

## Ten years of storms and clear skies... or how to navigate a ship through perilous seas?

In 2008, the adventure began! We started out flying high with our spanking new Fund, established to raise money for Mediterranean women's associations.

But in the fall of that year, we were quickly brought back down to earth by a financial crash that hit many countries in the region and revealed the fragility of our institutional support. The lesson from this first hurdle was that we had to gather more people around our cause to form a solid base able to resist storms.

After operating for two years, we realized that money alone was not enough to bring about the change that women sought: the associations also need organizational support to be able to reach any society. And the first place to start was right at home...

This where we were in our thinking in the spring of 2011, when a sparkling spring washed away the hurt done to so many people on our southern shores, and even touched the northern coast, because in Istanbul the Council of Europe finally

signed the Convention on combatting violence against women.

Along with hope, the women's movement was everywhere back into the limelight: a new 2.0 generation, creative, turning the female figure into a political message, demanding change in feminist colors.

Support for the organization of associations became critical. We immediately offered them space for meetings to analyze changes in their societies and to work together. For this new generation, we also designed a program that sought to consolidate the participants' self-esteem, the Achilles's heel of many women, with training in collective intelligence.

Sadly, beginning in 2013, spring molted into a glacial winter in some lands. It is difficult to talk about equality when basic needs of peace and security are being trampled underfoot and lives are destroyed by hatred and weapons, but some tenacious few linked the three into a single bouquet, setting down the foundations of a future egalitarian society even in the most dire situations, and we supported them.

The clouds over the sea became ever darker and menacing.

Because, just as migration -- and deaths -- hit record numbers in the Mediterranean, 2015 was also a record-breaking year in terms of climate change. Reaffirming our eco-feminist vision, we tried to build bridges between people concerned with climate change and those defending human rights.

But these people, ourselves included, had to struggle to break a centuries old code of silence by denouncing sexual violence. In 2017, they formed the incredible MeToo wave, sweeping away their shame and raising their heads high.

Today, new threats are on the horizon, to both the north and south, as our Mediterranean Sea drowns in plastic, and an aggressive movement screams its hatred for women and diversity in life. It is once again up to us to stand tall and stay resolutely on course towards justice, love, and beauty in the world...

## They open the cages!

The theme of the photography competition, closed in March 2018, was: They open the cages to move in the direction of self-knowledge, towards other people, towards the world, leaving the doors wide open behind them so that others can follow! Among the over one hundred photographs submitted from ten Mediterranean countries (Albania, Algeria, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Spain,

France, Morocco, Palestine, Tunisia and Turkey), those of Antonin Weber (France/Turkey) and Mariem Naciri (Morocco) were respectively awarded the second and third prizes.

The first prize went to Ester Perez Berenguer (Spain) for her photograph entitled:

"During the strikes and the March 8 women's march"  
To view the other photographs submitted to the competition, see: [www.medwomensfund.org](http://www.medwomensfund.org)



SINCE THE START OF THE YEAR,  
WE HAVE SUPPORTED SOME FIFTY INITIATIVES WORKING TO...

END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN



TURKEY

Established in 2002 in Kadikoy, the **Association to Fight Sexual Violence** aims to raise awareness concerning all forms of sexual violence and support survivors. Despite the repressive environment, the association organizes “**Discussions about sexual violence**” in a secure space so that participants can share their experiences and discuss non-violent ways to fight sexual violence.



FRANCE

The **Association Femmes pour le Dire, Femmes pour Agir (FDFA)** established in 2003 in Paris, works to promote the status of handicapped women in French society and to fight all forms of discrimination, in particular the double discrimination faced by handicapped women. Our support allows them to fund a **hotline number for handicapped women victims of violence: 01 40 47 06 06.**



EGYPT

The **BuSSy Project** was launched in 2016 in Cairo by the Egyptian NGO, MADEV. The **Caravane BuSSy** is a mobile workshop which enables women and men from various towns in Egypt to be introduced to storytelling to highlight issues related to sexual violence, domestic violence, and sexist discrimination in their towns. In addition, the **BuSSy TOT** program is a 7-month training program for the facilitators of these mobile workshops.



FRANCE

Established in 2016, **Feminists against cyber bullying** combats violence against women, girls and the LGBTQIA+ community through digital tools. The collective is behind the



#TwitterAgainstWomen campaign and aims to raise awareness in the public and on social networks with an **interactive guide to awareness raising and information about cyber violence.**

DEFEND SEXUAL  
AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS



EGYPT

**Ikhtyar for Gender Studies and Research** was launched in 2014 in Cairo by young Egyptians. Each month, law and sexual and reproductive health practitioners and activists meet around the **Karama Platform** to share their knowledge and identify research on sexual and reproductive rights in order to access this knowledge through documentation and translation into Arabic.

PROVIDE SAFE SPACES



PALESTINE

Founded in 2009 in Gaza, the **Centre for Legal Research, Advice and Protection of Women** provides psychological, financial and legal aid to women victims of violence. The association currently is assisting approximately 100 women. MWF's support enables them to better help the women and **expand their awareness raising campaigns for the general public.**

MAKE WOMEN'S VOICES HEARD



LIBAN

**Protecting Lebanese Women**, established in 2018 in Beirut, developed a project, “**My custody rights**”, to alert public opinion and government authorities on the Shiite religious law that awards men custody rights in a divorce. They will notably recruit a lawyer specialized in the defense of aggrieved women.

CAPACITY BUILDING



MOROCCO

The **Tafoukte Association** was established by young women living in Ait Ourir, a remote region in the Atlas mountains. It works to promote the **financial independence** of women through the production of rugs and herbs, provide **literacy workshops**, and network with Taytamatine on the **Amazigh poetry competition.**



ALBANIA

**Close to Adolescents** has worked since 2005 to strengthen vulnerable groups in Albanian society. Its project this year is to strengthen women whose requests for asylum have been denied, or who have returned to Albania after living in exile, by helping them reduce their stress through legal aid and discussion groups, and to fight against the violence to which they are subjected. This project will be set up in three locations: Tirana, Korca and Burrel.

AWARENESS RAISING  
THROUGH ART AND CULTURE



BOSNIA-HERZÉGOVINA

**Cure Foundation**, was established in 2005 in Sarajevo to offer a secure environment to a new generation of feminists. The project funded involves the participation of activists and women artists in **Festival Pitchwise 2017** in Sarajevo. This Festival aims to **promote and celebrate the success of artists, theorists, activists, politicians and athletes** who remain invisible to their society and region.



PALESTINE

**El Marsa for Culture and Creativity** is a cultural centre established in 2013 that tries its best to animate the Gaza strip. The project supported is a **play about violence against women** that is followed by a discussion led by professional psychologists and social educators.

To become familiar with all of the projects, visit the information page on our website: [www.medwomensfund.org](http://www.medwomensfund.org)

## AND WE ORGANIZED...

*The first Mediterranean meeting of women specialized in media and communications* which took place at the Maison des Savoirs Féministes Altradimora, in the heart of Piedmont in Italy, from 6 to 8 July 2018. It gathered 18 women from 10 countries in the region (Algeria, Croatia, Egypt, Spain, France, Italy, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia), some linked to organizations, others freelance, all committed to defending women's rights in their work and daily lives.

Over the course of three days, they discussed their experiences as women journalists and the situation of women's rights in their countries, highlighting numerous similarities between the two shores of the Mediterranean, the existence of a shared Mediterranean identity, and the relevance of working together. They laid the foundations of a Mediterranean feminist information network, MedFemiNiswiya, based on an inclusive feminism and the promotion of solidarity, support and kindness between network members and between generations.



## FEMINIST TRAINING IN COLLECTIVE INTELLIGENCE: WHERE ARE WE NOW?

### The trained young women are changing their societies in Tunisia



*In 2016, we trained 23 young women from 17 associations.* In March 2018, nine of these young women, coming from Tunis and the suburbs of Sousse, Gafsa, Thala, and Sidi Bouzid, gathered to consolidate their network and identify together their priorities. They decided to engage in a collective action: a campaign for sexual and reproductive rights which currently exist but which are under grave threat from conservative groups and religious fundamentalism.

### in Morocco



*In 2015, we trained 28 young women,* 3 of whom were the founders of the Taymatine association, in Aït Qalla, a village in the middle of the Atlas mountains. The participants also included the head of the Tafoukte association, based 3 hours away in the village of Aït Ourir. During the training program, they came up with an idea that has become a reality thanks to their determination and our support. They have resuscitated the feminist tradition of Amazigh poetry, an

ancient oral tradition handed down from generation to generation which is rich in texts evoking equality between men and women. They did so by organizing an Amazigh (Berber) poetry contest on the topic of women and girls' rights co-organized by the inhabitants of their two villages. We had the opportunity to see the final phase of this competition, which was open to male and female artists. It took place in Aït Qalla on 22 September 2018 with approximately 1,500 spectators in attendance. The 4 finalists (3 men and 1 woman) took the stage to use the language of poetry to denounce child marriage, promote girls' education, and praise equality within the couple, before an enthralled audience of all ages. It was an unforgettable experience for us, and a historic event that girls and women will no doubt recount from generation to generation in a poem.

***The Mediterranean Women's Fund celebrated its 10th anniversary in Paris, organizing a Gala gathering over 500 people around our team and 10 magnificent performers... a spectacular party that generated joy, energy, friendship and... money, with €20,000 raised for four associations: Women Now for Development - Syria, le Feminist Collective Against Cyber-bullying - France, Women Journalists of Mesopotamia -Turkey and Victory for Rural Women -Tunisia.***

### **Focus: the Victory for Rural**

**Women association** was established in 2012 in Sidi Bouzid in Tunisia to improve the situation of women working in rural areas in the fields of agriculture, livestock farming, fisheries, forestry and crafts.

#### **Why do we support it?**

For its commitment and determination despite threats and intimidation in a region marked by conservatism and fundamentalism. And for its eco-feminist outlook.

of women in rural areas, who work from morning to night, are not heard, and these women cannot assert their rights because they know little about them. The project aimed to make people familiar with CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, adopted by the United Nation's General Assembly in 1979 and signed by Tunisia). This convention explicitly mentions equality between men and women, and Article 14 of the text specifically discusses rural women's rights.

of the Rights of Women and the Family, was visiting to meet with some twenty rural women. One of the association's activities is indeed to put members of the Tunisian government in contact with women to inform the latter of the existence of public measures to which they are entitled in their farming and artisanal work, and to bring institutions closer to marginalized women.

#### **Notwithstanding the pressures faced, the association is known and recognized**

Women know that they can find a sympathetic ear and a helping hand at Victory for Rural Women. Women who have been the victims of violence and young girls who have experienced sexual abuse seek refuge at the association. As there is no centre dedicated to welcoming or listening to women victims of violence in Sidi Bouzid, the association decided to launch itself into a new, ambitious project, that of creating such a facility.

The visit to the field having confirmed the value of the work conducted by Victory for Rural Women, we decided to support them again this year with funds raised at the Gala for this project dedicated to women victims of violence in the region.



#### **A memorable encounter**

The story began in 2015 when Karima Amami participated in our Feminist Training in Collective Intelligence in Tunisia. We discovered a woman determined to change conservative mentalities and improve living conditions of women through her association, Victory for Rural Women. The training gave her the confidence that she could in turn train other women and give them the chance to speak and the ability to act.

**The first project**, funded in 2016, was called "Aswat el nissa" (Women's voices). It was a response to the reality that the voices

Islamist organizations have spread considerable misinformation about it, presenting CEDAW as a tool of the devil, but no government authority has taken measures to counteract this misinformation. The association therefore organized "Citizens' cafés" in the homes of volunteers to inform women about the existence of this international convention which recognizes their status and defends them.

#### **A visit to the field**

In March 2018, we went to visit Victory for Rural Women in its building in the middle of Sidi Bouzid. It was the day that Hedia Nssiri, the delegate to the Secretariat

#### **LETTER FROM THE MEDITERRANEAN SHORES**

The Mediterranean Women's Fund newsletter

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