

STRENGTHENING THE ROLE OF FEMINIST CSOS WORKING IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY AGENDA (WPSA)

GUIDELINES FOR OPEN CALL FOR PROPOSALS SEED FUND TO WOMEN LED CBOS AND LOCAL INITIATIVES LEBANON

1. Background

The «Strengthening the role of feminist CSOs working in the implementing of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda (WPSA)» program aims at contributing to the effective implementation of the WPSA in Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan and Palestine through empowering feminist civil society organisations (CSOs) and women-led Community Based Organizations (CBOs) to play a leading role in implementing the WPSA, combating Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) comprehensively and enhancing women's participation at local, national and regional levels. The program started on 1st March 2023 and will run until 28th February 2026.

The program is structured around three components:

- Provision of financial support to national and local CSOs and CBOs
- Capacity-building and learning
- Regional networking and exchange of expertise and practices

The program is implemented by a consortium of five organisations in the four countries: EuroMed Feminist Initiative (EFI), Women Empowerment Organisation (WEO) in Iraq, Arab Women Organisation (AWO) in Jordan, Association Najdeh (AN) in Lebanon and Palestinian Working Women Society in Development (PWWSO) in Palestine. All are members of EFI, a policy platform that provides expertise in the field of gender equality and women's rights as inseparable from democracy building and citizenship, and advocates for political solutions to all conflicts, and for the right of peoples to self-determination.

This program is funded by the Agence Française de Développement (AFD) which implements France's policy on international development and solidarity. Through its financing of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the public sector, as well as its research and publications, AFD supports and accelerates transitions towards a fairer, more resilient world. It also provides training in sustainable development (at AFD Campus) and other awareness-raising activities in France.

The project will be implemented in Lebanon targeting seven governorates including (Akkar, Baalbek-Hermel, Beirut, Beqaa (Zahlé), Mount Lebanon, North and South)).

2. Why Women, Peace and Security Agenda?

Women and girls continue to be disproportionately affected by the conflict-related crises in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine. As gender inequalities¹ remain deeply rooted in discriminatory laws² and social

¹ « With an average population-weighted score of 60.9%, the MENA region has the largest gender gap (about 40%) yet to be closed. The progress is slow, and it will take 142.4 years to close the gender gap ». World Economic Forum, *Global Gender Gap Report 2021*, page 26.

² Regional Civil Society Observatory (RCSO)- EuroMed Feminist Initiative (EFI), *Regional Index on Violence Against Women and Girls, 2021*. [Regional Index - Combating violence Against Women and Girls \(VAWG\) | EFI-RCSO](#)

practices³ (RCSO, 2020), the post-conflict situation in Iraq, the ongoing occupation and conflict in Palestine and the refugee crisis in Jordan and Lebanon have added layers of vulnerability for women and girls. The disintegration of the economic and social fabric and the Covid-19 pandemic have further heightened VAWG while restricting effective access to services for women and girls victims or at risk. The lack of rehabilitation mechanisms, the guilt and shame associated with sexual violence hinder victims' social reintegration. VAWG is also a major barrier for the participation of women in decision-making⁴. Conflict-related factors contribute to further excluding women from political participation.

The Women, Peace and Security Agenda (WPSA) recognises the continuum of VAWG, states that addressing inequality between women and men⁵ as the root cause of VAWG is crucial to preventing conflicts, draws attention to the gender dimension in all responses to threats to peace and security, and calls for conflicts to be resolved by political means and avoiding escalations of armed interventions. Working in conjunction with, and building on other international human rights instruments⁶, WPSA stresses that equality between women and men is central to citizenship and therefore to peace and security of the whole society.

WPSA emphasizes the need to prevent and protect women and girls from sexual violence and exploitation and focuses on victims' rights to justice and redress for sexual violence while stressing the importance of ending impunity for such crimes. Moreover, WPSA focuses not only on preventing VAWG and protecting women and girls from violence, but also on women's right to participate in all decision-making processes, aiming at ensuring that equality and the active participation of women and girls are observed and upheld in both peaceful times and times of conflicts. It calls for equal access for women to power and resources, to the labour market, in relief and recovery, and transitional justice.⁷

WPSA aims to ensure the implementation of UNSCR 1325 on women, peace and security adopted in 2000, and its consequent Resolutions⁸. Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine have adopted National Action Plans (NAPs) for the implementation of UNSCR 1325. There is a need for governments to allocate budgets and resources and establish a strong and systematic cooperation with feminist CSOs for the implementation of the UNSCR 1325, and to place women's participation in the centre of all planning for achieving peace and security at all levels, including diplomatic positions, local councils, parliaments, peace missions, and security apparatus.

Supporting women's role and participation in conflict prevention, management and resolution and peacebuilding is particularly relevant to the Middle East fragile context.

3. Call for Proposals – Seed Funds to women led CBOs

Within the framework of the program, the seed funds to women led CBOs aim at reaching out to women and girls while strengthening the CBOs and initiatives working at local and grassroots levels to widen the discussion on issues related to the WPSA, combating VAWG, and promoting women's participation. The CBOs will be expected to expand and diversify their involvement on grassroots level to improve the coordination and dialogue among individuals, other CBOs and local authorities and influence public opinion towards women's rights, participation and protection.

³ RCSO-EFI, *Regional Study – Violence Against Women and Girls in the South Mediterranean*, 2020. [Regional Study - Violence Against Women and Girls in the South Mediterranean | EFI-RCSO](#)

⁴ See the findings of the consultative process led by EuroMed Feminist Initiative in Syria. EuroMed Feminist Initiative, *Common Agenda for Combating Violence Against Women and Girls as a Major Barrier to Women's Participation in Syria*, 2021. [Common Agenda for Combating Violence Against Women and Girls as a Major Barrier to Women's Participation in Syria | IFE-EFI \(efi-ife.org\)](#)

⁵ The Beijing Platform for Action acknowledges violence against women as an extreme manifestation of the historically embedded hierarchies in gender roles and power differences between men and women in all our societies.

⁶ The UN Sustainable Goal no. 5 declares that Gender equality is a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable world.

⁷ Regional Guidelines for the implementation of WPSA. Link: <https://www.efi-ife.org/en/pdf-detail/97178-regional-guidelines-for-the-implementation-of-women-peace-and-security-agenda-in-the-south-mediterranean>

⁸ UNSCR 1325 (2000), 1820 (2009), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2010), 1960 (2011), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013), 2242 (2015), 2242 (2015) and 2467 (2019).

Relevant women led CBOs and local initiatives are encouraged to apply on a yearly basis for the open call for proposals in Lebanon targeting seven governorates including (Akkar, Baalbek-Hermel, Beirut, Beqaa (Zahlé), Mount Lebanon, North and South)). Seed funds will be provided to three grassroots women led CBOs and initiatives working at community level each year following the evaluation process described under Section 10 of this guidelines.

4. Who can apply?

The beneficiaries of the seed funding will be registered women-led CBOs that have potential and intend to organize on the long run. The following criteria should be ensured to be able to apply:

- To be an officially registered grassroots CBO/local initiative in Lebanon.
- Clear governance and decision-making structure.
- To be led by women with a majority representation of women in its governance and decision-making structure.
- Manifest commitment to women's rights.
- Active involvement in the WPSA and combating VAWG at local level.
- Clear goals and vision towards social change, inclusive of women's rights and gender equality.
- Have a good level of experience in project management.
- Ability to implement activities that are relevant to achieve results, consistency and feasibility of their actions.
- The quality of a technical and financial proposal, which will outline the justification for the seed fund, how it will be used and dispersed, what impact their actions are expected to have on the community, and a sustainability plan.
- Capacity to reach out and engage local community.
- Potential for development and replication of proposed actions.
- Interest and willingness to participate actively in the sharing of experiences and capitalisation process of the program.

Women led CBOs focusing on and/or made of the following groups, as well as those that work with and take into account their needs, interests and rights in their actions, are strongly encouraged and will be given special consideration: young women, women who are structurally marginalised/excluded because of their origin, status (e.g. refugee, migrant), disability, gender identity, social, economic or cultural background.

5. Eligible actions

Eligible activities for seed funds may include but are not limited to:

- Provision of services and/or spreading information on provision of services for women and girls victims or at risk of violence at community level including prevention, counselling, reintegration.
- Awareness raising-activities and sensitization campaigns on UNSCR 1325, WPSA, VAWG and the link with women's political participation in decision making.

- Advocacy and lobbying on local levels, e.g. through the organisation of community level dialogue led by women activists where reconciliation and peacebuilding initiatives are promoted, including Internally Displaced Persons (e.g. in Iraq), refugees (e.g. in Lebanon and Jordan) and host communities whenever relevant.
- Training and workshops supporting the empowerment of women and girls in raising their voices in the local communities.
- Skills development and support to income-generating activities at community level with specific focus on women from marginalised/excluded/discriminated against groups: refugees, displaced, women with disabilities, etc.
- Work with men and boys to promote positive masculinity, combat VAWG and promote women's political participation.

These examples are indicative, and there are no restrictions on the type of actions that can be proposed. Innovative and creative feminist approaches are strongly encouraged and will be given special consideration.

Actions will not be supported if they:

- Are contrary to human rights and the principles of gender equality and justice
- Exclude structurally marginalised populations,
- Are contrary to the WPSA's vision and values.

6. Funding Scheme

The annual budget for each seed fund can range between a minimum of EUR 5,000 and a maximum of EUR 25,000 (or equivalent in local currency) depending on the size and experience of the CBO/local initiative and scope of their action.

The budget may include the following costs as long as they are directly related to the implementation of the action:

- Human resources
- Equipment and supplies
- Local office expenses
- Activities
- Other (e.g. translation, transport, audit)

Eligible costs

To be eligible, costs must:

- Be directly related to the action, be provided for in the contract signed at the beginning of the action and comply with the principles of sound financial management, in particular value for money and cost-effectiveness;
- Have been incurred during the implementing period of the action;
- Be recorded in the beneficiary's accounts or tax documents, be identifiable and verifiable, and be backed by originals of supporting documents;

- iv) Subject to those conditions and where relevant to the contract-award procedures being respected.

Eligible direct costs include:

1. Costs of staff assigned to the action, corresponding to fees or actual salaries plus social security charges and other remuneration-related costs; costs for fees or salaries must not exceed those normally borne by the beneficiary and in all cases, it must not exceed 30% of the total cost;
2. Travel and subsistence costs (i.e. participation allowances) for staff taking part in the action, provided they do not exceed those normally borne by local organizations, and in all cases, they must not exceed the scales approved annually by EFI;
3. Cost of purchasing equipment and services, provided they correspond to market rates;
4. Cost of consumables and supplies; when are linked to the implementation of activities;
5. Costs arising directly from the requirements of the action (dissemination of information specific to the action, translation, printing, insurance, etc.) including financial service costs.

The following costs are not eligible:

- Debts and provisions for losses or debts,
- Interest owed,
- Items already financed in another framework,
- Purchases of land or buildings,
- Currency exchange losses.

Payment Procedures

The seed fund for CBOs/local initiatives for the first year shall be provided as follows:

- The initial pre-finance payment with 50% of the budget shall be transferred upon signing the agreement,
- The second and final payment with 50% of the budget shall be transferred upon the provision and approval of the first interim financial and narrative report with the supportive documents (for further details, please check section 8 Reporting Requirements).

The seed fund for CBOs/local initiatives for the second and third year shall be provided as follows:

- The initial pre-finance payment with 50% of the budget shall be transferred upon signing the agreement,
- The second payment with 25% of the budget shall be transferred upon the provision and approval of the first interim financial and narrative report with the supportive documents (for further details, please check section 8 Reporting Requirements).
- The third and final payment with 25% of the budget shall be transferred upon provision and approval of the second interim financial and narrative report with the supportive documents (for further details, please check section 8 Reporting Requirements).

7. Expected duration

The program will have three calls for proposal, one at the 6th month of the program and two at the beginning of year two and three of the program as follows:

- The first year: 1st September 2023 – 29th February 2024.
- The second year: 1st March 2024 – 28th February 2025.
- The third year: 1st March 2025 – 28th February 2026.

8. Reporting requirements

Please note that for each awarded seed fund, the CBO/local initiative must submit reports to AN as follows:

The first year: 1st September 2023 – 29th February 2024:

- First interim narrative and financial report with the supportive documents covering 1st September - 30th November 2023 submitted by 10th December 2023.
- Annual narrative and financial report covering the whole period submitted by 21st March 2024.

All reports shall be developed using the formats shared with successful applicants by AN later on. The financial reports shall include relevant supporting documentation such as:

- For human resources; contract, payslips, timesheets, proof of payment
- For equipment, supplies, local office costs: invoices, proof of payment (and contract for rent)
- For consultancy contracts: contract, invoices, timesheets, proof of payment
- For activities: invoices, proof of payment, list of participants, agenda

Beneficiaries receiving seed funds will also receive coaching by AN during the lifespan of the action, to ensure that spending is in line with the submitted technical and financial outline and to abide by transparent and accountable standard operating procedures. The beneficiaries of the seed funds will also receive a training on project management, M&E and reporting, and financial control. AN will ensure that the coaching focuses on key issues related to due diligence and compliance procedures, such as public procurement principles, transparency, non-discrimination, equal treatment, and proportionality in order to monitor transparent and accountable implementation of the grant, and report any irregularities and misuse of funds. The financial support is only one aspect of this call. The program shall provide the beneficiaries of the seed funds with thematic and institutional capacity building in diverse methods and tools, while fostering local ownership and localization, confidence-and-trust building.

9. How to apply?

To apply for the seed funds, each Applicant must submit the following:

➤ **Complete the attached forms:**

- Annex A. Concept Note
- Annex B. Budget
- Annex C. Action Plan

➤ **Attach the following administrative documents:**

- Annex D. Statement of integrity
- Annex E. Administrative profile including the statutes/bylaws of association, and an identification document of the legal entity indicating the name of the CBO, the member of its governing body (e.g. board) and list of personnel.

For the first year covering the period of 1st September 2023 – 29th February 2024, please send the full Application by email before [21st August 2023] at the following address: najdeh@association-najdeh.org & alaa@association-najdeh.org specifying in the subject WPSA – Application Scheme 2 Name of CBO

CBOs can qualify only for one seed fund per year. If an organisation submits multiple applications, only the application received first will be considered and any subsequent applications will be rejected.

10. Evaluation and Selection of Applications

An evaluation committee will be established by AN to evaluate all received applications and provide them with scores. Each Application shall be evaluated as per the following criteria:

Step 1. Administrative verification

- Submission before the deadline is respected.
- Availability of all required documents (concept note, budget, action plan, statement of integrity, list of documents in the administrative profile).
- Being a registered organization.

Step 2. Eligibility of CBO

In compliance with AFD requirements, the evaluation committee will be undertaking mandatory verification of the organisations, their representatives, members of governing bodies and employees by checking:

- The consistency of the declaration of integrity by verifying the actual existence of the organisation, its reliability, the economic coherence between the activities and its resources and the absence of negative information in the public domain from reliable and objective sources.
- Whether the CBO or any of its representatives/members/personnel is mentioned on the United Nations, European Union or French **sanction lists**⁹. Organisations that are mentioned or whose representatives appear on at least one of the sanction lists will be automatically excluded.

Step 3. CBO profile

- Mandate to promote women's rights and/or gender equality.
- Composition of the organisation's governing body (women-led).
- Experience in fighting VAWG and/or implementing WPSA.
- Ability to outreach local communities.

Step 4. Qualitative evaluation of the Proposal (concept note and action plan)

- Relevance of the proposed action.

⁹ The sanctions lists are:

For the United Nations: <https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/un-sc-consolidated-list>

For the European Union: https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/restrictive_measures-2017-01-17-clean.pdf

For France: <https://gels-avoirs.dgtresor.gouv.fr/>

- Quality and coherence of the design.
- Effectiveness and feasibility.
- Potential for replication / bringing change.
- Suggesting innovative approaches for local actions.
- Suggested timeframe.

Step 5. Financial evaluation of the proposal (budget)

- Are activities adequately reflected in the budget.
- Cost-effectiveness.

The applications will receive an overall score out of 10 based on the above-mentioned criterion. Once all applications have been assessed, a list will be drawn up with the proposed actions ranked according to their total score. After the evaluation of all applications, AN will send letters to all applicants, with the results of the evaluation. Three women led CBOs/local initiatives with the highest scores shall be selected each year for the seed funds. The selected applicants will subsequently be invited to sign the agreement.

11. Schedule

The application and evaluation process of the seed fund will adhere to the following time schedule:

- The first year: 1st September 2023 – 29th February 2024:

	WHEN?	HOW?
Requests for clarification	8 th August 2023 (2 weeks before closure)	Send your question(s) by email on najdeh@association-najdeh.org & alaa@association-najdeh.org
Clarifications to potential applicants	14 th August 2023 (1 week before closure)	AN shall submit answers for clarification requests.
SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS	21st August 2023 at 23:59 EET	Send the full package by email on najdeh@association-najdeh.org & alaa@association-najdeh.org
Evaluation of proposals by the Evaluation Committee and final selection	22 nd to 30 th August 2023	Evaluation and selection conducted by AN.
Notification of award	31 st August 2023	AN to send emails to successful and unsuccessful Applicants.
Estimated date for contract signature	1 st September 2023	AN to sign agreement with the selected Applicant.

Timeframe of the implementation	1 st September 2023 - 29 th February 2024	The period of implementation of the action to be specified in the contract.
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12. Annexes

Application Documents to be completed and submitted by the women led CBOs and local initiatives to apply for the seed funding:

- Annex A. Concept Note Form
- Annex B. Budget Form
- Annex C. Action Plan Form
- Annex D. Statement of integrity
- Annex E. Administrative profile list