



## **Narrative report**

# **Psychological support to Syrian women refugee in Lebanon**

**March to August 2016**



## 1- General information

Title of the project: Women Now center Lebanon –( Chtaura & Majdal Anjer )

Project name: Psychological support to Syrian women refugee in Lebanon

Project Period: 1 March 2016 – 31 August 2016

Name of the organization: Women Now for Development -SFD-

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## 1- Situation analysis

As the conflict in Syrian crisis enters its fifth year, millions of Syrians have sought refuge in neighbouring host countries. According to Amnesty International<sup>1</sup>, in February 2016, more than 4.5 million of persons fled Syria since the beginning of the revolution. Moreover, 4 persons over 5 are women or children ("Are we listening", IRC 2014). In February 2016, more than 1 067 785 persons are registered as refugees<sup>2</sup>. Lebanon, the worst-affected among Syria's neighbours, is now home to the largest number of Syrian refugees per capita relative to its total population, putting a severe strain on the country's fragile infrastructure, economy, and security. Among the Syrian refugee population in Lebanon, the Bekaa Valley contains the high concentration of refugees, with over 400,000 registered with UNHCR.<sup>3</sup> The new refugee population from Syria is primarily living in makeshift tents, or in poor and overcrowded urban areas, and is suffering from poor infrastructure and living conditions, lack of job opportunities, educational exclusion and increased costs of living. There are also a number of protection concerns, such as sexual and gender-based violence, early and forced marriage, early pregnancy and severe psychological trauma that is largely going untreated.

According to an investigation done by the International Medical Corps<sup>4</sup> (IMC), many displaced Syrian persons faced limited access to basic health, mental health, education ... Mental health disorders are constant: 54% are suffering of severe emotional disorder (depression, anxiety), 17% are suffering of epilepsy and 11% of psychotic disorders (IMC investigation's). The situation inside Syria is in even worse, because of the absence of specialized psychologists, the daily threat of bombing, death ...

Women Now for Development, is working in protection and empowerment of vulnerable women in Syria and neighbouring countries. The organisation is running two centers in Lebanon located in Chtaura and Majdal Anjar with several programs for women. Both centers have worked over the last 2 years with women refugees and their families (husband and children) and our psycho-social workers have built a mutual trust with beneficiaries and identify several case in need of specialized mental health services. Even if we have 2 psychologist students, the team needs to develop more specific programs and training in order to bring a real support to the concerned persons.

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.amnesty.org/fr/latest/news/2016/02/syrias-refugee-crisis-in-numbers/>

<sup>2</sup><http://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/syrian-arab-republic-humanitarian-snapshot-29-february-2016-enar>

<sup>3</sup> <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/settlement.php?id=201&country=122&region=90>

<sup>4</sup> <http://internationalmedicalcorps.org/document.doc?id=526>



During the last few years, several cases were transferred too specialized partner's organisations. But unfortunately the outcome were not as well as expected because of many raisons: long distance to partner centers, lake of coordination, long queue for appointment, and as well the fact that Syrian women refugee not feeling comfortable to speak with foreigners.

Another problem is mental health conditions of the team itself who is supporting all beneficiaries; in addition, of being them self, refugees and victims of war trauma, WND team is in real need to psychologic support as groups and some of them as individual persons.

## 2- Project summary

The project for psycho-social support funded by “TuWas - Stiftung für Gemeinsinn” for Syrian refugees in Lebanon was conducted in both Women Now centers (Chtoura and Majdal Anjar) in the Bekaa Valley. The project duration was from the beginning of March until the end of August 2016 (6 months). In this time, both centers get a remarkable development of the psycho-social support program. Prior to this project, there had not been any dedicated individual and continuous care by a psychotherapist in our centers for the women and support for the psycho-social support team to discuss cases and develop their programs. We used to organize collective sessions where women were able to talk about everything. Most of the psychosocial was done through the activities, because women were meeting each other in a safe place and progressively are talking about their past ... A trust relation emerged with Women Now team. This support became not enough regarding to women needs. The project deserves Syrian women refugee's, men and children and even Lebanese women.

The work was divided into several phases. The first phase of the psychological support involved conducting informal psycho-social support sessions in which the team assessed the needs of the women in the centers. Then, the team could prepare sessions in coordination with the psychologist fitted exactly to those needs. This helped in identifying cases that require individual treatment. Initially, the psychological support team sat down with the affected persons and then referred them to a psychologist if there was a need. If the case was particularly difficult, the team referred the woman directly to the psychologist, who came three days a week from Beirut to the Bekaa Valley.

We managed to exceed our goals that were expected based on the study prior to the project regarding the number of beneficiaries. There are very few support and psychotherapy



organizations in this area, which meant that there were referrals from other organizations of cases that required treatment. As a result, our centers became even more known as many beneficiaries specifically sought out the centers to obtain service and support in the field of psychotherapy.

As for the support and psychological relief sessions for children several programs have been carried out for the children affected by the war. Also, projects related to theater therapy in partnership with the competent British organization "Scenaryio" have been implemented, after which a significant change in the children behavior to deal with themselves and with their fears was noticed. This observation was made by the psychological support team and also by the children parent's.

As for the team of Women Now, the presence of the psychologist provided an academic and scientific reference point for the center management to discuss the problems and which are the best solutions for the team; this created ways of communication in terms of solving problems within the team. As a result, there was more communication between the employees and after gaining trust in these sessions some of the employees were asked to join individual therapy sessions as well.

Because of the great demand of the number of individual therapy sessions, the first six months of the project implementation period were insufficient to establish and develop their own team psychological support programs. In spite of this, the team began to develop a study program of life skills to deal with teenagers and adolescents due to the fact that this is a sensitive age group and the need for support and permanent follow-up, especially in the harsh conditions of asylum

### 3- Results:

Psychological Empowerment				
Activities	Beginning	End	N° of beneficiaries	Comments
Effective communication	7-3-2016	29-3-2016	<b>22</b>	9 hours
Needs Identifying	28-4-2016	28-4-2016	<b>18</b>	2 hours
Social support	29-3-2016	29-3-2016	<b>4</b>	2 hours
Psychological social support (ToT)	10-2-2016	14-3-2016	<b>10</b>	15 hours
Disorders in children and adults	18-4-2016	9-5-2016	<b>25</b>	6 hours
Psychological release sessions	2-6-2016	24-6-2016	<b>8</b>	10 hours
Self-esteem	10-5-2016	10-5-2016	<b>10</b>	2 hours
Stress	12-5-2016	12-5-2016	<b>10</b>	2 hours
Positive thinking	13-6-2016	22-6-2016	<b>10</b>	6 hours
Anger management	28-6-2016	28-6-2016	<b>16</b>	1.5 hour
Psychosocial support - Meditation	18-7-2016	18-7-2016	<b>12</b>	2 hours
Psychosocial support – Self-esteem	25-7-2016	25-7-2016	<b>10</b>	1.5 hour
Adaptation disorder	3-8-2016	6-8-2016	<b>9</b>	4 hours
Family guidance	20-8-2016	31-8-2016	<b>13</b>	7 hours
Muscle relaxation and meditation	24-6-2016	24-6-2016	<b>8</b>	2 hours
Dealing with children	29-8-2016	continuous	<b>22</b>	1.5 hour
Depression	8-6-2016	8-6-2016	<b>20</b>	1.5 hour
Autism	7-4-2016	7-4-2016	<b>20</b>	2 hours. For the families of autistic children
<b>Total</b>			<b>247</b>	

All those activities were proposed to the center beneficiaries, and were driven by the 2 social workers.

Private psychotherapy sessions				
Center	Type of treatment	N° of sessions	N° of beneficiaries	Comments
Chtura	Therapy	15-20 session	<b>15</b>	One hour
Chtura	Consultation	1-2 session	<b>50</b>	One hour
Majdal Anjar	therapy	15-20 session	<b>14</b>	One hour
Majdal Anjar	Consultation	1-2 session	<b>7</b>	One hour
<b>Total</b>			<b>86</b>	

During therapy the beneficiaries are sited with the psychologist many times and discussed about many things, during consultancy there are sited with him once or twice to speak about a specific problem.

Activities for children				
Activities	Beginning	End	N° of beneficiaries	Comments
I deal psychological program	25-2-2016	28-4-2016	17	16 hours each month (boys & girls ) 10-14 years
I deal psychological program	23-2-2016	28-4-2016	25	16 hours each month (boys & girls ) 10-14 years
Psychological relief	14-3-2016	7-4-2016	300	In a Syrian school (boys & girls ) 6-12 years Playing sports and games all day
Life Skills	14-3-2016	7-4-2016	200	In a Syrian school ( boys & girls ) 13-17 years Psychologist program to teach skills to deal with life
Psychological support by theater	27-2-2016	7-7-2016	15	Ended with a play called "Exotic woods" ( boys & girls ) 10-14 years In partnership with Scenaryio
Psychological support by theater	8-8-2016	12-8-2016	30	Ended with a play called "Small dreams" ( boys & girls ) 10-14 years In partnership with Scenaryio
Total			587	

“I deal program” is developed in partnership with the “War child” organization. Through this program the children acquire knowledge, and have access to a psychosocial support and help them to deal with their past and the war consequences.

<b>Psychological support for the employees (collective sessions)</b>			
<b>Center</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>N° of beneficiaries</b>	<b>comment</b>
Majdal Anjar	10-3-2016	7	2 hours
Majdal Anjar	28-4-2016	8	2 hours
Chtura	6-5-2016	7	2 hours
Majdal Anjar	9-6-2016	7	2 hours
Chtura	23-6-2016	9	2 hours
Majdal Anjar	30-6-2016	6	2 hours
Majdal Anjar	30-7-2016	7	2 hours
Majdal Anjar	17-8-2016	7	2 hours
Chtura	22-8-2016	10	2 hours
Chtura	29-8-2016	10	2 hours



Workshops for the team				
Workshop	Beginning	End	N° of employees	Organiser
Oral history archive (How to document the detainees and missing persons abuses)	18-4-2016	31-7-2016	<b>5</b>	Dawlati
GBV	21-4-2016	25-4-2016	<b>2</b>	Syrian Female Journalists Network & BBC
Project development	1-3-2016	4-3-2016	<b>2</b>	Kvinna till Kvinna
Finding problems (How to detect problems through psycho social support sessions in order to treat them)	18-8-2016	18-8-2016	<b>1</b>	Sams
Child leading by music (How to deal with child and having a kind of musical therapy for them)	16-7-2016	17-7-2016	<b>2</b>	Basma & Zaitona

- ⇒ Psychological empowerment: **18 different topics covered, 247 women attended** to this empowerment.
- ⇒ Private psychotherapy sessions: around **35 therapy sessions** were proposed, **4 consultancy sessions** were organized. **86 women** attended to the private sessions.
- ⇒ **6 activities** for children were organized and **587 children** attended to them; in partnership with others organizations.
- ⇒ **10 collectives** psychosocial support session for the employee were organized.
- ⇒ Some of the employees attended to workshops.

#### 4- Challenges:

In Majdal Anjar center we faced problems due to traditions and customs, it's really unusual for women to be confronted to a male psychologist, face to face. We tackled this problem by having the female psycho-social workers speaking to the women about their concerns.

In the Chtoura center this was less an issue for the beneficiaries.

The Bekaa Valley is a marginalised area and finding highly skilled personnel is difficult. This is the reason we did not manage to find a qualified female therapist to work in the centres three days a week.

The room for psycho-social support is in need of equipment to make it suitable for sessions with children, we will need to equip it with dolls, games, colored walls , children's couches.

The grant was focus for women and children but some men suffered as well, we have welcomed some of them, but we could not offer psychosocial for all of them.

There are too few books about psychology in our libraries.

Because of the high demand on psychological treatment sessions there was not enough time to develop the program of Women Now for psycho-social support.

## 5- Success stories:

### Etab

Etab was living in seclusion since her arrival in Lebanon. Her isolation was exacerbated by the fact that her husband is blind; she spent most of her time in great sadness. But after attending the activities in the center and sessions of psychological support, she began to change also in terms of dealing with her children at home. She is a mother of two and she began to feel the impact of what ailed her children, so she started to change her ways. She said: “From the first day I came to this center my life changed completely because of your care, I started laughing again and I found friends who visit me and whom I can visit. I started thinking that life is beautiful and I want to live and be happy”.

### Fatima (32 years old)

“When I fled to Lebanon I was alone. I started to work as a teacher in a Syrian school but I was always feeling that I am alone, and I could not get married because of my psychological stress. Then I joined activities in the Women Now center and attend psychological sessions with a therapist who reduced my psychological stress and was able to accept the pair. Today I am engaged, and I prepare my wedding”.

### Ghaithaa & Khitam

They are two Syrian women refugee who live in Lebanon and suffer from the harsh living conditions and low social status caused by their husbands' absence and their sole responsibility for their children. After these two women attended the psycho-social support sessions, it was noticed that they have capacities and skills. Based on this, they have been given the chance to work in a project with the NGO Dawlaty and Women Now on collecting oral history from refugees. This job and the trust in their skills helped to have their self-esteem and their confidence back.

### Abo Shadi & Em Shadi

A married couple living in Lebanon with their two children, they have lost their eldest son Shadi during the war in Syria. They live in Lebanon in such hard conditions that they were having marital problems. After both of them attended psycho-social sessions separately they worked on their marital problems and developed a more positive outlook on their lives.

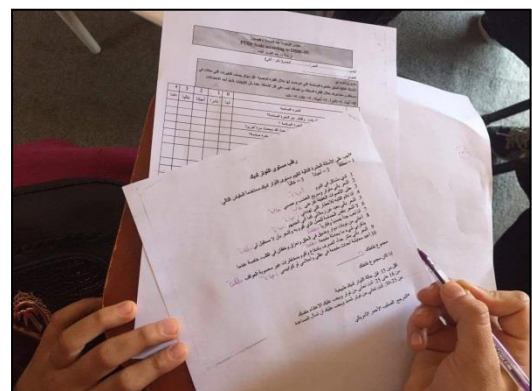
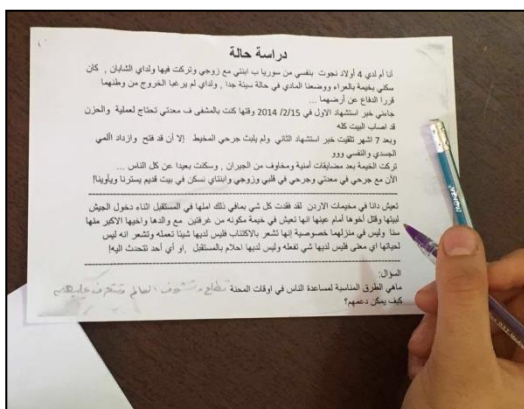
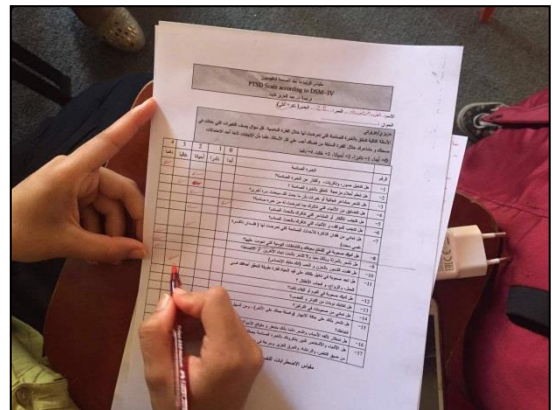
### Dima (13 years)

A Syrian girl who lives in Lebanon with her mother and brothers after they fled Zabadany, Syria, due to the siege and war. Due to customs and traditions, Dima was forced to wear the veil. Wearing the veil at such an early age made her personally uncomfortable and was an

issue for her. She attended the psycho-social support sessions with the specialist and the psycho-social support program dedicated to children named “I Deal”. As a result, her personality evolved and she felt more responsible and was able to confront her parents to declare her wish to take off the veil promising to wear it again when the time comes. Now, she feels a lot more comfortable and living a normal childhood.

## 6- Some pictures :

### 6.1- Psychological Empowerment







النساء الآن  
WOMEN NOW  
FOR DEVELOPMENT

## 6.2 -Activities for children



I deal  
Psychological  
program



Psychological  
support  
through  
theater

