

POST

# Strengthen the women's movement,

... is repeated like the leitmotiv by the Mediterranean Women's Fund: but what does this really mean?

One might go back to the suffragist movement begun in Europe at the end of the 19th century, or to the beginnings of the Egyptian movement with the Egyptian Feminist Union created in 1923 by Hoda Shaarawi, but it is undoubtedly starting from the second half of the 20th century that the movement for the emancipation of women, emboldened by the wind freeing hitherto oppressed groups of people, flowered in the Mediterranean. And for over thirty years, ever increasing numbers of women have organized themselves, even in the most isolated spots in the world, and have succeeded in throwing sand into the well oiled machine of a patriarchal norm, and, by disrupting it, are beginning to succeed in having the world be seen through women's eyes.

**It is because they mobilized themselves,** fighting their own reflexes as people raised to obey, adding the engagement to their already full days as women, often clashing with those they considered to be allies (and luckily sometimes finding unexpected allies), that they were able to establish the idea that it is no longer inconceivable for a woman to live with whoever she wishes, decide if and when she is ready to have a child, and to be whoever she wishes: to be a free human being.

But it is also, and above all, because they mobilized themselves together, uniting the strengths of autonomous groups, based on their own needs, in the same movement for the emancipation of women and equality between men and women: the women's

movement. (A handful of men have joined this movement: conscious of the need to let those who have personally experienced oppression to decide how to overthrow it, they accept the uncomfortable position of remaining on the sidelines, in solidarity.)

**Despite all these years of struggle, the path towards a just and balanced society remains long,** and while it seems shorter in certain countries, no one is safe from the appearance of unexpected and enormous obstacles that demand the redoubling of efforts to overcome them.

This is what is happening today in numerous countries in the region: political changes that raised hopes for better human relations, the blossoming of individuals in a more open society, are evolving into a whirlpool of hatred and violence that is gradually rendering the basic work of women's associations impossible. They are desperately fighting against fundamentalism, militarization, torture, and to help the wounded and refugees, and, even if they continue to advocate for egalitarian constitutions and *struggle against violence against women*, they no longer have the resources to continue their awareness-raising activities.

**They need the women's movement to be strong,** if not in their own country, then in neighbouring ones, so that others can express their voices, their demands, and win ground no matter where they are.

Because if somewhere in the world just one woman is free, respected, and in possession of all of her rights, that means that one day all the women in the world may be so too...

Caroline Sakina Brac de la Perrière

**THE COMPETITION RUNS FROM JUNE 20, 2013 AT 00:00 TO OCTOBER 30, 2013 AT MIDNIGHT**

Photo Competition 2013



## « FATHER AND PROUD OF MY DAUGHTER »

*"I am proud of my daughter and her commitments, even if I sometimes find her actions excessive..."*

*"I'm proud of her strong personality, I like the fact that she doesn't let people push her around"*

*"Everything my daughter accomplishes and experiences today is her own choice."*

*"I am proud of the artist she is. I have always believed in her, since she was a child. At the time she already loved to sing, to make up lots of stories, to listen to me play music..."*

We often expect mothers to be proud of their daughters. What about Mediterranean fathers? How do they look at their daughters? How do they encourage them, how do they empower them?

"Father and proud of my daughter" will be the topic of our next Photo Contest 2013. It is about staging the empowerment of the women through the eyes of a father

This competition is only open to amateur photographers living in a Mediterranean country.

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## SUPPORT DURING THE FIRST HALF OF 2013, OUR FOCUS THUS HAS BEEN TO THE INITIATIVES OF WOMEN'S GROUPS WHICH ARE:

### FIGHTING TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN,



**Beit El Hanane** is a non-denominational association created in 2008 to provide psychological, emotional, and physical support to women victims of violence no matter what their origins, appearance, or beliefs. It furthermore promotes awareness raising and the education of society to break the taboos regarding violence and abuse of women.

By offering a welcoming and secure refuge to women fleeing violence, the first step in their rehabilitation in society, Beit el Hanane, the **"House of Tenderness"**, helps them to integrate themselves and become active members of society through education and efforts to become autonomous.



**Tamaia**, is an association created in Barcelona in 1995. It fights against violence and gender inequality, notably within couples and families. It implements a programme to provide psychological support to women victims of this type of violence by offering a telephone help line, individual or collective.

The project, **"Assistance to heal and recover from violence for mistreated women"** aims to reinforce the first contact over the telephone with assistance, accompaniment, and support in crisis and emergency situations for women already participating in the programme.



**Libres Terres des FEMMES** was created in 2006 to fight against violence against women. It aims to produce animated **films on the rights of foreign-born women** who are victims of domestic violence. These animated, 3 minute long films, each of which covers a specific topic (lodge a complaint, rebuild self-confidence, etc.) explain in simple terms the steps to be taken. They are translated into several languages: English, Arabic, Lingala, Bambara, Wolof, and Portugueses.

### DEFENDING AND PROMOTING WOMEN'S RIGHTS,



The **Coalition for Sexual and Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies** (CSBR)

founded in 2002 is the only international solidarity network in Muslim societies working to promote sexual and bodily rights as human rights. CSBR has a multi-disciplinary character and is composed of a wide array of organizations and academic institutions from the Middle East, North Africa, South Asia and Southeast Asia, engaged in advocacy work including women's human rights, human rights, sexual and reproductive health and rights and LGBT rights at the national, regional and international levels.

The project **CSBR at the Commission on the status of women** allowed the presence of a delegation of CSBR members at the 57<sup>th</sup> Commission on the Status of Women (CSW): this year's theme being the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls. While the current situation is alarming, the CSW is an opportunity for CSBR to mobilize its constituencies and attempt to counter the Organization of Islamic Countries' positions on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR).

### AWAKENING AND RAISING AWARENESS,



**Adam Foundation for Human rights**, created in 2012, works as an umbrella organization for some community-based organizations in Giza governorate. It promotes campaigns against female genital mutilation, advocates for better healthcare for women, and conducts youth leadership workshops.

Its project, **"Combating female genital mutilation by Theatrical Drama"**, proposes using theatrical drama to raise awareness about female genital mutilation (FGM) hazards and harmful effects and to combat this kind of violence, which touches 91% of Egyptian women.



**Association Femme et Progrès**, founded in Kef in 2011, aims to raise the awareness of women, particularly in rural areas, about their rights in a context of post-revolutionary political instability. The members of this association are convinced that a woman who is more aware of her rights is better equipped to fight against violence and discrimination, particularly in closed environments opposed to change.

Its project, **"Karamti fi Majallati"** (**"My dignity in the Personal Status Code"**) aims to raise the

awareness of women, most of whom are illiterate, regarding their rights and fundamental liberties so that they can become instigators of change on the political scene and in society.

The Association Femmes et Progrès thereby contributes to promoting equality between men and women, gender diversity, and to supporting women's rights.



**Anima Center for women's and peace education** was founded in 1996.

Its mission is to create a non-patriarchal society of free individuals (both male and female) by spreading culture of peace and non-violence, as well as promoting gender equality.

The project **"Transitional justice & the feminist ethic of care: a feminist approach to dealing with the past in post-conflict ex-Yugoslavia"** aims to increase the active role of women in transitional justice and peace building processes, bolster women's visibility in social and political decision making, and amplify women's impact on post-conflict politics and civil society systems throughout the region. Through this project Anima aims to:

- increase awareness of the State's responsibility for crimes in 1990
- increase awareness of civil society of transitional justice mechanisms
- connect alternative art and activism through the Performance of «DAH Theatre».



**Cairo Centre for Development**, is a non-profit organization created in 2009 in Giza.

It aims to promote women's rights, gender equality and struggles against all form of violence against women.

These objectives are pursued through the implementation of awareness raising activities, capacity building and advocacy campaigns.

The project **"Media for Combating Violence against Women"** targets media professionals and aims to provide them with information and knowledge on violence against women. In so doing, the organization seeks to raise public awareness about violence against women through media campaigns and to raise legal awareness as a strong tool for combating violence.

## MEETING TOGETHER AND ORGANIZING THEMSELVES



### Feminist Ambassadors

created in 2011 seeks to promote the rights of women, non-violence, and a socially just economic system for all.

Project **Revolt Social Workers** (RSW) started in December 2012 with beginning of All Slovenian Revolt in Slovenia. Feminist Ambassadors seized this opportunity to form the women's/feminist group Revolt Social Workers, since none of the revolt groups represented women's rights and position of women in Slovenian society.

Revolt Social Workers are women- mostly young(er) women, professional social workers and students of social work, but also university professors and women who consider themselves to be social workers (since to be a woman in our society, means to be a social worker, since women's work within the fami-

ly and elsewhere is based on care for others, emotional support, understanding of others problems etc.). RSW organise discussions, round tables, art performances, political actions, protests concerning position of women, women's rights, unemployment and poverty of women (demand for social protection and new social rights). Women's presence in the public (and political) space is essential for broader public sensitization of issues affecting women the most (low pay, exclusion from the political space, precarious employments) which have increased with austerity measures and changes happening within the global and European context.



### Feministes Indignades

is a feminist group founded in 2011 and made up of diverse feminisms and feminists. Its main goal is to achieve a worldwide change in human, social, political and economic relationships, so

that diversity is fostered and valued, from a feminist perspective. Its strategic goals therefore are to create and support the ongoing networking and solidarity among feminists and feminist groups, at the local territorial level as well at a much broader level (national and international) and to promote debate and exchange among feminists. The project **"Participating in the World Social Forum in Tunis 26-30 March 2013"** aimed to support some of its members in the running costs of their participation as Feministes Indignades (travel, accommodation, etc.) in order to have a collective presence at the forum, and the workshops they were invited to ■

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TO SUPPORT THIS WORK, online donations  
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## LAUNCH OUR FIRST COLLECTIVE INTELLIGENCE TRAINING,

### A FEMINIST TRAINING IN COLLECTIVE INTELLIGENCE: WHAT IS THIS?

Lastly, the Mediterranean Women's Fund launched its first feminist training in collective intelligence: two training sessions were held March 14-19 and June 27-July 2 near Alger. They gathered some twenty young women from different town in the country, Constantine, Tizi Ozou, Mostaghanem, Bejaia and Alger, all convinced of the need for change in the situation of women and all al-



*I know I am not alone.*

*Together for equality and do not let yourself oppress.*

*One might say this is the day I was born.*

*Men, stop your domination, we are fed up with your domination.*

*We can all work together to fight inequality.*

ready active in associations. They were thrown into a formation that was "unlike anything they had ever seen", during which laughter and reflection, transmission and learning, poetry and rigour, theory and experience mixed harmoniously in a warm and welcoming space.

This three-part training mixes feminist approaches both on the theoretical level (what is domination? what is equality? feminism? gender? the women's movement?) and concrete level (the space created is a hierarchical space of liberty, safety and confidence) and uses tools from the theatre of the oppressed and theatre-forums, psychology, and personal development. Its aims is to allow young women – and ultimately everyone present, including those animating the sessions – to reinforce their self-esteem, their confidence, their capacity to take the floor, to defend their ideas, to lift themselves out of the rut of the system of domination, but also to live with contradiction, listen to others, go be-

yond confrontation and find agreement, all in order to construct associations and reinforce the women's movement on solid interpersonal and organizational grounds.

The training evolves over time: **The first part, "Meet and know oneself"** covers the relationship of women to the world at the individual and collective level: know oneself and understand the mechanisms of the social system to which one belongs as well as those of movements for change such as the feminist movement.

**The second part, "Affirm and defend oneself in public"** focuses on the relationship with the other, both within intimate relations and within the public sphere, learning and internal communication in a group, including conflict management.

**The third session, "Build and create together"**, which is planned for this fall, will be the moment to implement the collective intelligence gradually formed over the preceding sessions.

This training is given in partnership with the association *Étincelle* (France) ■



■ **UNITED NATIONS WOMEN'S RIGHTS BODIES HAVE TAKEN A STAND CONDEMNING ARGUMENTS EVOKING CULTURE, CUSTOM AND TRADITION** to justify limits on women's rights.

In March, the Commission on the Status of Women, *in the conclusions of its 55<sup>th</sup> session*, thus urged States to strongly condemn all forms of violence against women and girls and to refrain from invoking any custom, tradition or religious consideration to avoid their obligations with respect to its elimination as set out in the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women. And in July, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women adopted *a statement on the*

*role of women* in the process of political transition in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia at its 55<sup>th</sup> session in which it urges all State parties to strongly condemn all forms of violence against women and girls and to ensure that custom, tradition, and cultural or religious considerations are not invoked to justify non-compliance with their legal obligations under the Convention.

■ **THE AFRICAN CHAPTER OF THE INTERNATIONAL NETWORK FOR WOMEN'S FUNDS** *INWF* met in Cape Town in early August to draw up a collective plan of action for all feminist African funds including, of course, the MedWF, which supports women's associations in five North African countries.

■ **THE UNITED NATIONS POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME** was studied at-

tentively by civil society organisations. *In a letter* – signed by MedWF through the auspices of the INWF network – that was sent on July 13 to the Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, some sixty organizations from around the world urged the programme to focus on individuals and ensure that no one is left behind.

■ **THE USE OF MEDIA CAMPAIGNS** against prejudice, xenophobia and discrimination is part of the Grundtvig programme in which the MedWF is engaged alongside organizations from 4 European countries. It is drafting the strategy of its next campaign entitled, "Father and proud of my daughter" ■

... AND

## ORGANIZING STRATEGIC REFLECTION MEETINGS

**In March, the MedWF and the Urgent Action Fund (UAF)** decided to take advantage of the meeting of the World Social Forum in Tunisia to organize a meeting of women activists from the region. This action also allowed participants to attend various workshops of the World Social Forum and to participate in the International Women's Assembly held on March 26.

During the day of reflection (March 27), the 14 guests, coming from Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Turkey, Israel/Palestine, Algeria and Tunisia, were able to discuss the situation of women and the status of the women's movements in their countries, and to draft a list of priorities for the defence of women's rights in the region. Three crucial questions were raised: the question of fundamentalism and the role of women in revolutionary processes; the question of sexual and bodily rights as a new challenge in the region; and the question of the rise of young feminists to renew the movement. These discussions enabled the MedWF to better understand the situation experienced by the associations with which it works, and to meet and

get to know the coordinators of the different projects supported by the MedWF such as Muntada –Arab Forum for Sexuality Education and Health, Kayan, Kaos, Engagement Citoyen and CSBR, in the southern region of the Mediterranean. [http://www.medwomensfund.org/en/Workshop\\_Tunisia\\_March\\_2013.html](http://www.medwomensfund.org/en/Workshop_Tunisia_March_2013.html)



### 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.

NEWSLETTER FROM THE MEDITERRANEAN SHORES  
Information letter from the Mediterranean Women's Fund

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## Les femmes de la Méditerranée ont besoin de vous !

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