



Global Partners
Governance Foundation

WINNING WITH
WOMEN
انجح مع النساء

From Mentorship to Leadership

A Guide to Advancing Women's Political Participation



About the project

The “Winning with Women” project aims to bolster women’s leadership and political participation at the local level in Lebanon. It is led by Global Partners Governance Foundation (GPGF) in partnership with the Lebanese Organization for Studies and Training. The project brings together aspiring women candidates and male allies for women’s political participation from various regions within Lebanon, including Baalbek, Beqaa, Beirut, Saida, Tripoli, Mount Lebanon, El Chouf, and Ghazieh. This demand-led project uses training, workshops, networking, research and mentoring to respond to the structural and behavioural barriers to women’s political leadership and male allyship. The project utilizes a blend of both local and international expertise, drawing upon experts from the highest echelons of Lebanese and international political leadership to provide comprehensive support and guidance.

This booklet is a part of the “Winning with Women” project and has grown out of our ongoing mentoring and support efforts, which began in 2022. It is designed to guide and support women in political mentoring, offering tools and insights that will help strengthen their leadership and political participation.

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1. Introduction

The “**Winning with Women**” project aims to bolster women’s leadership and political participation at the local level in Lebanon. It is led by Global Partners Governance Foundation in partnership with the Lebanese Organisation for Studies and Training. The project brings together aspiring women candidates and male allies for women’s political participation from across Lebanon, including Baalbek, Beqaa, Beirut, Saida, Tripoli, Mount Lebanon and Jezzine. This demand-led project uses training, workshops, networking, research, and mentoring to respond to the structural and behavioural barriers to women’s political leadership. The project utilises a blend of both local and international expertise, drawing upon experts from the highest echelons of Lebanese and international political leadership to provide comprehensive support and guidance.

Global Partners Governance Foundation (GPGF) seeks to strengthen institutional capacity and political reform in some of the world’s most complex and sensitive political environments. We provide strategic political analysis, design and deliver programmes, provide training, and conduct research, drawing on a wide network of experts and Associates.

Purpose of this booklet

Many excellent resources have been developed in support of women’s electoral efforts and much has been said about the barriers to increased political participation. However, there remains a significant lack of Arabic resources dedicated to mentoring or continuous support through mentorship for politically active women, whether in Lebanon or the broader region.

The provision of mentoring has been at the heart of Global Partners Governance Foundation’s support to women leaders in Lebanon, rooted in our experience in behavioural and structural change and calls from our stakeholders for personalised, targeted support.

In an effort to bridge this knowledge gap, and in line with our commitment to long-term shared learning, we have documented our experience and the experience of the women leaders we work with.

This handbook draws on the accumulated knowledge and experience of many individuals involved in public work, those collaborating with and working within the mentoring support programme we lead, as well as both primary and secondary research where relevant.

The handbook aims to provide guidance and support to mentors and mentees alike and is a tool for women candidates to navigate the complexities of municipal, parliamentary, and/or party elections in pursuit of effective leadership roles.

It is our intention that this handbook will serve as a valuable resource in supporting women’s political empowerment and enhancing governance in Lebanon.

“If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants.”

- Sir Isaac Newton

“The idea that you keep working on politics, in the current situation in Lebanon, with all the crises we’re going through, with all the pressure that comes your way, from the family, from society, from the existing masculine mentality, from the violence against women in politics, all of these, if there’s no support system, any person would collapse.”

- Mentor

2. What is mentoring?

Mentoring has evolved significantly over the years, influenced by changes in societal values, professional environments, and personal development philosophies.

It focuses on long-term personal and professional growth through building a supportive and developmental relationship between the mentor and mentee.

The mentoring relationship has often transcended the professional and formal connection with their mentors to become a more inclusive and personal relationship where they share their professional experiences and life challenges beyond the topics and timelines of mentoring.

Traditionally, mentoring was viewed as a hierarchical relationship where an older, more experienced individual (the mentor) provided guidance and support to a less experienced beginner (the mentee). The primary goal was often career advancement, with mentors helping mentees to progress in their professional paths and offering them specific targeted advice.

Mentoring now extends beyond just career advancement to include personal growth, emotional intelligence, and work-life balance. Mentors support mentees in developing a wide range of skills.

Modern mentoring emphasises a more reciprocal and collaborative relationship, where both the mentor and mentee benefit from the exchange of knowledge, skills, and perspectives.

Mentoring occurs at different levels:

- **One-on-One Mentoring**
- **Group Mentoring:** between one mentor and several mentees.
- **Mentoring Circles/Groups:** groups formed around different networks or in groups that come together around particular issues.

It can also take on different forms:

- **Formal Mentoring:** specific programmes with defined goals, timelines, and processes, often involving matching mentors and mentees based on specific criteria.
- **Informal Mentoring:** less structured, with advice and support offered as needed.
- **Peer Mentoring:** individuals at similar levels or stages in their careers support one another.
- **Reverse Mentoring:** a younger or less experienced person mentors an older person, often in areas such as technology. It helps bridge generational gaps and brings in new perspectives and subverts some of the assumptions in traditional hierarchical mentoring.
- **Group Mentoring:** A single mentor works with several mentees at the same time.
- **Remote Mentoring:** conducted online, allowing for connections between people from different locations.
- **Situational Mentoring:** goal-oriented and temporary mentoring, focusing on specific situations or challenges that are circumstantial.

In *Winning with Women*, we take a blended approach to mentoring that combines many of these elements to create an individualised programme that suits the needs and interests of our mentees and the complimentary expertise of our mentors.

From the beginning, the project was purposefully designed to create platforms and provide safe spaces where women from diverse backgrounds could identify and coalesce around common aims and values.

We have worked with a core group of between 45-55 women over four years, providing thematic and skills-based support, hands on implementation experience, research, study visits, and structured mentoring to build skills, trust, and relationships.

By investing time and resources into scaling deeply and consistently, what started as a group of women who did not know each other became a peer support system and a network of shared expertise.

3. Mentoring and Women's Political Leadership

Winning with Women works with women from across the Lebanese political landscape, some with party backing, some without, some with electoral experience, and some with none. For women aspiring to political leadership in Lebanon, mentoring has supported them to overcome many of the structural and societal barriers that limit their political participation, such as discriminatory legal frameworks, male-dominated political parties, the high cost of political financing and patriarchal and religious norms.

In these complex and personalised experiences, the mentors and mentees that we worked with identified distinct benefits to mentoring in the political landscape:

Mentoring fosters individual and collective power. Politics can be a lonely and hostile place for women. Having a network of peers provides both the emotional support and the practical tools to navigate a system seemingly designed against you. Our experience has shown that the safe spaces and personalised support of a mentor keeps women in politics.

We have seen this to be the case for women considering their candidature:

“So when I trained with the GPG for three years, first I was curious about it, but year after year, I felt that I have the ability and the enthusiasm that I would like to be candidate, and I would like to make a difference, and I would like to be one of the decision makers if I was able to reach the municipal board.” “I would not have continued if I didn't have good guidance through the mentoring sessions.”

- Mentee

As well as with women currently in office:

“Of course, mentoring had an impact on me. I had decided to leave the municipality [where I am elected] because there were problems, and I could not be in a place where I could not work. That is why I had decided to leave. Through contacting my mentors, I decided not to leave. It was for my own benefit because I spent six months at home and did not attend the municipality. When I returned, the municipality staff came to me and apologized for their mistake. They asked me to return to the municipality.”

- Mentee

Mentoring provides structured support for independent women candidates

Given that political parties in Lebanon tend to be male dominated in both their internal party structures and in their electoral lists, many women aspiring to political office choose to, or have no other option but to, run for election outside of the party system.

The lack of structure, campaign teams, campaign financing, and party name affiliation in a sectarian political system can create significant barriers to success. Add to this equation the issue of pervasive misogyny and electoral advancement and it is incredibly difficult for women independent candidates.

“It is very difficult, because I see colleagues who are affiliated in political parties, and how the political parties are supporting them. So, I ask myself and I think I am an independent candidate who would support me? Here I found the support from the ladies who were with me in this program, who see me as a good candidate and would like to see her in the Municipality and want to support her, this keeps me going on.”

- Mentee

Here, peer and 1 to 1 mentoring play an important role in mitigating these vulnerabilities.

Winning with Women's politically astute mentors have emphasised the importance of guiding women in politics to join supportive networks, both formal and informal. One mentor contributed to establishing a network which brings together women municipal members and facilitates the sharing of experiences, information, and support at all levels.

Mentoring guides women in male dominated political parties: It is worth recognising that although political parties do provide their women candidates with support, Lebanese political parties are, for the most part, patriarchal and male dominated. This means there is still work to be done to ensure that political parties are gender responsive and have the structures and cultures in place to foster women's leadership. Both mentors and mentees in Winning with Women have highlighted the difficulties women face within political parties, in that they have to 'prove themselves twice'.

Mentoring gives women the tools and guidance to handle violence against women in politics: The women in our programme indicated that being part of a mentoring programme gave them a feeling of strength in numbers, of being part of a bigger support structure that they could turn to in the face of bullying, gendered attacks, and gendered stereotyping.

"We feel stronger because we are not on our own. Mentoring is one of the successful tools or approach that can give you this feeling that you are not on your own and there is someone you can turn to when you need him."

- Mentee

"Now when I want to run as a candidate, I can anticipate and expect the challenges and the harassment that I might be susceptible to from my competitors (parties, men, groups). These experiences my mentors have had before, and they are able to advise me and guide me through them."

- Mentee

"Bullying in politics against women is present. When our number increases, this bullying will be forced to decrease."

- Mentor

Mentoring creates a continuous learning environment

Mentoring encourages the mentee (and the mentor) to continue learning and acquiring new knowledge while practicing in real time the skills and tools imparted through the mentoring process. This enhances personal and professional development, fosters learning through doing and allows for real time adjustments that increase the likelihood of impact. An effective mentor will facilitate a learning environment where both parties share and learn.

"The mentor has practical experience in the field. So, I'm still in the field. I am still working. I am still dealing with... I am still facing violence and I am still facing obstacles. I am still in the battle. Can you imagine how I am benefiting and hearing from them who are also in the battle, but I am helping them in the battle. But we are both still in the battle. So, I'm telling them about my battle and they're telling me about theirs. It is very, very important for both parties, the mentor and the mentee."

- Mentor

Mentoring facilitates knowledge and skills development

Given the limited number of women in public life it is highly likely that women candidates in Lebanon and the broader region will be running for the first time and access to successful politically experienced guidance is difficult to secure. Our mentees identified a number of areas where skills and knowledge have tangibly improved as a result of mentoring:

- Goal identification and strategy setting.
- Advanced communications skills.
- Developed problem solving and decision making.
- Proficiency in technical tools for campaigning
- Improved ability to develop political messages.
- Greater understanding of local governance

“Our mentors have experienced the reality of elections and campaigning first-hand. They understand how to negotiate with both those who wish to vote for you and those who do not. They teach us how to attract voters, how to engage with them, and how to respond to their questions without causing offense. This wealth of information comes from real practice.”

- Mentee

“The presence of the mentor from my viewpoint fosters a participatory leadership because they are not just being superior to you. Let me say. They are there to help you. Because they have gained experience. In addition, they have been in situations I will be going through it. So instead of having difficulties because I do not know how to deal with such situations, it the presence of this person.”

- Mentee

Mentoring supports personal transformation

Our experience has shown that mentoring can have a transformative effect on the mentee, building confidence and the ability to withstand the pressures of political life as a leader in their communities. There is power in seeing success amongst your peers.

Mentoring multiplies impact and forges strong networks

Mentoring encourages each person to share their knowledge, experience, and networks. It strengthens a mentees' ties with political leaders, supportive men, and backing organisations. Where the mentor is a political leader, their ability to open doors, forge connections and create ties widens the scope of the mentees influence.

“The individual who has great connections has a greater influence on society because others begin to trust them more. When someone is beside you, people think, ‘Of course they have support; of course, they will be able to help us.’ This creates a significant impact”

- Mentee

4. The challenges of political mentoring

There are many barriers to women's political participation in Lebanon which we set out in our research report 'Women's Political Participation in Lebanon's Local Government' and our report 'Voter Turnout and Mobilisation in Lebanon's Local Government: Lessons for Women's candidates'.

Mentoring is an effective tool to support agents of change in complex environments working to overcome these barriers however it is not a simple task and requires purposeful design. From our experience, there are number of things to consider.

Establishing a Successful Mentoring Relationship

Personal and professional qualities play a crucial role in shaping the mentoring relationship and determining its success. Often, personal traits can be just as important, if not more so, than professional ones.

When matched well, our mentees told us that having someone she could relate to meant she was more likely to accept her guidance and where there are shared values, it created in a safe space to talk about anything.

"You feel like you can express any idea to this person and still trust them with a well of secrets."
- Mentee

"Of course, The mentorship, this relation, is something very beautiful, and at the same time, it's built on trust. So, if I, the person who is a mentee, can't have this trust between me and her, it won't work."
- Mentor

From our research it was clear that trust was the foundation to a successful mentoring relationship and where this breaks down, or there is ambiguity, additional support from the project organisers might be needed.

For example, one of the mentors working within the programme discovered that the political leader she was meant to guide belonged to a party and political ideology that were fundamentally opposed to her own. Should she continue the mentoring process or halt it? This presents a significant challenge, and the mentor chose to proceed with the technical guidance while agreeing with the mentee on a common ground based on shared values and some fundamental principles.

"You can't succeed in this if you are not sharing the same values... There might be points that are different, but there needs to be a common base that we agree on, and we need to agree that these points are different, and that in this mentorship, we will be focusing on certain points."
- Mentor

"This is an effort that we learned to make, to separate our political choice from our feminist battle, which is at the same time for local governance, for local political work."
- Mentor

In some cases, despite careful matching, that personal chemistry simply isn't there. In Winning with Women, several mentees requested a change of mentor despite knowing that the current mentor was capable and experienced in political and electoral work. because there was a lack of "personal chemistry." Here, it is essential for the programme management to respond positively and proactively to these requests.

Maintaining momentum and engagement

Trainings are mostly time limited, contained investments of time and effort; mentoring takes time, long term relationship building, and often has cumulative impact. The women in Winning with Women joined the programme expecting to work towards municipal elections- they had a target. Since then, municipal elections have been repeatedly delayed and at the point of writing are yet to happen.

In the last year, Lebanon's security situation has deteriorated, and conflict has impacted all of the project's stakeholders in some way. In this environment, maintaining engagement may require interventions from the programme staff, additional attention from the mentor and an honest conversation will all stakeholders. In

our experience, this is a key opportunity to practice participatory processes and include all stakeholders in reflecting on changed priorities and ambitions.

The Winning with Women mentees also benefited from their mentoring being part of a programme of support that included trainings and study visits and we would recommend building mentoring into a holistic programme.

Coordination also becomes important within a holistic approach, as it ensures that mentors and the organising team work together effectively to address the diverse needs of mentees. As mentors coordinate with one another and with the programme's organising team, they might identify a common need for knowledge, skills, or a shared gap observed among multiple mentees. Based on this, a decision can be made to provide further support addressing the identified issue. This allows a group of mentees to learn collectively, which is then followed up on an individual level with each mentee's mentor to ensure sustained benefits and continuous support.

Moreover, it is important to recognise that many of the women in a mentoring programme will also be responsible for domestic responsibilities and the primary caregiver to children whilst possibly having a job and acting as a leader within their communities. These time and resource restrictions need to be taken into account when setting a mentoring plan and where feasible, mentees need to be matched with a mentor who is able to engage around these parameters.

Managing expectations

Mentoring is not a silver bullet that can deliver change overnight and although Mentors are experienced professionals, the expectations of mentees should be both realistic and reasonable.

In many cases, Lebanese politics is impacted by clientelism. Many political leaders involved in the mentoring support programme initially believed that the mentor was responsible for providing political backing or facilitating their endorsement by certain political parties. This presented a major challenge for the mentor, which was addressed through transparency and clarity.

To reduce the likelihood of this, we recommend developing a written framework for mentoring that sets out clear objectives. We would also encourage an initial training for both mentors and mentees at the start of the process so that the parameters of the relationship are clear. This will avoid tensions later on when requests go beyond the comfort of the mentor. In a politically charged environment like Lebanon this is an important step in risk management.

*“The second point, when the mentee considers or expects that, as a mentor, you will lead her to be on an electoral list. No, this is not my job as a mentor. So, the challenge is to explain to her that, no, as a mentor, this is not what I'm here to do with you. I am not going to come to your region and speak and do a WASTA for you to be able to get yourself on an electoral list.
No, this is not my job.”*

- Mentor

“We can do this, but outside of mentorship, if you want me to be a stakeholder. For example, if you did power mapping, and within this mapping you found my name, and you want to speak with me discuss whom I can put you in touch with or connect you with, this can be done, but here, not because I'm a mentor. This wasn't my role as a mentor.”

- Mentor

5. Principles of Effective Mentoring

For mentoring to be not just effective but meaningful it should follow a set of guiding principles. Drawing from our own experience, we highlight the key principles that shape our approach to mentoring for women's political leadership. These are:

- **Supportive not directive:** It is not the role of the mentor to direct and instruct a mentee. Mentors should use their experience and expertise to support mentees to find their own solutions, to develop their skills, and to facilitate mentee-led critical thinking and problem-solving
- **Focus on mutual learning:** There is now greater recognition of the mutual benefits of mentoring. Our experience has shown that mentors also learn from their mentees, gaining new perspectives and staying up-to-date with emerging trends and technologies. One of the mentors working with GPGF's mentoring support programme, emphasises building a reciprocal relationship, where she exchanges diverse experiences with her mentees and learns elements that help her improve her own work.
- **Focus on Inclusivity:** Modern mentoring practices highlight inclusivity and diversity, acknowledging the value of different backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives in enriching the mentoring relationship.
- **Take a feminist approach:** Feminist mentoring incorporates all of the principles set out here and also reflects an understanding of how patriarchal systems impact women and impacts their options and techniques for creating change.
- **Put meaningful participation at the heart of the work:** As developers of mentoring programmes, it is vital for the success and impact of the project that you build in meaningfully participatory processes and connected communication loops into the design of the project. This may include consultations at the offset, continual feedback from both mentors and mentees to the project implementers and an agreement on the parameters of the project.
- **Whole person approach:** Whilst it is important for boundaries to be set to ensure a fair relationship, the breadth of a mentor / mentee relationship is testament to the 'whole person' approach that differentiates mentoring from coaching and training.
- **Know when to start and when to stop:** Although the relationship between the mentor and mentee may continue for a long time, it should not be assumed that the formal mentoring should continue into perpetuity. Take the time to reflect and to consider whether the mentees needs have changed and if another mentor might be preferable as they move into a different phase.
- **Be prepared to confront inherent power dynamics:** Whether you are the organisation facilitating the mentorship programme or a stakeholder in the programme, you will likely be confronted by power dynamics. Effective mentoring recognises the existing dynamics and purposefully works to equalise power. This may take some time as trust builds.

As a Mentor

Although each Mentor will be different, they should bring certain attributes to the table:

- **Empathy:** The ability to understand and share the feelings of the mentee.
- **Active Listening:** Paying full attention, both mentally and physically, reflecting on and reformulating ideas, and acting as a mirror before offering thoughtful feedback.
- **Encouragement:** Providing motivation by highlighting and reinforcing successes before addressing or focusing on gaps.
- **Generosity:** Have relevant expertise and be ready to share it.
- **Patience:** Allowing mentees to learn and grow at their own pace.
- **Flexibility:** Adapting mentoring methods to meet the specific needs of the mentees.
- **Commitment:** Respecting the agreed-upon work schedule and dedicating the appropriate time needed to accomplish tasks with the mentees.

As a Mentee

- **Be ready:** no mentoring process can succeed, no matter how favourable the conditions and elements, unless it stems from a genuine desire from the mentee. Mentorship is a choice/decision that reflects the mentee's willingness to benefit from the mentor to the fullest extent and demonstrates a commitment to investing the necessary time and effort into the process.
 - **Have a willingness to learn:** Being open to new ideas and feedback.
 - **Take the initiative:** Taking the lead in the mentoring relationship initiatives.
 - **Be respectful:** Valuing the mentor's time and advice.
 - **Be goal-oriented:** Having clear objectives and working towards achieving them.
 - **Practice open communication:** Sharing thoughts, challenges, concerns, and fears.
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6. Step-by-step guide to building a mentoring programme



We have developed a step-by-step guide to building a mentoring programme, following these principles and based on our experience in supporting mentoring over multiple years.

1

Pre-Programme Engagement and Relationship Building

In our experience with the Winning With Women project, mentors had already been actively involved with the women candidates prior to the formal start of the mentoring programme. By leading training sessions and participating in various project activities, they built strong connections with the women, giving both sides the opportunity to become more familiar with each other and their respective strengths. This pre-existing relationship created a solid foundation for the mentoring process.

In cases where such prior engagement is not feasible, organising networking events that bring together potential mentors and mentees are recommended. This provides opportunities to get to know one another, learn about each other's experiences, help them get acquainted, and facilitate informed decisions on mentor-mentee pairings. This approach sets the stage for a more effective mentoring relationship.

The Organisation's Approach to Designing and Implementing a Mentorship Programme

Clearly defining the objectives of a mentorship programme is crucial for organisations implementing such initiatives. Whether the goal is to develop leadership skills, support professional growth, or promote diversity and inclusion, having clear goals ensures that the programme is structured to achieve meaningful outcomes. This also helps in aligning expectations across all stakeholders and in measuring the programme's success.

Before officially launching the mentoring programme, GPGF designed and introduced an application process to ensure its effectiveness. Women seeking mentoring were asked to specify the areas where they needed support and articulate their goals for the mentoring relationship. This strategic step enabled GPGF to identify and recruit mentors with the specific skills and expertise needed to address these requirements, while also gaining valuable insights into the participants' goals and expectations.

3

Selection/Recruitment of Mentors and Mentees

Both mentors and mentees need to demonstrate a strong commitment to the programme. Mentors should bring relevant professional experience and a personal perspective that aligns with the programme's goals. Mentees, on the other hand, should be in a place of autonomy where guided support will be instrumental, without fostering dependency. Mentees must also be open to feedback and input throughout the mentoring process.

"We should not feel that we should know everything. Things that we don't know about as mentors we should make it clear. We can discuss it again, but you should not pretend that you have given an answer, and you can now end the meeting. As if I'm checking a box."

- Mentor

“Mentoring is also a two-way communication, it’s not the goal to just talk, talk, talk, and this mentor takes what she wants from what I’m saying. There is a discussion that needs to happen, and therefore it’s very important that the mentor is a good listener at the same time, and mutual respect, and transparency, and clarity from the start, I mean, I think that these three are the basics, and then everything else becomes easier, but if we start from these.”

- Mentor

“The first skill is to listen. To not judge. The mentor, it is not about him, about her, it is about the mentee. I am not allowed to be sensitive, and not accept criticism. Because sometimes the mentee is the one who gives us advice. So, it’s not one way. We accept what she is teaching me, and what I am teaching her. This does not work with mentors and mentees. It has to be open. It needs to have tolerance. It has respect for both sides. Respect for the experience of both sides. All of these are conditions.”

- Mentor

“When you ask for mentorship, you do not come to copy the mentors. It is not about copying. It is about listening; it is about benefiting from the experience of others. Because no one can live 100% of someone else’s experience. She needs to have free thinking. She needs to hear from me, and I hear from her, and finally apply what suits her, depending on what she wants. She does not have to erase her personality, or to erase her identity, and copy the mentor. And this is the role of the mentor.”

- Mentor

Matching Mentors and Mentees

Successful mentor-mentee pairings are critical for an effective programme. Matching should be based on shared goals, interests, and experiences. Compatibility is essential for a productive mentoring relationship. In GPGF’s experience, it was important to match up mentors and mentees in appropriate ways. For example, we had mentees who were potential candidates in rural and urban areas, and we matched them with mentors who had successful previous experiences in campaigning in complementary urban and rural areas. In some contexts where the municipal elections are similar to the parliamentary political context, the appropriate choice of mentor was an MP. That being said, where politics is still entrenched along sectarian lines, the benefits of looking beyond one’s own community in reaching wider pools of voters are also clear.

“There are things that can be applied everywhere. But not always, because every region has its own characteristics. Even the person who is going to run for the elections, their presence, their influence, their history, their geography, everything affects them.”

- Mentee

“We’re in Lebanon, the environment is close, but each region has its needs. I mean, what applies to my mentor, does not apply to me. The environment is different. But you still benefit, because they have a vision, and because of the challenges they faced.”

- Mentee

Before beginning the mentoring process, it is important to hold an introductory meeting for mentors and mentees. Separate sessions for each group, followed by a joint meeting, can help to identify relevance, adjust expectations, and ensure everyone is aligned with the program’s objectives. These sessions also serve as an opportunity to provide guidance on effective mentoring practices and address any initial concerns—especially for mentees who are new to this approach, helping them better understand the process and feel more comfortable engaging in it.

5

Defining and Agreeing on the Guidelines and Framework

A structured framework is essential for the mentorship programme. This should include the duration of the programme, the frequency of meetings, and clearly stated expectations for both mentors and mentees. Flexibility is key to accommodating individual needs and adapting to evolving situations.

In order to effectively align expectations for the mentoring programme, Winning With Women developed a mentoring agreement, signed by both parties, which clearly outlined what the mentoring experience did and did not entail, while also establishing a mutual level of commitment. The agreement defined the commitments on both sides, and also included a section for mentees to outline their goals and objectives for the mentoring process, which were later reviewed and discussed with their mentors to ensure alignment and track progress throughout the programme.

“In my style, as a person, of course. Just like as a trainer do I adapt to the different learning styles in the training room. There are mentees who love to talk about personal things, and they are related to what will happen or the decisions they will make. There are mentees who don’t like to talk about anything in their personal lives. I have to respect this. It’s up to them how they want to share with me and on what basis they build their choices. There are mentees, let’s say, if we are doing a SWAT analysis, there are mentees who love to do the swot analysis and share it with me so we can talk about it. There are mentees who say, teach me to do the swot analysis and I want to do it alone. The mentorship last year was mostly online and it was easier for everyone. I had one mentee who needed to be with me in the meeting. She needed to write on the board and then put a piece of paper.”

- Mentor

Mentoring Support Starts

After finalising all preparations, securing agreements, and formalising the programme structure, the mentoring support phase begins. During this stage, mentors and mentees start their regular interactions, guided by the programme’s framework and goals. The first meeting is often used to revisit and review the guidelines and framework, discuss the objectives, refine them if necessary, and agree on the time and format of future meetings. These initial discussions set the tone for the mentoring relationship and ensure that both parties are aligned in their expectations.

“The first 15 minutes I do not say anything. I leave her talk whatever she wants. I tell her to speak whatever she wants, her life her CV and I listen. During this, I can tell what are her weaknesses what are her fears, what is the problem. I can extract around 2 or 3 problems from 20 minutes talk from her. I make a summary and talk with her about the first one only, because is the problems where many, she might be afraid to confront a large number, so I start by one.”

- Mentor

“And always when I work with a mentee, this meeting, what do we want from it? We talk before we start. When we finish, we evaluate if we reached what we wanted, and we put a projection for the next meeting. It can be a goal, that during this time, she will be working on something, and we will discuss it in the next meeting. Or it can be that we want to talk about another topic in the next meeting. But my approach is that it’s her first. She decides what she wants, and I work accordingly.”

- Mentor

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Tracking Progress

To ensure that the mentorship programme stays on track, it is important to implement a system for monitoring progress. This could include regular check-ins, follow-ups, and feedback mechanisms. Tracking measurable elements or indicators of success helps both the organisation and participants evaluate progress and make any necessary adjustments.

In GPGF's experience, tracking progress was facilitated through the use of structured reporting tools. Mentors were asked to document their meetings with mentees, summarising key discussion points, challenges encountered, notable achievements, and the next steps agreed upon. These tools were particularly valuable for mentors managing multiple mentees or balancing busy schedules, as they provided a clear and organised way to track progress and stay on top of the mentoring process.

Importantly, no sensitive information was requested in these reports, ensuring privacy and confidentiality for all participants. The reports were only accessed by the implementation team to learn about general challenges or achievements and to refine the programme's approach where necessary.

Measuring Success and Evaluating Impact

At the end of the programme, it is important to collect feedback from participants and analyse key performance indicators to assess the programme's effectiveness. This data can be used to make continuous improvements to the programme and demonstrate its impact. Feedback from both mentors and mentees will also help refine future mentoring initiatives.

"Sometimes, the mentee when she's saying what affected her in the mentoring relationship, it's very important because the impact isn't always something that you might know or see as a mentor, and it doesn't always happen at the end of the day. Meaning, we can't right after we finish the mentoring stop and ask what did we achieve. There are things that happen after 6 months. She can be in a meeting later on and be able to answer in a certain way or be more confident or utilize a tool given to her before. This is real impact but it's a long term, it depends in what context you're working if the project is still ongoing or not. Until today, I still consider when I was a mentee maybe in 2004, I still think about a discussion that took place or a tip that someone gave me. Meaning that in my whole life there are things that I benefit from until now. You can't consider that I had enough, and I now have everything I need."

- Mentor

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7. Conclusion

Many support programmes directed at politically active Lebanese women, and those aspiring to play a role in public life, have focused on technical aspects, overlooking the exclusionary or obstructive factors mentioned above. Additionally, these programmes typically end with time-limited trainings, without offering ongoing or extended support.

This is where mentoring proves invaluable, as it not only supports women through their journey toward achieving leadership roles but also helps them maintain and strengthen their positions once they are in those roles.

Therefore, the provision of post-training mentoring support becomes crucial in maximizing women's potential and improving their chances of overcoming obstacles.

This peer support approach can also play a helpful role in forming teams of mentors and mentees, especially if the mentors have faced similar challenges and either partially or fully succeeded in overcoming them.

Finally, the process of selecting mentors is of great importance. They must possess the ability, competence, and practical experience relevant to this reality, which qualifies them to provide effective, appropriate, and supportive guidance.



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WINNING WITH WOMEN

انجح مع النساء

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