



Libyan Women Forum Newsletter

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A few words from our Founding Director...



Sometimes I wonder whether the women of Libya have lost faith in the future of their rights, and increasingly, I witness a country that has taken on the attitude to "let the chips fall where they may" so to speak.

It is easy to look at a situation and see the negative aspects, but that

does not mean it is true or wise. I want to urge Libyan women to stay positive about our situation. Things can and do change. Stay aware and proactive about the future development of our country.

The coming few months will be very important and decisive landmarks for the path of the "new" Libya. I say this due to the coming elections for the local councils and constitution drafting committee, which are sure to have huge impacts on the way in which the country will develop and

move into the future.

Women must keep faith, focus and come together during this time to secure their future rights and the representation of their views.

This does not mean that every woman should put herself forward as a candidate, but at least we should make sure that those we support and vote for, have our own best interests and views at heart. Pay attention and take action. After all, the power is, finally, in our hands.

Latest News:

- LWF on the way to membership in Association for Mediterranean Business Women
- 7 LWF members assembled for team to implement future SGBV documentation project.
- Custom Civic education manuals for LWF CoE project in first stages of printing.

Our Story...

Looking around the hive of activity that is the LWF office today, one can not but amazedly recall that the office was once located in our Founding Director's car, and that members met with each other to discuss and organize LWF activities in their favorite coffee shops down Gargaresh road.

It truly is astounding to consider how far we have come as an organization, from the simple hope of several women to empower others, to a bustling organization that is dealing with some of the biggest international organizations in the world.

Perhaps our readers would also be interested in how LWF came to be what it is today. Our story was touched on briefly in the previous issue, however the purpose of this article is to fill in the gaps of the LWF journey.

Libyan Women Forum was established after a group of women, given new hope for Libya following the 17th February revolution, saw the necessity of a women's movement to empower Libyan women. They hoped that women would in fact contribute to the development of a new, un-discriminatory Libya that would protect their rights,

represent their views and encourage them to participate in all roles and sectors of society.

Within a week the women had decided on the name of forum and recorded their vision. Within a month, the women who stayed with LWF formed a solid team and obtained official registration as a CSO. Our first project, the DDR and reconciliation campaign was launched soon after.

However, the forum remained mainly self-funded with its members contributing money and donations and working in

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FEATURE

Meet the four special women behind our success

It is unquestionable that all of our LWF members have contributed in some way to our growth and success, whether with small or large donations of their time and effort, we are extremely grateful for all of the work that our members have

given to our organization and cause. However, extraordinary dedication, hard work and unwavering loyalty to LWF by a special few women has really been the backbone of our success and continuation as a civil

society during these trying times .

Therefore, many of us agree it is high time that due recognition and gratitude are given to these women who have stood behind LWF through thick and thin.



Hameda Al Ousta

Hameda joined Libyan Women Forum in April 2012 and has been a dedicated and important member of our organization ever since. She has taken on the position of executive director with a strong sense of astuteness and responsibility, and her contribution has been vital to the successful implementation of most, if not all, of our projects. She is constantly on the move, completing important errands for the forum, and has a say in all of the major decisions made by LWF.



Essra Amar

Essra has been a member of Libyan Women Forum since we first began recruiting in November 2010, she immediately became an active and integral member of our organization when the Centre of Excellence and the Civilian Alliance projects were initiated, in which she was appointed centre coordinator and procurement officer respectively. She has managed to juggle these two tasking responsibilities and much more with a fierce diligence and capability that has made her into one of our greatest behind the scenes assets.



Shahrazad Magrabi

Shahrazad is one of the three founding members of Libyan Women Forum and has become the pushing force and inspiration behind our organization and all of our work. She often meets with representatives of international and local organizations to initiate or secure project funding and partnerships, and holds the position of director within LWF. All decision making, organization of events and activities and the preparation of essential project documents are mainly attributed to her and her astounding sense of dedication, hard work and creativity.



Intissar Aljreow

Intissar began working with LWF in January 2011 and helped to expand Libyan Women Forum by requesting the establishment of a branch in Zawiya of which she took the position of head. Until now, she has remained one of the most loyal and helpful members of organization, not only skillfully managing a whole branch of our organization and boosting the growth of the LWF network, but also contributing endlessly to our work in the LWF headquarters in Tripoli meriting her the utmost appreciation and esteem from all of us here at LWF.

PROJECTS

The Women Leadership Empowerment Project

LWF has recently agreed to collaborate with PILPG, an international pro-bono law firm, for The Women Leadership Empowerment Project, planned to be implemented over August to September 2013.

LWF has taken on the role of implementation and outreach partner, with PILPG providing funding, the training course and materials for the participants.

Three individual training courses are to be implemented three times each in different areas across the East, West and the South of Libya, including Sirte, Musrata and Zuara.

The workshops and sessions will cover professional skills training for female legislators and judiciary officials and women currently or hoping to be involved with the drafting of the

constitution, combined with transitional justice training. The aim is to enable women in the judicial, civic and governmental sectors to effectively



PILPG representative Andres Perez meeting with LWF

contribute to the drafting of the constitution and decision making process.

LWF is very excited at the prospect of contributing towards this nation wide

project that directly falls in with the LWF aims outlined in our vision and mission statement.

Shahrazad Magrabi LWF Founding Director said "We are so pleased that we have managed to secure this project. Empowering women to play an effective role in the decision making process is an integral part of what we do here at LWF. I have very high hopes for the outcomes of this project."

Incidentally, the coming of the project also falls in with three of the Forum's top identified priorities for the coming year, which are; embedding women's rights in the constitution, supporting female candidates for the local council elections and constitution drafting committee, and encouraging women to participate effectively in the constitution drafting process.

2 Projects, 1 Organization; LWF and NDI

Voters Guide for Constitution Committee Candidates

On July 30th, NDI, the National Democratic Institute in Libya along with the New Libya Foundation, H2O, and 1Libya, invited LWF along with various other CSOs to attend a meeting to discuss the development of a Voter's Guide containing information about the candidates of the constitution drafting committee elections.

The purpose of the project is to better inform the voters and clarify the views of the candidates that they would vote for. The guide will include a questionnaire asking the candidates about their views on key issues such as women's rights and system of government.

In order to determine which criteria and issues should be covered by the guide, NDI invited the local NGOs, four of which attended, to the first meeting. The LWF, NDI, and the attending

NGOs, reached out to other CSOs to further increase the participation in this project.

The NGOs participating are expected to provide the interview questions, the nature of the information required and distribute the guides.

2 other meetings followed the first, the last taking place on the 18th of August. These workshop/ brainstorming sessions were led by Mohamed from H2O, a local organization, to identify the information to be included.

Sample questionnaires have been requested from the participating NGOs, of which LWF has submitted in early August, which will be circulated and discussed by the organizations to contribute towards the final template which will be finalized soon.



A meeting of the participating NGOs

LWF greatly value participation in this project as it will support civic education of women at the grassroots level whilst also aiding women voters to place effective votes for candidates who accurately represent their views and rights.

Election Observer Facilitators Training and Network



The initial workshop in Zawiya on the of 27-29 August

The LWF branch in Zawiya recently requested that NDI provide training for a number of women as election observers and facilitators.

NDI promptly responded to our request and 12 women and men from various local NGOs, including 6 of our own, attended a 3 day workshop in Zawiya which took place on the 27-29th of August 2013.

NDI provided the training and funding for the activity, from which 6 selected participants are to receive further training to become official election observers.

Meanwhile the Swani election committee had already requested of LWF to train locals as election observers in the area.

It was decided by LWF and NDI for the 6 selected participants, all of which were LWF members, to lead the training in Swani, where they would be observed by members of the NDI team to give note on their performance and report back on their progress.

This led to our involvement in the establishment of a permanent nationwide election observers network that was initiated by NDI, after the organization requested that our 6 members to represent LWF

as part of the network.

LWF recently provided a list of suggested local NGOs to be part of the network, and will also bring their experience forming the Civillian Alliance to the project. The Network is hoped to be ready for the coming local council and constitution drafting committee elections.

Empowering members of LWF and other women to play effective roles in the building of the country as election observers, and the sustainability of this project in particular, definitely renders it a valuable project that LWF is very eager to be involved with.

EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

LWF members attend documentation workshop in Cairo organized by Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice.

During the 19th–24th five LWF members attended a workshop in Cairo, Egypt along with several other representatives from other CSOs from Bengazi and Derna. The intense 8am-7pm four days event was stimulating, challenging and a wholly enlightening experience that will be valued and remembered by all the women who attended, despite the turbulent political situation in Egypt.

The workshop centered around documentation of SGBV. Many of the women were encountering this issue for the first time and gratefully professed that the workshop helped them to take on a great deal of knowledge and tools to comb and advocate for provision of services for affected women at this major concern that they had been unaware of beforehand.

The workshop was expertly organized and led by women's Initiatives for Gender Justice ad lead by Amira Khair, the Sudan and Libya Program Officer from the host organization, and contributed to by Manal AbdulHalim and Faiz Alsiliak, a media expert who presented about how to fill the gap between media and Civil society. A highlight of the event was an unexpected phone call from the executive director of the Women's Initiatives , Brigid Inder, who unfortunately was not able to meet us in Cairo. Our members were also especially touched by the care and concern shown by Ms. Amira Khair in particular for their comfort and safety.



LWF Open Day a Big Hit



From 11am-4pm on the afternoon of the 14th the LWF premises in Ben Ashor, Tripoli was the site of lively activity as guests arrived for the Forum's first Open Day. The informal event was a great success with the appearance of guests from all over Tripoli and the surrounding areas such as from Zawiya, Swani and Alaziziya. We received civilian activists and representatives from local NGOs along with professors, four UNDP representatives and members of the media and press such as AlAasima TV. Guests took part in a lively Q&A session, ad hoc group discussions and debates and had a chance to look around and enquire about the Centre and LWF office. The afternoon also included a delicious open buffet and registration for membership in the forum was opened for the very first time. 8 new members joined during the event.

LWF Founding Director on televised interview with Libya Al Hurra

Our Founding Director Shahrazad Magrabi was invited to be interviewed for Libya Al Hurra TV on the 18th of August to discuss the views of women activists and CSOs on Women's Rights issues in Libya. The interview was aired the next morning for the Subah Al Hurra segment, and has been repeated several times since. The interview and discussion was conducted by Mohamed Al Aujli, a presenter from the channel, and the topics covered gender equality concepts, effective representation and participation of women in the drafting of the constitution and LWF's vision and views on the empowerment of women.



Mrs. Magrabi briefly touched on LWF's future vision to aid the establishment of a High Commission for women, with direct contact to the head governmental office, in order to directly combat concerns about women's issues, develop a national strategy to protect women's rights, and hold the government accountable for committing to international human rights instruments to protect and enforce these rights.

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partnership with other organizations. Our members recognized the need for real funding and a premises as the forum continued to grow. When LWF heard about UNDEF, they jumped at the chance to apply for a fund for one of their larger projects, a Centre of Excellence to train and empower women.

Meanwhile, an international NGO named CAWTAR (based in Tunis) agreed to extend their funding, expertise and partnership for a number of our projects, after LWF approached the organization for support. Their help in our time of need enabled LWF to stabilize and begin building a good reputation for effective hard work in the field.

Soon, LWF received the exciting news that they had been selected to go through to the final round of the UNDEF application process. A comprehensive project document had to be prepared for submission, a huge task for a relatively small and inexperienced organization.

After the 17 page document was completed and sent, LWF members waited in suspense until the coming year to receive a response. Meanwhile, LWF began to gain even more recognition and momentum initiating larger projects such as the Civilian Alliance and the "My Rights" campaign.

The breakthrough came in October 2012, and as soon as the project was

accepted for funding, LWF knew that it had made it. We have continued to go from height to height, securing larger projects as our recognition, experience and grassroots network continue to grow, ever since. Soon enough, LWF were moving into a brand new premises, the initial 6 months of which was generously funded by the Canadian Embassy in Tripoli, in which both our office and the Centre of Excellence is located.

We hope our story will serve to inspire others and remind them that change can indeed start with a few people, after all it is commonly said; "where there's a will, there's a way".

ANNOUNCEMENTS & NOTICES

TUNE IN...

“Women of Today and Politics”

LWF is resuming its weekly radio program titled “Women of Today and Politics”, an hour long segment prepared and produced by LWF members centered around providing awareness, information and advocating women’s empowerment and participation in Libya. The program is aired by Zawiya’s local radio station.

Station: Edaat Al Zawiya - 101.3FM

Time: 6 - 7pm, every Monday

LWF NEWS UPDATE:

- Comparison Study and Analysis of Libya Family Law Project waiting for funding. Team of LWF lawyers have been assembled and completed first stage of the project.
- Sound bite promoting Economic Empowerment project recorded by LWF, and broadcasted by 2 local radio stations.
- LWF Zawiya branch opening new Centre for Soft Skills for women.
- LWF members met on the 11th of August to discuss projects for the next 6 months.

ANNOUNCEMENTS OF THANKS

LWF would like to extend our gratitude to the following;

ICCWomen and Amira M Khair in particular for hosting and organizing the brilliant workshop in Cairo.

Our young volunteers Lulu Faidi and Hind Turki for contributing their time and effort to LWF over the summer.

Kashada & Co. auditing firm for assisting LWF in establishing a financial system and the previous years auditing.

LWF Press Releases and Statements of 2013

LWF has released a number of press statements during our activities, these range in subject from announcing the initiation of some of our projects to open protests against governmental actions. Open the link below to view the documents on our Facebook page.

Please note that most of the documents are in Arabic.

<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.530993653636114.1073741856.23447490662.1325&type=3>

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VOLUNTEERS REQUIRED

Libyan Women Forum is urgently seeking a voluntary media and photography coordinator.

Flexible hours
Arabic or English

If you would like to contribute to our organization, please contact us.