melee of this rivalry, there seems to be an increasingly acceptable norm. A photo of a beautiful, slender-bodied female modelling the latest arrival of luxurious lingerie has become the ideal, perfect image of a woman. The dangerous ideology is not only invading our streets, but also our minds.

We have taken the **objectification of women's image** seriously and personally. We set out to fight the shockingly stereotyped portrayal of female bodies in the media and in advertising. More importantly, we are trying to speak about what harms this stereotyping does to the community as a whole.



## SO HOW DID WE DO IT?

The first step was to go out and **say something**; discuss this little-recognised social disease. We brought together young male and female activists from all over the country and invited professionals from the media and advertising agencies as well as members of the government and got the conversation going.

The first attempt was made to promote **a balanced, diverse image of women**. We tried to encourage the media to refrain from presenting women as the more inferior category in the society and stop their exploitation as **'sexual objects and commodities'** in commercials. Our message was simple but crucial: **"Women are not shiny bodies. They are bright minds."**

Our motive to bring justice to the subject took us to the street. We went out to stop people and talk to them, raising questions that the ordinary person on the street might have never thought of. The debate was soon taken to the media and we had a chance to speak about the issue on national TV channels

**For five years**, our online campaigning to engage hundreds of thousands of users in the conversation on social media has paid huge dividends.





Launched in the final month of 2013, **Towards Changing Women's Image in Media and Ads advocacy** campaign brought to the surface the different ugly faces of gender discrimination, with a photo and video campaign that called for an end to dangerous messages transmitted to the younger generation via mass and social media.

In the summer of 2015- a typical season when commercial campaigns became as scorching as the climate- we broke the ground for our **"Sell You Products, Not Her Body"** campaign. On the three most-used social media platforms, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, we worked to challenge the objectification of women. The **#NotAnObject** hashtag was launched and used by hundreds of online users, who inscribed the 11-letter message on blank papers and shared their snaps online. The success and appeal of our campaign was manifested in the overwhelming responses from more than **130,000 people** reached over just two months.

As summer gave way to winter, **Fe-Male** kept the heat up. This time, a **Towards a Balanced Image of Women in the Media** study was released in December to show some surprising facts about women's under-representation in the world of media in Lebanon. The study revealed that women made up **only 23 percent** of the **total workforce** in newspapers, 34.2 in magazines and 29.36 in TVs. It also revealed that just 3.4 percent had an ownership in radio stations and 6 percent in TV stations.

Another headway was made in November 2016, when **Fe-Male** announced the official launch of the **National Network to Change Women's Image in Media and Advertising in Lebanon**, outlining a raft of demands as part of the association's mission. Those demands included setting professional and ethical codes to tackle gender diversity in the media and establishing committees across media outlets to monitor any violations of women's rights.

With the beginning of 2017, **Fe-Male** joined hands with **ABAAD** for the Protection and Mitigation of Gender-Based Violence (also known as GBV) against Women and Girls in Lebanon among Syrian Refugees and Vulnerable Host Communities project, which seeks to free women and children in Lebanon from violence and restore their right to protection.

The project offers protection and prevention services through close collaboration between entities of different sectors. **Fe-Male's** role in the project is to work with academic institutions and ministries including the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the Ministry of Social Affairs on these issues. Our organisation will also be ready to carry out its mission to generate gender-sensitive media coverage that sheds a bright light on issues related to women in conflict and the struggle of women survivors of GBV.



## AND WHAT HAS CHANGED SO FAR?

Our reward is change, in ideas and outlook. And we have been rewarded.

Offensive ads and coverage are monitored, called out, taken down, named and shamed. We've made it clear that you cannot produce a stereotype and not be challenged.

This is how we changed attitudes. Ideologies. Concepts. Behaviours.





## THREE DECISIVE HOURS

A well-meaning, but ill-thought advertisement by **ABC Mall**, a famous shopping mall in Lebanon, was launched to raise awareness on breast cancer. The blunder was quickly called out by Fe-Male. Less than **three hours** after the first call was made to take it down, the advertisement disappeared from the streets and an apology was issued.

The ABC Mall gaffe was only one of six prominent offensive ad campaigns stopped by Fe-Male over five years.

# LIKE



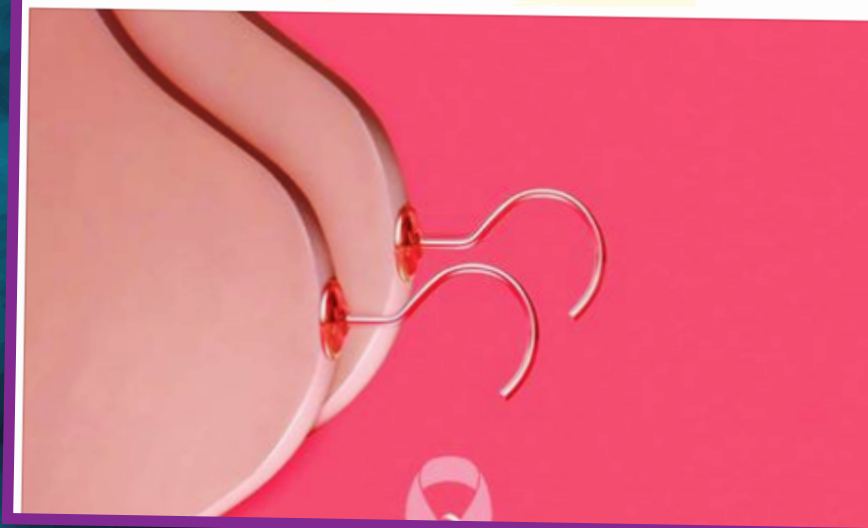
Follow our facebook page



**ABC Lebanon**

Yesterday at 10:00am · 🌟

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, a time to stand with all the brave women in our lives and show support with our Mission Pink initiative. This month, be sure to remind someone close to you about scheduling their yearly check-up. Together, we can truly make a difference. #ABCLebanon #PinkOctober #BreastCancer #Awareness #Change #Together #Women #Mom #Moms #Sister #Sisters #Friend #Friends #Hope #Joy #Love



**Fe-Male**

Published by Hayat Hala Mirshad [?] · Just now · 🌐

Dear Facebook followers and supporters, This is to clarify the reason for deleting our last post, which aimed to ask **ABC Lebanon** to stop its violent and abusive ad about breast cancer. We received a call from ABC to inform us that they took your complaints into consideration and that they will delete the ad and work on fixing it. Accordingly, and after ABC reacted positively and dealt effectively with your complaints, we consider that the aim of the campaign was achieved. Thanks a lot for your interaction and stand towards challenging women's objectification in ads, we look forward to see ABC's new ad and support them in their mission and fight against breast cancer. Yes, together, we can truly make a difference! #NotAnObject



## FE-HIGHLIGHT

### KEEPING AN EYE ON THE IMMORAL

A report entitled **Monitoring Women's Image in Media and Advertising** was released in August 2016, offering an analysis of deep-rooted stereotypical representation that naively confines the role and image of women to a set of topics and interests, such as marriage, pregnancy and plastic surgeries.

The report provides examples of ‘**male gaze**’ productions promoted by Lebanese media and adverts that appeal to a masculine society that sees women as no more than a ‘pleasure trigger.’

It didn't start or end there. Since 2015, we have been scrutinising- day in, day out- every piece of news or advertisement that tackles women's issues. And we stand ready to stand up.



## FE-HIGHLIGHT

### TAKE IT FROM THE HORSE'S MOUTH

With nearly **40 books, novels, short stories, and memoirs to boast**, it is safe to say that the veteran Egyptian feminist and writer **Dr. Nawal El Saadawi** knows a thing or two about feminism (among a long list of other topics).

In a much anticipated special evening, and in the packed hall of the **Russian Cultural Center**, **El Saadawi** discussed topics that ranged from politics and culture to feminism, sexism and patriarchy with an eager audience who longed to meet her. The night didn't pass without **El Saadawi's** typically rich, straightforward and tongue-in-cheek talk.

Always special to hear from the great woman.





# SHARIKA WA LAKEN



Violations are not only committed, but they also seem to go unnoticed.

Women's rights are subject to all sorts of violations wherever they happen to be; at home, on the street, in the office, on the bus, and, most unfortunately, in the media.

From the latter we started. **Sharika wa Laken**- Arabic for "A Partner: Not Yet Equal"- was the first feminist radio programme to ever hit the Lebanese airwaves. The show on Sawt El Chaab radio station marked the start of a new conversation and sparked a debate on women's right issues, including citizenship rights and social, gender and legal equality.

Men, women, NGO representatives, journalists, lawyers, legislators, activists, members of civil society, and public figures engaged in a live discussion on topics related to women's rights. For 55 minutes each week, the programme raised awareness and broke a taboo surrounding different



issues including sexual harassment, domestic violence, sexuality and the shameful portrayal of women in the media.

**Sharika wa Laken** highlighted ways to change the status quo surrounding women's roles in Lebanese society. Listeners tuned in to take part in conversations about over 100 issues concerning citizenship rights, social, gender, and legal equality, and the need to create a civil state. This was the first-of-its-kind radio talk show in Lebanon, and it all started with Fe-Male's vision and the values we stand for.

**Sharika wa Laken** was **Fe-Male's** first initiative and achievement, and it paved the way for expansion and more inspiring ventures. The programme was broadcast for two and a half years, from May 2012 through September 2014, and aimed to reach every house in the suburbs, in rural areas, and in marginalised communities. It acted as a catalyst for change, an outlet for Lebanon to lift its visors on the feminist agenda and embrace its positive impact in the country and the region's future. This is Fe-Male's true value that **Sharika wa Laken** embodied fully.

For over two years, **Sharika wa Laken** helped us to build our audience base, increase consciousness about women and the injustices they face in Lebanon, and promote the work of various rights groups. The feedback we received was extraordinary and uplifted us to take it to the next level.

**Sharika wa Laken** sought to reach every corner where violations against such rights were being committed on regular basis. Listeners came from almost every village and city and from all walks of life. Inspired by others' experiences, they came forward to share their own and contribute to a wider discussion. Gender-based violence aired their grievances and we took it upon ourselves to act and help the victims through referring them to the right support, sparing further physical and psychological ramifications.

The icing on the cake for **Sharika wa Laken** was a closing ceremony which celebrated and awarded the best pieces of journalism covering gender topics as well advocacy campaigns doing their part for women's rights.





## FROM AIRWAVES TO WEBPAGES

**Sharika wa Laken** and its flagship website represented the backbone of our movement. In less than six months, Sharika wa Laken became among the most prominent sources for information about women's rights in the country. Old and young, married or single, employed or at home, women from all backgrounds engaged in this open platform, which is still run on voluntary basis, and had their voices not just heard, but heard to change.



The studies and researches page brings users the most important reports tackling a list of topics and interests, such as domestic violence, nationality and citizenship, early marriage and women's role in the political life. Other sections in sharikawalaken.media offer a snapshot of the latest- and oftentimes shocking- stats and figures from **the Arab World** in relation to women's rights. Exclusive coverage and investigative content tell the untold in the world of gender.

## FE-HIGHLIGHT

### TUNE IN, SPEAK LOUD

In one case, **the programme** received a call from an old taxi driver who regularly listened with rapture and struck up debates with his customers on the issues raised in the episodes. In another case, a domestic worker was saved from violence and we delivered her to a safe shelter after the programme received reports of her predicament in her neighbourhood.

An audience member called us following a series of eight episodes (done in collaboration with the International Labour Organization) that dealt with domestic workers' rights, which underlined the trust we had nurtured in our listeners.

To this day, we are flooded with phone calls and the programme's Facebook page continues to receive messages reporting on cases of violence against women.





# STIRRING WORLD INTO THE ACTION



Why would you defend equality when you are enjoying all your rights? Why would you even bother? What would make you rise up and blurt out lines in support of those who don't get to enjoy the same rights? More significantly, how passionately would you do that?

The answer, as we have found out, lies in this simple motto: Life is better with equality.

We spoke to the big players on the other side of the spectrum who could take on that message and defend it: the public. Old, young, male, female, journalists, students, activists, all engaged, listened, discussed and scrutinised the status quo.

**For five years**, we have turned up the volume, raising people's awareness on issues not tackled before. We told people why sexual and all forms of violence should not only be reported, but also stamped out. Why victims should be supported, not frowned upon. Why sexual offenders need to be sued, not excused.

With support from partner associations, including the **Lebanese Women Democratic Gathering - RDFL** and **ABAAD**, we worked to enable people from all walks of life to have better understanding and appreciation of the struggle of women in Lebanon. They returned to their schools, TV stations and offices with the badge of '**Women Rights Defender**' to support their communities and help victims who suffer a great deal from domestic violence and harassment but say no word about it.

Domestic violence might be the most critical, but it was not the only issue we put on the table. Our awareness-raising sessions touched upon an array of other crucial topics. We tackled laws that need to change to make this society a safer place for girls and women. We explained how global charters were developed to protect women from violence in times of peace and war.

The discussions also raised the question of discrimination against women at home, in the workplace and in society. How we can empower women to stand up to violations of their rights, and how a feminist society can be part of that charge.

Our partners were inspired by the talks. Positive change was immediately seen in the type of media coverage tackling such issues. Working alongside partner newspapers, we upped the ante against the misrepresentation of women's image in the media, with special content highlighting **Fe-Male's** work in the field.







A giant leap  
in the right  
direction.

## SETTING A BAR

A moment of crucial importance came when a **Code of Conduct** was developed by **Fe-Male** in August 2016, outlining in very clear language a set of demands that, if seen through, could guarantee a better, more balanced representation of women's issues across media outlets, advertising companies, government institutions, and the civil society.

The six-page document, which puts in practical terms what should be done to reach the bigger aim of diversity and fairness, was signed by an array of journalists, decision makers, university students, advertisers and activists. Signatories also include the National Media Council, Press Club and the Lebanese Council of Women.

They carried the torch and spread the word into their areas of expertise and profession.



## THE HEAT OF A COLD MARCH

It was one of those cold, rainy mornings on which you wouldn't envisage leaving home to grab a sack of gold from downstairs, let alone take part in a long march. Except if you had the passion to do that.

Against all odds, our calls to march for women's rights on the International Women's Day on the 8th of March 2017 were not only heeded, but overwhelmingly answered.

There were 2,000 of them all, and maybe more. Locals, migrants, transgender people, the secular-minded, the liberal-thinking; from all backgrounds, all nationalities and all beliefs, they marched on the International Women's Day on 8 March 2017. Together, they braved the cold weather and, in sheer spontaneity, thronged the streets of Beirut. With a united voice, they shouted one message "different causes, one struggle."

The march celebrated women living in Lebanon and their effort to make the country's laws, societies and economies

more inclusive and supportive of women. It wasn't too long before three of Fe-Male's younger members were invited to take part in a meeting organised by the Lebanese Parliament and the United Nations Development Programme to discuss abolishing child marriage.

And because the rightful demands of the marchers reverberated like never before, the march prompted us to take a more sustainable step. Fe-Male is currently part of a feminist bloc that was established by the national groups and agencies that partnered with us in organising the event.



Not bad a  
victory on a  
chilly morning  
after all, eh?



To read (and sign on) our Code of Conduct, jump to our website





افعل  
صوتك

لا تربط رجولك بالمرأة  
لا تربط رجولك بالمرأة  
لا تربط رجولك بالمرأة  
لا تربط رجولك بالمرأة

قضايانا متعددة  
نضالنا

Girls just wanna  
have  
Fundamental  
Rights!

قضايانا متعددة  
نضالنا

مسيرة يوم المرأة العالمي ٢٠١٧

Women and girls  
live in dignity  
in a just world  
of patriarchy

Women and girls  
live in dignity  
in a just world  
of patriarchy



# A **ENTHUSIASTIC** NETWORK OF **DEFENDERS**



Change doesn't happen without a trigger. It doesn't happen overnight. For injustice to be combatted there has to be people who call it out in the first place. It takes **brains**, hands and conviction for that to happen. Taking down a wall cannot happen without a hammer.

## SO HOW DID WE PLANT THE SEED OF FEMINISM?

Conviction always existed in the minds and hearts of those who wanted violations against women stopped. At **Fe-Male**, we only provided the toolbox that would enable our nucleus of passionate feminist volunteers to raise the voice and demand a change.

Our members joined our training programmes with the main aim of changing societal mind-sets and norms. But they also did so to widen their own horizons and acquire the skills they need to take on the next offender. For months, they underwent training sessions on women's rights, sexual violence and creative activism. They learned how to put together a proposal that puts women's rights first.



Our volunteers summed up their experience in two main transformational signs:

- A motive to be more involved in the overarching feminist movement and struggle for women's rights in Lebanon.
- An appreciation of the difference between sex and gender and the negative ramifications of inequality and the need to combat it.

## WHAT DO THINGS LOOK LIKE TODAY?

Our young activists play a vital role. They are the driving force behind our calls for change. We rely on them to bring up issues that feminists face in Lebanon. We are inspired by their resilience, adaptability and hunger for success.

Armed with the knowledge and resources, **our volunteers** have taken women's needs to decision-makers and debated what we know is a right.







## A FEMINIST TURNOUT AT THE BALLOT BOXES

While parties scrambled for a vote and voters scrambled to back their candidates, Fe-Male's volunteers, along with other women's rights organisations, were busy making history. For the first time in Lebanon's elections history, the May 2016 Municipal Elections were monitored and observed from a gender angle, as we kept a close eye on women's participation and the impact votes had on voters of all sexes.

With support from the Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE), our volunteers worked round the ballot clock to collect data, analyse and assess the grounds. A post-elections report summed up those observations and gave the verdict on the direction of travel that women's participation in democratic elections was following.



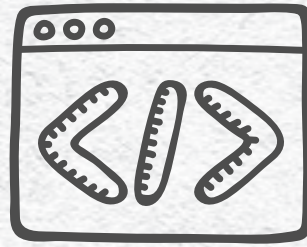


# STRAIGHT INTO THE SCREEN

Seeing is believing, so the saying goes. There have been numerous adaptations of great literature and novels over the decades. When fiction is set in motion, the impression is always greater. There is something special about seeing the words being acted out, feeling in direct touch with the characters and being immersed in the plot. There is a rapport of some sort.

**But what if what is being depicted is the reality itself? What if the reality was quite sinister? What type of feeling would possess us? Would it be guilt, sympathy or depression?**

Because we felt that women's rights were addressed with a great deal of injustice, we decided that the best way to go about it was to look our viewers in the eye, show them that those violations were no game, that offences were being committed on an hourly basis and, disappointingly, no-one seemed to pay attention.



## IMAGE UPON REQUEST

Sexualising the image of a woman is a licence to gender-based violence. In Lebanon, this dangerous trend in media and advertising industries seems to slip through the net. Producers, creative designers, journalists and market agents have, sometimes inadvertently and many others not, presented women in images that are not just far from the reality, but can do more damage than the makers can imagine.

As Lebanon headed into a murky path, we provided fog lights. Produced in collaboration with **the Lebanese Women Democratic Gathering (RDFL)**, Image upon Request reminded that objectifying women on TV and in commercials was not a 21-century phenomenon. Humiliating promotions were seen, for generations, as amusing, with little to no attention given to how women were portrayed as second-class humans that should forever live in subordination.

The documentary, part of an online **“Sell Your Product, Not Her Body”** advocacy campaign launched in 2014, highlighted how the social status-quo in which patriarchal tendencies dominate the Lebanese society was reflected in the media.

Produced by Lebanese reporter Jad Ghosn, **Image upon Request** featured interviews with prominent feminist activists, TV personalities, psychological experts, lawyers, and ordinary people in the street. It compiled a collection of disgraceful TV clips and commercial sketches that invade our screens and streets like a pack of wolves unleashed in a jungle of bunnies.

**Image upon Request** was a wake-up call for people who turn a blind eye to violations and stereotyping. It was an open discussion between all segments of the society on an issue that needed a long, deep look.



To watch the full documentary, head to our YouTube Channel



## SEXUAL VIOLENCE DOCUMENTARY

Based on real-life stories of four women, **the Sexual Violence documentary** tore up the thin veil behind which the suffering of thousands of women in Lebanon and around the world was being suppressed.

Produced in renewed partnership with **RDFL**, Sexual Violence collected testimonies from women who- at some point or repeatedly- in their teenage or adult years, fell victims of social norms that put honour first and girls' well-being last. The women in **the documentary** recalled distressing accounts of incest, forced marriage, rape and child molestation which they had to live with for substantial parts of their lives without having anyone to listen to them.

**The documentary's** release on 27 November 2015 coincided with the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, a fitting occasion to renew calls for an action to end violence against women and girls around the world.

The first screening was watched by **120 people** who came from education institutions, humanitarian organisations and the media. Over the following month, the film was screened at five different universities across Lebanon, with discussions held on the side-lines.

**Sexual Violence** served as a painful reminder of the injustice that millions of women in Lebanon and beyond suffer from; shocking figures released by the United Nations at the time revealed that around one in three women around the world experienced physical or sexual abuse at one point in her lifetime.

It is an  
epidemic that  
has to end.



To watch the full documentary, head to our YouTube Channel





# CROSS WORLD CROSSES THE WORLD

**Aya and Justina** are two girls living thousands of miles apart who meet from their own end. They have both lived as refugees at one point of their lives. Their stories in two juxtaposed corners in this world finally cross path.

**Aya** fled the war in Syria to neighbouring Lebanon, while **Justina** went through the same cruel experience of leaving one's home when the conflict engulfed her country, South Sudan. The two girls don't know each other, but there is immediate empathy between them. One girl asks questions, the other answers.

The feminism-based film, produced by **Fe-Male's** own film maker **Nour Wahid**, was a worthy winner at the 30 Under 30 Film Festival in New York City. The nomination, from among thousands of contestants, came following a screening at the 61<sup>st</sup> session of the Commission on the Status of Women.



In Wahid's words, "I come from a country with unfolded, but untold, stories. I felt I had to share one of them with the world. Inviting Aya and Justina to interact from afar was the beginning of an idea to present problems such as early marriage and offer hopeful solutions.

"As much as I feel proud to have won this accolade, I know that my victory is when people watching this film are motivated to make a change in this world."

Wherever they  
might happen to  
be, girls deserve  
to dream and  
achieve.



To watch the video, head to our YouTube Channel





# FE-V VOICE



Values.

Voices.

Victory...

words associated with our feminist movement. But for us, the **V** is really all about our Volunteers who raise the voice, defend their values and achieve victories. This is the amazing group of people who we feel proud to have as a huge part of our venture. The group of 40 passionate feminists who decided it was time to do something meaningful to change the harsh reality.

Our volunteers are vocal. They are our valuable assets. And we will always listen to their powerful voice.

MONA  
YAACOUB

"You do  
something you  
believe in without  
expecting  
anything in return"



"I met the Fe-Male team when I was brought on as a guest for Sharika wa Laken. After watching their documentary about objectification, I wanted to become more involved; this stereotypical image of women is based on cultural norms. People would tell me I couldn't play basketball because I was a girl, so I wanted to prove them wrong. Being a part of the journalism world also played a major role in encouraging me to join the cause. My experience with Fe-Male has taught me about my rights and how harmful everyday sexism can be.

Before joining Fe-Male, I never used to pay attention to media or advertisements. The ads we see on the streets do not represent us; our projects pinpointed ways to give women more roles in ads and change the misconception that women are either supermodels or housewives. We highlight issues that were once ignored. The reward that comes from volunteering isn't always financial- you develop in character and do something you believe in without expecting anything in return. This sort of passion to build a better society is born from the heart. Patriarchy is widespread and feminism should become the centre of everyday life. Neglecting to speak out on these issues only gives them more power.

Lebanon has a long way to go, but at least we've started to raise awareness in universities, schools, and within families. Feminism is about equality in rights and representations. We still see women getting harassed and raped or their children being taken away because laws don't provide

justice. We want more men to call for gender equality. Thanks to Fe-Male, I feel I've contributed to the change we all seek every day. We're on the right track."

MONA  
YAACOUB  
QUICK  
V-FACTS

Joined in 2012  
Basketball player,  
wrestler

**Education:** BA in Journalism, the Lebanese University. Currently studying MA in Economic and Development Journalism.

**Feminist Idols:** Nawal Saadawi and Marie Curie, who "challenged their societies and worked towards making a difference in their field and changing the projected image of women."

**Favourite Feminist Quote:** "Those who were seen dancing were thought to be insane by those who could not hear the music." Friedrich Nietzsche



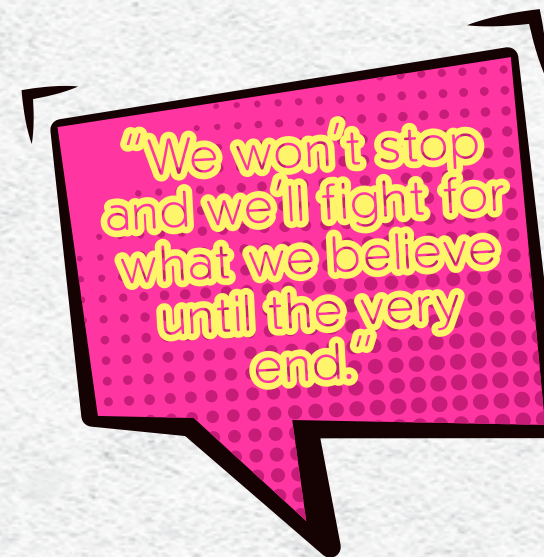


"I was inspired to join **Fe-Male** in 2013 after they came to my university and presented a lecture. They got my attention because I was studying advertising and I knew how prominent sexual objectification of women was widespread in the media. I joined in order to fight against this, as well as to advocate for women's rights, women's empowerment, and to fight against gender-based violence.

I felt I became more rebellious since being a part of **Fe-Male's team**. My perception and awareness increased of the sexual objectification and harassment that is everywhere in media. I believe in change and I want to see it take shape more and more. I don't believe that a person can change, even if their behaviour does. No force can change a person. But personal experiences can play a role.

This is not a job that a person does for free. Volunteering for an organisation like **Fe-Male** acts as part of a mission for the common good of humanity. That's why volunteering is very important. Change is so slow in its progress, but it's there. We won't stop and we'll fight for what we believe until the very end. That's why I invite every single person, woman or man, to volunteer and help raise awareness to make things happen.

**Feminism** is supposed to be a part of everyday life, and a very important part at that. It should be like eating; we need to nourish our bodies, just as we need to feel united and as though our thoughts and ideas matter. As a general rule, the people and citizens themselves bring out the best in their country. We need to strive to understand our job in Lebanon and decide where to go from there."



**Joined in 2013**  
**Weather Presenter at MTV**  
**Digital marketing.**

**Education:** BA in Marketing and Advertising, Notre Dame University

**Feminist idol:** Jessica Chasten, a Hollywood actress, who "speaks out about the trivial roles given to women in movies."

**Feminist quote:** "At one point, 'feminist' became a pejorative term. How did that happen? If you are a feminist, you are basically saying you are a humanist." Julianne Moore.





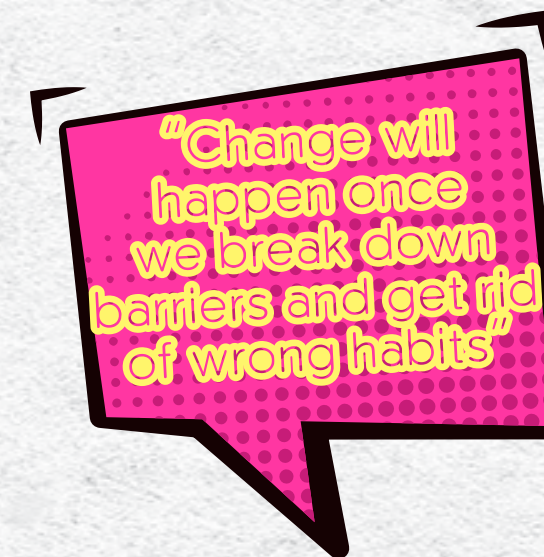
"I joined female in 2015 as they prepared to hold a workshop in Amman, Jordan. I felt we both were going in the same direction so I wanted to become a member. What motivated me in particular was the cause that Fe-Male defended. As I look at my journey so far, I feel everything here reflects my character. I identify myself as a feminist.

Feminism tells you that you shouldn't judge people based on their social class, political affiliation, colour or nationality. Feminism breaks gender stereotypes that we grew up with. So, I'm not just defending a woman's cause, but also standing up for the man. They are both victims of patriarchy we grew up with.

Change will happen once we break down barriers and get rid of wrong habits. It is one of the most difficult missions to break with deep-rooted traditions in a society. But this is exactly why I wanted to join Fe-Male for; to challenge myself to do that.

For Lebanon to become a better place for everyone, there has to be equality in law and politics; law should punish harassment because it is a crime. Women have to enjoy political participation in parliament just like men. Education is also important, we have to give boys and girls the same rights.

I will always remember screaming my heart for that as we marched on International Women's Day. As the march advanced through the streets, I was in the lead with 2,500 women and men marching behind me. After the march, I was asked to attend a parliament discussion about early marriage. It was a special moment and I was the youngest to attend and debate. It sums this experience up for me."



**Joined in 2015**

**Works in customer services at the British Embassy**

**Education:** BA in PR and Advertising, Lebanese university

Currently studying MA in Communications

**Feminist idol:** All women and girls who achieved their dreams in spite of all challenges against them. Girls who fought for their land and country, like Sanaya Mehadli. Above all, the girl who after years will change and become more educated and more influential, that's me, **is my idol**

**Feminist quote:** "I do not wish women to have power over men; but over themselves." - Mary Shelley





“One of the greatest highlights since joining Fe-Male was the demonstration **that** we walked in for International Women’s Day. Thousands of people of all ages were marching in the streets under pouring rain. Everyone was proud and screaming for every woman on this planet, full of hope that everything will get better and safer for them. There was an amazing feeling of solidarity that no one in Beirut could deny. I stepped out of my comfort zone that day and let the genuine feminist in me flourish. To be a feminist, you can’t just preach feminist ideologies, but must also take action.

I’ve learned the history of feminism and my beliefs are now backed by developed theories. I learned how to **translate** my feminism to others and help them see it in a positive light. I used to try to justify my stance by saying that **‘I’m a woman and how can women not be feminists?’**.

My whole way of thinking has evolved. We strive to become more loving and respectful individuals, who embrace differences. Joining Fe-Male was a major turning point in my life.

Volunteering for the cause pays the highest wages to passionate people. Every time a law that protects women is decreed, or an objectifying advertisement is taken down, we’re rewarded with priceless joy. We must let our hearts, anger and thoughts push us on.

When women are encouraged to partake in every aspect of life and are treated the way they deserve, **then** we can start to feel that we’re in a better society.”



**Joined in 2014**

**Editor and Communications Officer**

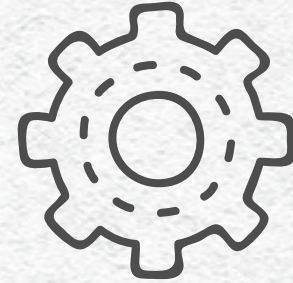
**Education:** Journalism & Electronic media, Notre Dame University Currently studying MA in Communications

**Feminist idol:** Coco Chanel and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

**Feminist quote:** «I raise up my voice—not so I can shout, but so that those without a voice can be heard...we cannot succeed when half of us are held back.» Malala Yousafzai



# THE FIVE NEXT YEARS



“Women are half the society. You cannot have a revolution without women. You cannot have democracy without women. You cannot have equality without women.

With this remarkable woman’s perspective in mind, **Fe-Male** has set certain goals for itself in its mission to achieve justice. In the coming years, we will tackle these key questions:

You cannot have anything without women.  
DR NAWAL EL-SAADAWI



## WHERE DO WE WANT TO BE?

**Fe-Male aims to widen its compass** and reach out to a larger number of women and girls outside the capital Beirut.

**Have a hand in building a young feminist movement** in the region, extending the knowledge and fostering the spirit of feminist activism

**Challenge women’s objectified and stereotypical image** in the media and advertising through campaigning

**Strengthen and expand Fe-Male’s financial** and human resources by raising funds, hosting panel discussions, and mobilising volunteers to all corners of Lebanon.

**Mobilise people and resources**, lobby for core funding, and increase project funding to reach more people on a national level





## WHAT DO WE WANT TO ACHIEVE?

**Implement capacity building exercises and activities**, i.e. assessments, facilities planning, fundraising, leadership development, mergers, networking, programme design, research, team building, etc.

**Train young feminists in our unique cause** and establish a curriculum that includes basic knowledge of feminism that could contribute to **Fe-Male's** recruitment strategies

**Develop creative and digital activism** to ensure cyber security and conquer violent extremism using art, awareness methods, and online advocacy

**Focus on advocating** for **Fe-Male** through various media and social media outlets, and thereby expand our membership system

**Work in solidarity with agencies** to raise awareness and change policies within the establishments



## What kind of world do we want to live in?

One in which feminism **is no longer a taboo subject or a stigma**, but embraced as a level of knowledge worthy of attention

One in which women's **objectification and negative stereotyping in the media** is challenged and acknowledged as problematic by decision makers and advertising agencies

One in which young feminists **thrive and contribute** to the creation of their own movement

One in which the world **joins that feminist movement** to change the wrong and fight the unjust

One in which our experiences and feelings inspire **personal empowerment**

One in which our organisation continues to prosper and **becomes the hub of effective actions**





# OUR GENEROUS SUPPORTERS OVER THE HALF-DECADE

# OUR AMAZING NETWORK OF PARTNERS



Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands



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International Labour Organization




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Norwegian People's Aid  
جمعية المساعدات الشعبية النرويجية


Mediterranean Women's Fund


The Independent Activists




RD=L  
التجمع النسائي الديمقراطي اللبناني


World March of Women


الشبكة العربية  
www.annmwm.org


FEMINIST BLOC



# AND ALSO..



There is no advocate without education. There is no success without failure. **We must learn. Learn to fail, learn to push on, learn to rise up as one and fight for what is right, rather than what is easy.** Centuries have passed with this notion at the heart of many debates. Well, actions speak louder than words. It is our turn. We **mustn't** accept defeat.

If not now, **when?** If not here, **where?** If not us, **who?** **We have a responsibility, not just to Lebanon, but to women worldwide.**

**Feminism** is not just a word that denotes women's rights. It is a way of life, a call to arms. It is a word that provokes us to reconsider what we have accepted for **thousands** of years.







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