



WINNING WITH
WOMEN
انجح مع النساء

WINNING WITH WOMEN

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*The names in this report may have been changed
to preserve the anonymity of our participants.*



ON WINNING WITH WOMEN

Winning With Women is a Porticus-funded programme that works to enhance women's access to local politics and decision-making positions in Lebanon. Global Partners Governance Foundation (GPGF) provides technical training, mentoring support, and network building to help our women candidates and their supporters gain experience and credibility as leaders in their communities. We aim to support their possible election to municipal levels as well as growing their ability to lead and mobilise within their communities as a whole.



A WORD FROM OUR PROJECT LEAD



I have had the pleasure of being involved with Winning With Women since its early days, nearly three years ago. This initiative to empower Lebanese women in becoming active stakeholders in local politics mirrors Lebanon's diversity through the participants it has drawn together from across the country and its political spectrum. It truly reflects the project's foundational belief: that there is space for all in politics.

As a trainer, mentor, and project manager working closely with the women in the project, I observed their impressive skills and personal growth, fuelled by their unwavering perseverance.

The project exists in the context of a deeply patriarchal society in which women's initiatives will be hindered by skewed power dynamics, and of a severe socio-economic crisis that is hitting underprivileged groups the hardest. Witnessing collaboration between women from diverse regions is therefore truly inspiring, transcending the typical barriers of political and religious affiliations that often undermine such unity in the Lebanese context.

The women in our network have become confident political campaigners, but also leaders within their communities, speaking out on injustices and organising community-based support and recovery initiatives. Their essential contributions offer hope for Lebanon's future, and with targeted support, these women can become the future leaders who will bring about much-needed political and structural reform.

When the upcoming elections were postponed, we were forced to adapt. We drew from our long experience delivering projects in complex and fast-changing contexts and opted for a longer delivery which would build skills within our candidates as well as the network of supporters around them. Our participants showed impressive resilience and continued reaching out during and outside our workshops to build meaningful, long-lasting connections across regions and political parties. Throughout this period, so many of them displayed remarkable leadership, which fills me with confidence and optimism for when the elections do take place.

Moving forward, we are confident in our Winning with Women mission, thanks to the dedication of our team, our Associates, and our stakeholders. Our commitment remains steadfast in empowering women to assert their rights and take on leadership roles in the public and political spheres, sowing the seeds for a more equitable and prosperous Lebanon. Together, we are resolute in achieving this vision, working towards a better democracy, equal representation, and a more prosperous country, regardless of challenges.

- Moataz Ghaddar, Project Manager

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THANKS & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

SOME KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Amidst an eventful year, marked by a great deal of uncertainty, we set out to continue offering our support and training to our participants: dedicated women committed to enacting change in their communities and local political landscape.

To that end, we delivered training, workshops and mentoring sessions to our 50 aspiring women leaders across our four geographic areas of operation: Baalbek, Beqaa, Beirut, Saida. Notably, these geographic groups brought together women from all regions of Lebanon, fostering a diverse and inclusive approach to our initiatives. Through this intervention, we secured four key achievements:

EMPOWERING WOMEN

We equipped our network's members with the essential skills and knowledge they would need to lead successful campaigns and take on leadership roles in their communities, and brought them together across religious and political divides to share their experiences and perspectives

BUILDING CONFIDENCE

Our participants reported that the programme had a positive influence on their perception of municipal work and the political sphere, and encouraged them to run for candidacy.



Listen to our Podcast episode, featuring Rouba Makarem, WWW participant and election candidate
Available in Arabic only

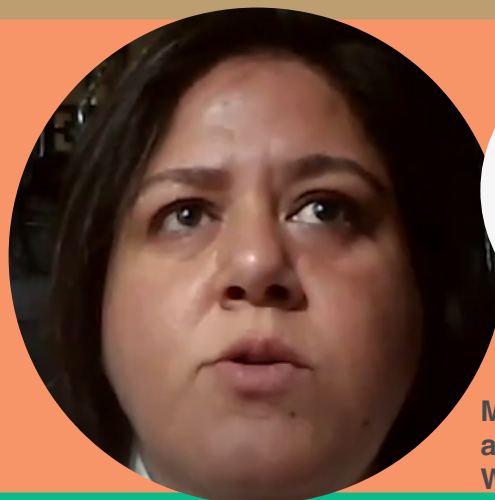
PROMOTING COLLABORATION

We actively involved male allies and prominent male leaders to engage and educated them on the role they can play in supporting women's political participation

BROADENING OUR REACH

We extended the project's impact by producing a podcast series discussing women's political participation and male allyship for a wider audience. We conducted research on women's local political engagement and published our findings across our channels. We launched and promoted petitions drafted by our participants to raise wider awareness and signal the changes in behaviour needed. We ensured the knowledge delivered during trainings was shared with other women in our participants' network, broadening its impact.

“TWO YEARS AGO, IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE FOR ME TO THINK ABOUT MUNICIPAL WORK, BUT NOW I HAVE COMPLETE CONFIDENCE IN MYSELF THAT I CAN DO THIS WORK”



Mayoral candidate Elliane Azzi talks about her achievements through the Winning With Women programme



Listen to our Podcast episode, featuring Sanaa Rafeh, municipal councillor and WWW participant
Available in Arabic only

CAMPAIGN SUPPORT

A central goal of this project phase revolved around support for our candidates' campaign efforts. We aimed to equip them with essential campaigning and advocacy skills through an intensive bootcamp, personalised mentorship, and later, in response to high demand from the participants, through a series of tailored training sessions.

26%

OF THE CANDIDATES ONLY HAD A CAMPAIGN TEAM READY AT THE START OF THE PHASE

As none of our candidates had set their campaign budgets yet, we designed tailored workshops on budgeting and fundraising. The practice-oriented sessions helped our participants get a better idea of what was required of them, and they reported feeling more inclined to fundraise for their own campaigns and finding the task less daunting than they did before the training.

76% OF OUR CANDIDATES HAD RECRUITED TEAM MEMBERS BY THE END OF THE BOOTCAMP



Physics professor and activist Ouloum Audi describes the impact the programme had on her confidence

We integrated research and analysis into project delivery to develop targeted outputs that could assist women candidates in effectively navigating the intricacies of the local political landscape and election campaigns. You can [explore our research report](#), *Voter Turnout and Mobilisation in Lebanon's Local Elections: Lessons for Women Candidates*, on our website.

Throughout this phase, one of our most notable achievements was our adaptability to the Lebanese context. As the dates of the upcoming elections were postponed and delayed on several occasions, we maintained our delivery and adjusted the timelines of our workshops and mentoring programme to ensure no enthusiasm or momentum was lost in the uncertainty.



Project participant Ouloum uses her social accounts as a public platform to amplify stories meaningful to her. She had recently shared the story of a woman working on her parents' farm, who had to buy produce from her local market instead of sourcing her food from her parents' land. Ouloum wished to highlight how this example illustrated women's hindered access to rights and inheritance in Lebanon.

She drafted a first post on the topic. It was well-received in her close circles, but did not perform well beyond them, in part because of the tone and language she used in her text. It was however important to her to get the story out, and she turned to the writing and social media training provided by Winning With Women. With these resources and the support of our direct mentoring scheme, she re-drafted a post which reached 4 million users from her personal page and was shared on others to reach another 20 million viewers.

This tailored support enabled many of our participants to approach their own goals more strategically and become more efficient communicators for community-based advocacy.



Listen to our Podcast episode, featuring Nizzar Rammal, male advocate for women's political representation
Available in Arabic only

MALE ALLIES

While designing the programme and adapting to the context of Lebanon's political landscape, it became evident that our mission couldn't solely focus our efforts on women. We recognised that to meaningfully achieve women's political participation, active engagement with, and support from men in politics will be required as well. This is because men hold the reins of influence and dominate decision-making processes within the political arena. Therefore, we integrated engagement and support from male in politics as an integral component of our approach. With the guidance and help of our mentors, the candidates successfully garnered the support of 31 dedicated and committed male allies who all wholeheartedly championed women's political participation.

77%

OF THE MALE ALLIES REPORTED A POSITIVE SHIFT IN THEIR PERCEPTION OF WOMEN'S LOCAL POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

These male allies emerged from our workshops as committed advocates dedicated to securing support for the programme's women candidates. Our project team and expert Associates played a pivotal role in reshaping the perspectives of several men regarding women in leadership and their political involvement. Encouraged by the project's recommendations, several of our male allies publicly pledged support to some of the women's candidates, sometimes going against party lines.

“THE WORKSHOP WAS VERY BENEFICIAL. IT MOTIVATED THE MEN WHO ATTENDED WITH ME. THEY REALISED THAT WOMEN HAVE A CRUCIAL ROLE TO PLAY IN BRINGING ABOUT POSITIVE CHANGE. THEY ACKNOWLEDGED THAT I AM CAPABLE AND WORTHY OF SUPPORT. THEY EXPRESSED EAGERNESS TO ATTEND THE NEXT WORKSHOP IN BEIRUT AND ASKED ME TO INVITE THEM.”

“IT IS NECESSARY THAT EVERYONE, WITHOUT ANY EXCEPTION, SUPPORTS HER. I WILL NOT HESITATE TO OPPOSE THE PARTY’S DECISION, BECAUSE WE MUST IMPOSE OUR OPINION ON THE PARTY. THIS IS THE ESSENCE OF MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS!”

A MALE ALLY, SPEAKING ABOUT A FEMALE CANDIDATE HE ENDORSED

At the end of our concluding workshops, the Male Allies co-wrote a set of recommendations with the candidates, which was later transformed into an online petition.

1. Networking and engaging all segments of society to encourage their involvement with women candidates in social work and local initiatives. This involves organising meetings and fostering collaboration with local associations.
2. Working on forming active teams for women candidates from diverse age groups, in particular the youth, and involving them in the development of the electoral programme. This process will be based on their insights to identify the community's needs and collaboratively finding relevant solutions.
3. Exploring media opportunities through communication with men and women journalists to host examples and shed light on the importance of women's participation in municipal elections, highlighting their successes and achievements in local governance.
4. Lobbying with legislators, both men and women, to adopt women's quotas in municipal legislation.
5. Advocating for the adaptation of polling stations to facilitate the electoral process for individuals with special needs, enabling them to exercise their right to vote.

This petition is now available online and promoted across our channels, and had received 148 signatures at the time this report was published.

72%

OF THE MALE ALLIES ENGAGED IN ACTIVE COLLABORATION WITH THE CANDIDATES AFTER TAKING PART IN THE PROGRAMME

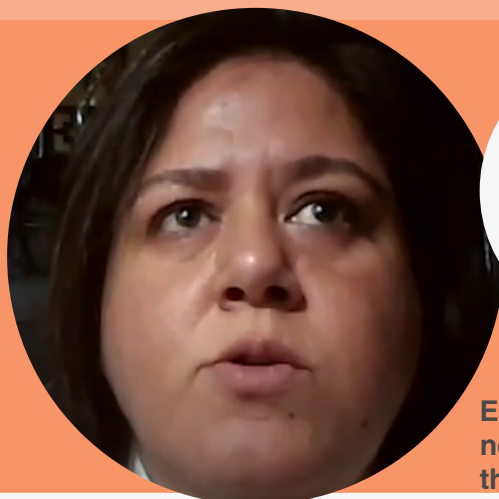


Listen to our Podcast episode, featuring WWW participant Ouloum Audi
Available in Arabic only


SUSTAINABILITY



The design of our Winning With Women network and support sessions aimed to put our participants in touch and encourage them to keep collaborating and exchanging, even outside of the training sessions. This has produced a rich and inspiring network of women committed to supporting each other regardless of political affiliation or personal background. The network is active and growing, and will certainly outlive this phase. In an unstable and sometimes challenging context, it has enabled our participants to obtain material help, access essential contacts, and find resources to facilitate the carrying out of their community support initiatives.



Elliane discusses the long lasting network and relationships she built through the WWW programme



Another key achievement that will outlive this phase is the knowledge and information we have produced and collated into accessible and easily disseminated formats. The research paper we produced was launched during a public webinar, of which a recording was shared across our platforms and made available online. Likewise, the findings of the research were translated into Arabic and both versions are available on our website. Our newest output, the podcast series, was promoted across all our channels and widely shared beyond our participants. These episodes, available exclusively in Arabic, feature women candidates from our programme sharing their experiences as leaders in public service alongside a prominent male ally advocating for equity and women's representation in decision-processes. They served as the vehicle through which we gathered momentum around the petition drafted and signed by the project's women and male allies alike. It is an exciting and encouraging development to find that our efforts to pass on knowledge to our stakeholders' extended networks are proving fruitful.



Municipal councillor Sanaa Rafeh revisits the support she gave and received through the network she built from her involvement with WWW



Listen to our Podcast
episode, featuring
WWW participant
Souhad Affara
Available in Arabic only

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THANKS & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Throughout the programme, the unwavering enthusiasm and commitment of our participants kept alive its momentum and impact. The dedication they showed to the workshops and training sessions as well as their proactive engagement outside of the programme's training days multiplied its reach and fostered the growth of an inspiring network of committed women.

We are delighted to observe the positive feedback from our participants and the project's impact on their political activism and community involvement. The combination of the training workshops, mentoring programme, and research helped us address specific needs demonstrated by our participants. It helped us provide tailored guidance and produce evidence-based insights.

At the close of this phase of the Winning With Women programme, GPGF has delivered the resources necessary for women candidates to contribute to significant, positive change in their communities. Through these efforts, we continue to champion the role of women in politics and strive to create a more inclusive and equitable society.

We are particularly grateful to our Associates and mentors, Rt. Hon Jacqui Smith, Dr Halimah Kaakour, Dr Josephine Zgheib, and Vicky Zwein for their support, their expertise, and their time. Their advice and knowledge was an invaluable resource throughout the delivery of this phase of the Winning With Women project.

We are also grateful to our local partner, the Lebanese Organization for Studies and Training (LOST), whose steadfast support has been instrumental in facilitating our work, especially in the Baalbek and Beqaa regions. We are excited to continue collaborating with them to keep promoting women's political representation and engagement in Lebanon.



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