WHY DO WE NEED A MEDITERRANEAN WOMEN’S FUND?

Women’s associations cannot consider taking long-term actions if they are not strong enough. How can 5000 euros grant help an association to operate?

In the new Tunisian constitution, dated 27 January 2014, Article 20 proclaims, “The citizens of Tunisia, male and female, have equal rights and responsibilities. They are equal before the law with no discrimination.” Not stopping there, Tunisia goes to the head of the class of Mediterranean countries with the particularly innovative Article 45, which stipulates, “The State is committed to protecting and giving women equal rights and to reinforcing and extending these rights. The State guarantees equality of opportunity for women and men with regard to access to all responsibilities and in all fields. The State strives to establish parity between women and men in elected assemblies. The State will take the necessary measures to eliminate violence against women.”

This is the question that comes to the minds of the women citizens in numerous countries in the region where the Constitution, the supreme law of the land, stipulates equality between women and men. What good are these lovely constitutions if discrimination occurs on a massive and daily basis? The situation of women sometimes is so difficult that some women no longer see what a law can do for them and doubt that there is any point in working to reform them.

This would be the case of women who have not experienced studying, working, going out onto the street, having heterosexual relationships, giving birth or being forced to end a pregnancy, marrying, living with a violent man, separating from a husband, and many other moments of a woman’s life that can be, depending on the time and place, full of injustice and unbearable oppression.

Because even if the application of laws favourable to women remains a pious wish, their sheer existence means that at least part of the society recognizes the injustice done to them.

Caroline Sabina Bion de la Penne

“FATHER AND PROUD OF MY DAUGHTER” BRAVO TO ALL OF THE 2013 PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION PARTICIPANTS AND PRIZE WINNERS!

With the idea of drawing men further into the women’s emancipation movement, the theme of this year’s competition was: “Father and proud of my daughter”. We received 70 photos from 15 countries: Algeria, Croatia, Egypt, Spain, France, Italy, Lebanon, Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia, Palestine, Portugal and even temari. After much deliberation, our jury, composed of Marie-Faude Ngere, Reza, Pierre-Yves Génestre, Sylvie Hugues, Frédérique Joulou, Caroline Laurent-Simon, Catalina Martínez-Clera, Souad Elhadj and Lizzie Sadi, selected 20 photos and gave awards to 3 of these. A fourth photo received a special honourable mention from the Mediterranean Women’s Fund team.

The photographer chose to recount the story of two well known public figures in Tunisia, father and daughter in their private life. She is Laura Ben Mhenni A freedom activist, she was nominated one year ago for the Nobel Peace Prize. Her father, Sadok Ben Mhenni (a prominent personality in Tunisia), discreetly attends each rally and event at his daughter’s side.

Abdel Mhadi Beni

Photo competition
**NEWSLETTER FROM THE MEDITERRANEAN SHORES**

**DURING THE SECOND SEMESTER OF 2013, WE HAVE SUPPORTED THE INITIATIVES OF SOME DOZEN WOMEN’S GROUPS WORKING TO...**

**STRENGTHEN WOMEN’S CAPACITIES**

**SYRIA**

Tafoukte Association for the Development of Re-habilitation of Women was established in 2008 in Al Haouz province, situated in the south eastern part of the Marakech-Tensift-Al Haouz region. It aims to defend women’s rights and to combat all forms of violence against women. The association works to promote equality through women’s education and citizenship.

Their project, “Economic empowerment of women: to give birth in normal conditions due to the state of siege, and encourages the participation of women and young people in the future reconstruction process of Syria.”

**MOROCCO**

Voix d’Elles Rebelles, an association created in 1995 in Saint Denis to combat violence against young girls and women from immigrant groups. The association responds to the needs of women in the midst of family breakdowns who are facing violent situations and living in precarious economic and social conditions. The association seeks to be a place where women who have been maltreated can be heard and find support. It also offers support for social administrative procedures, and can provide housing in emergencies.

Through its project, “Anti-harassment security zones”, the association is leading monthly awareness raising campaigns on sexual harassment and its impact on all of society, following a participatory approach in which the citizens are involved.

**ALGÉRIE**

Asurf, created in 2011 in Tiizi Ouzou, works to promote women’s rights by creating an action framework for young people, prioritizing women and particularly university students and graduates.

Through its project, “Tamettut ger tlawin – a women’s association among women”, the association seeks on one hand to enable young women to identify and understand the main mechanisms of oppression so that they can take control of their lives, and on the other, to promote the financial independence of women and young people in disadvantaged rural areas, and to integrate them into leadership and decision making processes.

**EGYPTE**

Kayan – Feminist Organization, created in 1999 in Haifa, works at the national level to strengthen the role of Arab women in local decision making processes and promotes and defends their economic, social, and civil rights. Its project, “The bridges – strengthening the Arab women’s movement in Israel”, offers a complete training to some thirty future female Arab leaders.

Through its project, “Harass Map was created in 2010 by young women to act against sexual harassment in public places in Cairo. The association first launched a mobile phone application that allows victims of sexual harassment to alert the authorities by sending them an SMS and to benefit from support and counselling."

**PALESTINE**

Asurif, founded in 2008 in Al Haouz province, works out of Syria. It cooperates with local and international NGOs and with members of civil society to help women in Syrian communities by promoting their participation in social, economic and cultural spheres.

The project, “Women and hope under siege”, aims for the economic empowerment of women by establishing a non-violent work environment. The association works to promote their participation in economic, social, and cultural spheres.

**CROATIA**

Women For Women’s Rights, created in 2004 in Bethlehem, aims to strengthen the economic, social, and cultural rights of women by actively collaborating with women and local and international feminist organizations. It works to improve the place of Palestinian women, to reinforce their participation in society, to defend their rights and to improve their overall well-being.

Their project, “Road of skills”, aims to help young Palestinian women to enter the workplace, improve their skills, and develop leadership and organizational skills needed for a solid professional career.

**ISRAEL**

Brod group for Women’s Human rights created in 1998, works to promote and protect the rights of women and children. In order to extend its network of services for abused women and children, the association is implementing a project, “Advice and refuge for women and children victims of domestic violence”, which seeks to provide free legal aid and psychological support to women who have been victims of discrimination, unequal treatment based on gender, and domestic violence in the Brod-Kisirkaya region.

**EGYPTE**

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**EGYPTE**

EGYPT,

*To view all of the projects, visit the information page on our site*
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Kayan – Feminist Organization, created in 1999 in Haifa, works at the national level to strengthen the role of Arab women in local decision making processes and promotes their economic, social, and civil rights. Its project, “The bridges – strengthening the Arab women’s movement in Israel”, offers a complete training to some thirty future female activists from Arab women organizations. Through its project, “Anti-harassment security zones”, the association is leading monthly awareness raising campaigns on sexual harassment and its impact on all of society, following a participatory approach in which the citizens are involved.

Voix d’Elles Rebellées, is a feminist and mixed association created in 1995 in Saint Denis to combat violence against young girls and women from immigrant groups. The association responds to the needs of women in the midst of family breakdowns who are facing violent situations and living in precarious economic and social conditions. The association seeks to be a place where women who have been maltreated can be heard and find support. It also offers support for social administrative procedures, and can provide housing in emergencies.

The Yto Foundation to lodge and rehabilitate abused women, was established in 2004 in Casablanca. It works for the rights and citizenship of women, and conducts awareness raising programmes about violence against women in Moroccan society. It undertakes actions against sex-based discrimination, and works for the economic integration of women, notably in rural areas. Its project, “Caravans for citizenship and real socio-economic and legal equality”, ensures follow-up to social caravans, campaigns to recode the civil status of women and children, and fights against the marriage of minors.

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Harass Map was created in 2010 by young women to act against sexual harassment in public places in Cairo. The association first launched a mobile phone application that allows victims of sexual harassment to alert the authorities by sending them an SMS and to benefit from support and counselling.

Through its project, “Gender and development: feminist or not? New voices and new usages: feminist or not? New voices and new usages”, the association is leading monthly awareness raising programmes about violence against women, and fighting against discrimination, unequal treatment based on gender, and domestic violence in the Belgrade-Visok region.

The collective, Feminists in Motion, gathering 45 associations, celebrated their third Summer meeting entitled, “Liberty, Equality, more determined than ever”. These meetings aim to multiply mobilizations and reaffirm the universal and feminist fundamentals of Society. They also are an occasion for hundreds of feminists from all over France and overseas to come together, exchange experiences, and together plan future mobilizations.
Why do we need a Mediterranean Women’s Fund?

Belonging to the same cultural area, under the influence of three monotheistic religions, women from the Mediterranean region are subjected to a common form of patriarchy and despite living in apparently very different situations, share many similar aspects of their condition. Whether they come from the southern or the northern shores of the Mediterranean, women know that they must not only fight to obtain equality but also to strengthen their existing rights which have been obtained thanks to their tenacity and their struggles.

They act in a climate of general regression which is the effect of radical conservative movements in societies undergoing changes and they are experiencing many difficulties in finding the necessary funding for their actions at a local or regional level. This is why in 2008, women from North Africa and Southern Europe have taken the initiative to create a Mediterranean Women’s Fund whose aim is to help with improving women’s condition and to promote gender equality throughout all those countries in the Mediterranean region.

In the new Tunisian constitution, dated 27 January 2014, Article 20 proclaims, “The citizens of Tunisia, male and female, have equal rights and responsibilities. They are equal before the law with no discrimination.” Not stopping there, Tunisia goes to the head of the class of Mediterranean countries with the particularly innovative Article 45, which stipulates, “The State is committed to protecting established women’s rights and to reinforcing and extending these rights. The State guarantees equality of opportunity for women and men with regard to access to all responsibilities and in all fields. The State strives to establish parity between women and men in elected assemblies. The State will take the necessary measures to eliminate violence against women.”

If one also considers Article 34 on representativeness and Article 40 on work, Tunisian women are well set to walk with their heads held high... on paper?

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This would be the case of women who have not experienced studying, working, going out onto the street, having heterosexual relationships, giving birth or being forced to end a pregnancy, marrying, living with a violent man, separating from a husband, and many other moments of a woman’s life that can be, depending on the time and place, full of injustice and unbearable oppression.

However, thanks to tenacious mobilisation, for each of these moments, laws have been passed which help to improve, little by little, the status of women and the way they are viewed.

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Caroline Sakina Brair de la Penne

NewsletTer from the Mediterranean shores

February 2014

N°9
PHOTO COMPETITION

2nd prize
ANAMARIJA MATANOVIĆ (Croatia, Slavonski Brod)

“She has her own world, but I have learned so much from her world”

3rd prize
ZENAB OUDAH (Palestine, Gaza)

The photograph shows the artist Mohammed Sahwil, a 66 year old Palestinian refugee, encouraging his daughter Rafidah, 25 years old, in her artwork. The father encouraged his daughter to study art at the University of Aqsa in Gaza. She furthermore participated in developing a large number of wall paintings and took part in numerous expositions. “I am very happy that my family supports me, and particularly my father, who played an important role in my career as an artist,” said Rafidah.

Lastly, special mention for the photo taken by YANN RENOULT (France /Palestine), “The young girl and the sea”. The accompanying text touched us deeply as it well reflects the spirit of the competition. “When her father’s injuries stopped him from continuing on as a fisherman, Madeline, despite her youth, did not hesitate: she took over her father’s work. The only woman in a man’s world, she had to work harder than everyone else to gain the respect of her peers. While he had doubts in the beginning as to whether she would succeed, her father is now proud of her. He does not hesitate to protect her and submit to arrest and pressure from Hamas, which takes a poor view of a woman working in this environment.”

Thanks to Micheline Decroix for having carefully collected and organized all of the photographs in the competition.

You may now go to our photo gallery to view the complete selection of the jury and the 20 photos.