

ANNUAL
REPORT 2021

GUARDING OUR VALUES
EMBRACING CHANGE



www.fe-male.org

Fe-Male is a community-based grassroots feminist organization which leads advocacy and campaigning efforts for the support of women and girls' rights in Lebanon and the region. Operating in a very challenging context and a crisis zone, Fe-Male strives to maintain its commitment to its mission which is to serve women and girls for as long as they are discriminated against and deprived of their rights.

Mobilizing communities, strengthening the feminist movement, fighting Gender- based violence, promoting equality, producing feminist knowledge, raising awareness, developing capacities, documenting women's stories and rights violations, and responding to emerging crises that affect the lives of women, girls and marginalized groups in Lebanon continue to be Fe-Male's goals as time passes by, and as long as women and girls' rights and causes are marginalized, and their voices neglected.

FOREWORD

The year 2021 was the most challenging year since Fe-Male's establishment. According to the United Nations, the human rights situation in Lebanon deteriorated further in 2021, where more than 80% of the country's residents did not have access to basic rights, including health, education, and the minimum standards of living in dignity, such as adequate housing and electricity. The World Bank has described Lebanon's crisis as a "deliberate depression," due to Lebanese leaders' mismanagement and lack of effective policy actions and ranked it among the top three most severe global financial crises since the mid-nineteenth century. The disastrous situation, with drastic implications on women and girls especially, which persists, had Fe-Male review its strategic objectives to meet the emerging needs of women and girls on the social, political, and economic levels.

Accumulating crises became the new reality for people living in Lebanon, especially the most vulnerable and marginalized women and girls, i.e., refugee women, women with disabilities, elderly women, women migrant workers, and LGBTQIA+ individuals. Starting with the Lebanese pound losing more than 90% of its value, to inability to access food, water, period products, medicine, health care, education..., combined with fuel shortages and electricity blackouts, lasting up to 23 hours per day, and increase in suicide and mental problems rates, and not ending with immigration and brain drain becoming an "increasingly desperate option", with 77% of Lebanese youth wishing to get out of their country, hospitals and schools permanently closing or being forced to cease their operations and the lives of hundreds being threatened at time several deaths were recorded due to lack of medication.

Over the years, Fe-Male has vowed to work tirelessly towards strengthening the feminist movement in Lebanon and the region and ensuring that every woman and girl live in a just and safe society. While being among the first responders in every crisis, we continued dedicating special efforts to advocacy and campaigning as tools to speed up the work on policy making and achieve social and behavioral change while being up to the challenge and achieving progress, leading on activism, increasing the production of knowledge and community work and mobilization, while developing innovative tools and techniques to adapt to the tenacious, deteriorating social, economic, and political situation, as you will discover through reading the following pages of this report.

During 2021, Fe-Male had also undergone internal reforms and restructuring in line with its feminist values and beliefs. We went back to the roots of our existence and prioritized our grassroots work and knowledge production and dissemination to ensure strengthening social and political feminist movements and paving the way towards more enabling environment free of patriarchy. These changes contributed to ensuring a healthier work environment as well as safe and violence free space for every woman and girl within our community. When looking back on all that we've achieved in 2021, we rest assured and proud that Fe-Male continues to walk the talk, speak truth to power, challenge abuse and inequalities, and nurture a culture of accountability. This year and every year, we vow to believe the survivors and stand side by side with the vulnerable and underprivileged. Fe-Male vows to keep prioritizing its values, ethics, independency and the community's best interest and rights, and most importantly, it keeps on celebrating activism, solidarity, feminist friendship and love.

Hayat Mirshad

Executive Director



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A year in Numbers

Direct Reach:

3,250 Women and girls benefited from hygiene kits

880 Women and girls in 12 areas in Lebanon benefiting from sensitization sessions on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights- SRHR

138 Women, young women, and girls benefiting from arts therapy and sports activities

135 Young women and men targeted in awareness-raising and capacity development activities

38 WHRDs benefiting from trainings on cyber security



- 46** Media coverages
- 32** Journalists trained on Investigative Journalism and participated in well-being workshops
- 18** Local and International NGOs participated in consultation meetings around GBV
- 7** Publications
- 3** Digital media campaigns launched
- 2** Feminist centers in marginalized areas established

Indirect Reach: FE-MALE :



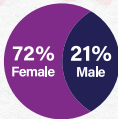
Audience Gender



SHARIKA WA LAKEN:



Audience Gender



The Gendered Humanitarian Response To Crises

Since 2020, Lebanon has been wallowing in crises: the global COVID-19 pandemic, followed by the devastating Beirut Port Explosion and its aftermath, then sinking in an unprecedented economic crisis characterized by a flagrant inflation; all of which severely affected its residents' lives. Undoubtedly, the magnitude of these crises laid heavily on the lives of the most vulnerable of women, girls, persons with disabilities, and LGBTQ+ persons regardless of their background, ethnicity, or nationality. In light of an obvious, mostly intentional, neglect of their needs and silencing of their voices, **Fe-Male** came to realize that a further regression in the attainment of their rights must be faced with all its available resources and capacities.

Effects on mental health, limitations on the access of sexual and reproductive health needs, the increase in GBV and femicides exacerbated, and the lack of safe spaces, were predominantly manifested upon women and girls leaving them in grave need for support. **Fe-Male** focused on attending to their needs, especially with minimal efforts exerted by the government to find solutions.



Grass root organizing and implementation marked the period that followed the blast, and **Fe-Male** took the responsibility to respond to the urgent needs of women and girls in one of the mostly affected areas, Karantina, an area 2 km away from the Beirut Port, and largely destroyed by the explosion. After a rapid needs assessment on their situation and a few interventions in support of recovery, **Fe-Male** planned a set of activities that would momentarily take women and girls out of the depressive situation and help them vent out and express their feelings. In addition to distributing hygiene and sanitary kits, sports and arts therapy were introduced to this community. Almost three months of grassroot activities targeting women and adolescent girls between 10 and 50 years of age provided them safe spaces and an opportunity to speak about the impact that the blast had on their lives.

Moreover, **Fe-Male** couldn't disregard the role that some hidden soldiers played in raising the voices of the marginalized. As an organization specialized in media, and a rigorous experience in working with journalists, we additionally reached out to front line journalists and reporters who went above and beyond to cover the blast and its repercussions, and also provided a space for venting out and stress release.

The Gendered Humanitarian Response To Crises



The activities under our initial humanitarian response were mainly:

- Dissemination of hygiene and sanitary kits for affected women and girls affected by the blast

- 2 Months of **football and basketball training** for girls age between 11 and 19

- One month of **Art Therapy** for women and girls age between 18 and 50

- One **well-being and self-care training** for frontline journalists

- Four interactive videos of **self-defense** tips published on our social media platforms

- Three awareness-raising and inspiring videos around mental **health and well-being**



SRHR: Women and Girls' Needs in Crisis

The aftermath of the blast combined with the economic inflation persisted throughout 2021 allowing for more injustices to surface. Women and girls' access to sexual and reproductive health resources became more severe.

Addressing this issue was inevitable especially with women, girls, and transwomen's repetitive concerns raised regarding the lifting the subsidization on menstrual products, where up to **76% of women and girls in Lebanon** began to suffer from difficulty in affording menstrual products due to the sharp increase in their prices. The crisis to them was multiplied, as they didn't only suffer the high prices, but also the limitation on their voices to speak about this stigmatizing issue, where they were bound by the fear of being shamed.

#Nashaftolna_Dammna



#Nashaftolna_Dammna was **Fe-Male's** public campaign to respond to this serious crisis which puts women's sexual and reproductive health at risk. Lack of enough information about **periods** and access to a healthy menstruation marked the lives of women and girls, as they suffered from **"period poverty"**, a term that describes the struggle many low and middle income women and girls face while trying to afford menstrual products due to the financial burden posed by menstrual supplies that include not only sanitary napkins and tampons, but also pain medications and underwear. Only in 2021, **Fe-Male** was the first organization to tackle this issue based on evidence through a holistic intervention that aimed to change the narrative and legislation around period poverty in the country. The campaign aimed to raise the voice about the negative effects of period/ menstrual poverty and its repercussions on women and girls in Lebanon, and to stress the importance of finding long-term solutions by the Lebanese government and key stakeholders following the release of **Fe-Male's** joined nation-wide research study with PLAN International. The study revealed that **41.8% of women and girls in Lebanon** reduced the number of sanitary pads used during their menstrual cycle or used them for a longer time, where **87.9%** have changed their purchasing behavior for menstrual products because of the dramatic increase in their prices.

Different approaches were used to highlight and tackle this issue. Awareness-raising, production of online content, and grassroots activities were implemented throughout the campaign's period. **Fe-Male** was able to distribute more than **1800 hygiene and menstrual kits**, reaching **3000+ women and girls** in marginalized areas as well as in the capital offline, as well as 16M online, in less than six months.

**#Nashaftolna
Dammna**



Below are the main activities conducted in this regard:

- Production of a research study based on a national survey targeting **1800 women** to study perceptions and needs related to menstruation .
- Launching **#Nashaftolna_Dammna** digital media campaign calling out for managing menstruation without shame or stigma.
- Launching of a grassroots **Period Poverty** Festival where **Fe-Male** and Jeyetna initiative roamed 12 locations across 6 regions in Lebanon (Beirut, North Lebanon, Akkar, Baalbak-Hermel, Beqaa, South Lebanon) in buses, while establishing mobile clinic and disseminating information and distributing menstrual products. During the festival, a 75-minute **"حييتنا"** (Arabic for **we got our period**) documentary which creates a space where women can break the silence on period poverty in Lebanon through ten intimate and inspiring portraits of women aged from 11 to 65 and drawn from a wide variety of social and geographic backgrounds across the country, was screened and discussed.

Feminist Internet and Digital Security and Safety

Recently, cyber security and safety became among the urgent issues in 2021 that caused unrest for women's rights and feminist activists. Mid 2019, Fe-Male launched a unique campaign underpinning cyber GBV under the title **"Screens Do Not Protect"** to raise awareness on the risks that face women and girls in the digital world. Believing that online violence is merely an extension of offline violence, relentlessly, Fe-Male continued its efforts to raise awareness on a persisting challenging situation for the most vulnerable, and that especially exacerbated for those who use the digital platforms as a tool to fight patriarchy and call for equality.

In 2021, Fe-Male tackled online GBV that especially impacts the lives of women human rights defenders and feminist and queer activists in the cyber world. This type of violence that silences them and narrows the safe online spaces where they can express themselves and support in being the voice of the vulnerable and marginalized. 2019 on, among Fe-Male's many priorities was fighting online GBV and facilitating a safe access to women and girls.

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صالح باوي

Feminist CyberSecurity



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Throughout the year 2021, we campaigned on reclaiming these safe spaces, and raising awareness on this issue to pave the way for targeted women, queer, and feminist human rights defenders to use their online presence to campaign against injustices. As such, Fe-Male sought to gather evidence on what are the needs of WHRDs and activists, therefore conducting a survey which was regionally disseminated in 14 countries. The survey's results revealed that more than half of the participants (55.70%) received sexist, racist, and/or homophobic messages and experiences, whereby 30.4% received direct attacks or threats of violence:

- Data collection of perceptions and experiences of WHRDs survey and production of a report with analysis and recommendations
- Development and production of Feminist Cyber Security training toolkit
- Three training workshops targeting front line WHRDs, and feminist and queer activists from Lebanon and the MENA region

Leading Advocacy Efforts and Campaigning for Priority Needs

A period of compounding crises in the country. Women's rights and causes deteriorated drastically, and the already existing and unresolved issues got worse. On the onset of the pandemic, numbers of femicides increased, GBV and VAW were incredibly present, and repercussions on the most vulnerable and marginalized emerged on many levels.

With a mandate to be the voice of the unheard, and under a dark cloud of continuous deprivation of rights and discrimination, **Fe-Male** intensified its advocacy and campaigning efforts to reach and mobilize the public in support of the marginalized and vulnerable, and launched three priority and unique campaigns during 2021:



-A 24-hour reactive campaign, initiated by Fe-Male and that took social media by storm, not only in Lebanon, but also in the region. "It's Called a Crime" was our response to the increasing number of femicides and domestic violence.

-An online regional campaign on the rights of domestic workers from a labor and feminist perspective. "Home Work not Homework" campaign portrayed and showed the realities domestic workers live in the MENA region while inducting conversations around the topic that shift the narrative, to finally, call for and introduce recommendations and reforms to ensure the protection of domestic workers' rights.



-A digital media campaign on cyber violence and crimes against WHRDs, feminist and queer activists in the MENA.

-A digital campaign aimed at raising the voice about the negative effects of period/ menstrual poverty and its repercussions on women and girls in Lebanon, and to stress the importance of finding long-term solutions by the Lebanese government and key stakeholders.



Community Mobilization and Expanding in the Regions

Since its establishment, Fe-Male has always believed in the power of youth to create change. To us, community mobilization is key. In 2021, we realized the intensity of the crises' impact on the lives of young women and men, especially in remote areas outside the capital. In 2021, Fe-Male extended its scope of implementation and established two centers in the North and the South of Lebanon putting its resources in the hands of youth, the agents of change. Our base of volunteers, members, and young leaders made it easier for us to reach and mobilize more youth and attract them to join our feminist movement.

To us, the centers are not just offices. They are safe spaces for youth to express themselves, gain new knowledge and information, acquire skills and tools to fight GBV, and spread Fe-Male's mission in their communities. For the upcoming years, Fe-Male will concentrate not only on mobilizing youth, but also on giving them ownership to take on the activities in the centers and lead the change.



Community Mobilization and Expanding in the Regions



Our Pioneering Feminist Platform: Sharika Wa Laken Documenting, Producing, and Sharing Knowledge

During 2021, **Fe-Male**, through its feminist platform **Sharika Wa Laken**, focused its efforts, as in the previous years, to continue to be a trusted and credible platform for feminist knowledge production. Various innovative taboo-breaking multimedia content including videos, photo stories, GIFs, articles, and infographics/images voicing out the needs of the most vulnerable communities affected by the compounding crises, were produced. While we continued monitoring the Lebanese media and news from a feminist perspective, **SWL** opened up and expanded its presence and reach to different countries in the MENA region providing a regional platform for Arab writers in Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Morocco, Kuwait, Sudan, Algeria, Syria, Palestine, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt... to reflect on the realities of women and girls in these countries. **Fe-Male's** network of journalists mounts up to 100 Arab journalists and they all share our vision of solidarity around women and girls' rights and causes. The social media content produced and published on **Sharika Wa Laken's** website and social media platforms was diverse and inclusive and it highlighted the realities of the marginalized and vulnerable communities, generating discussions among the public and promoting change in attitudes towards taboo topics.

Investigative journalism played a big role in shaping SWL's media and social media production in 2021. We were able to reach and tell the stories of women and girls in marginalized communities who suffered discrimination, abuse, exclusion, and various forms of oppression in Lebanon and the Arab world.





- **50 unique coverage articles** from Lebanon and the MENA region
- **Daily news coverage** (at least 2 news per day) on women and marginalized communities' issues, women, and human rights violations, documenting their struggles, achievements, and success stories
- **18 videos and video-graphics** tackling the different forms of GBV
- **A guide for journalists on GBV terminology**
- More than **100 infographics**, info-images and photo stories summarizing statistics, informative data, case studies, and reports that tackled SRHR, GBV, access to rights, women in politics, mental health and well-being, digital economy... in the country and the MENA region

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Safe-Guarding and Anti-Corruption Policies



Over the years, Fe-Male has always prioritized enhancing its policies and developing its organizational capacities and operational processes to create an enabling environment for its staff and any who works or volunteers with it. Fe-Male's board believes that, when in place and practice, governing policies are important for the sustainability of our work.

These policies, some developed upon establishment and reviewed over the years and some during the year 2021, are true facilitators of implementation and are the basis of our response and are more often presented to our community to increase their awareness on the significant role they play in steering the wheel of implementation and response. Since its establishment, Fe-Male has never faced any issues related to safeguarding or misconduct, whether within our offices or with any of its employees, members, associated “consultants” or partners, until mid-2021, where we had to deal with a serious case of violence and abuse of power.



Having a well-designed and well managed mechanism for handling external or internal complaints/feedback and striving to gain the trust of both our staff and the stakeholders, Fe-Male investigated and handled the complaint as per the articles of our Whistleblowing and Feedback Policy, our internal bylaws and the Lebanese laws. Since the complaint concerned the senior management, a committee that included members only from the board, was formulated, and after thorough investigation, and because of evidence of severe breach of Fe-Male's Code of Conduct, the decision was made to discharge this particular staff member.

During 2021, we developed new policies as well as revised all the previous ones. Listed below are the policies that Fe-Male abides by in implementation:

1. Whistleblowing and Feedback
2. Asset Management
3. Procurement
4. Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse- PSEA
5. Human Resources
6. Financial
7. Digital Privacy
8. Child Safeguarding
9. Anti-Harassment and Anti-Bullying
10. Anti-Fraud and Anti-corruption
11. Do No Harm



Donors and Partners

GLOBAL FUND FOR
WOMEN
Champions for Equality

CFI MEDIA
DEVELOPMENT

**KVINNA
KVINNA**

**FRIEDRICH
EBERT
STIFTUNG**

**UN
WOMEN**

MADRE
fighting for feminist futures

 **Save the Children**

ICNL
INTERNATIONAL CENTER
FOR NOT-FOR-PROFIT LEADERS

PLAN | The charity for
girls' equality



THOMSON REUTERS
FOUNDATION



**Women's Peace &
Humanitarian Fund**
A United Nations & Civil Society Partnership

FRIDA
THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT



**THE
SIGRID
RAUSING
TRUST**

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2021 Budget

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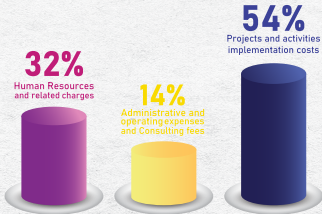
30%
increase
in Fe-Male's annual budget

Funds received in 2021:

\$465,537

Expenses of 2021:

\$424,731





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