

# ALWANE Newsletter



Women's Campaign  
International



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## Introduction

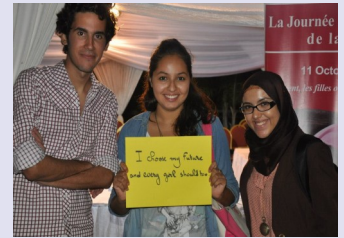
Hello! Assalamu Alaikum!

It has been almost two years since the start of the ALWANE network! Women's Campaign International (WCI), as an ALWANE partner, is proud to present the first ALWANE newsletter. As many of you know, the ALWANE network spans the Middle East and North Africa region, working at both national and regional level across 15 countries. ALWANE's goal is to create a constructive dialog around pressing challenges to women's empowerment and advancement; to be a platform to share regional success stories, with the ultimate aim of advocating for change in the region. Currently, the ALWANE network includes more than 320 women, men and youth, 8,000 online supporters, and 20 partner organizations. ALWANE's website and Facebook page have a growing supporter base. Over the past two months, WCI conducted interviews with several country officers and this

newsletter will showcase the achievements of the ALWANE Country Committees and their country officers.

It is clear that the ALWANE network has made great strides in regional integration. Together, members of the network have pushed to achieve the common goal of women's empowerment and leadership. There have been many successes and challenges, with a lot of learning taking place throughout this process. Since 2011 we have said farewell to a few colleagues both in the region as well as here at WCI who have taken new exciting positions and who continue to be strong supporters of the cause. We would like to thank Rim Hajji from Morocco and Ahmed Al-Yamani from Yemen for their support as Country Officers, and welcome Maroua El-Hani and Fawzi Al-Shami who have taken their place. We would also like to extend a fond farewell to Qatar country officer, Aysha Al Mudehki who is moving on from ALWANE work, and a thank you to Nickie Sene and Marion Abboud, the

two program officers from WCI who worked hard to build ALWANE and wish them luck on their new positions. The work that they started continues to grow stronger each month.



Overall, great strides have been made in the region to empower women. However, we all know that there is more work to be done. WCI enthusiastically looks forward to continuing our work with the ALWANE network to advocate for women's empowerment and leadership in the region.

## About WCI

**W**omen's Campaign International (WCI) is a non-profit founded in 1998 by former Member of Congress, Marjorie Margolies, and is located in Philadelphia, PA. WCI, in partnership with local women and organizations, designs programs that are tailor-made to meet the needs of specific groups of women in communities around the world. These programs help women find their voices by providing trainings and offering technical assistance in four core areas, including: political leadership, conflict mitigation, economic empowerment and civic participation. Over the past 15 years

WCI has worked in over 40 countries globally and designed programs emphasizing localized approaches, and promoting the sustainable growth of advocacy efforts and the establishment of dynamic networks over large, diverse populations.

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## ALWANE

**ALWANE stands for Active Leaders for Women's Advancement in the Near East. It stems from the Arabic, "alwane" meaning "my colors." This phrase evokes the ability to paint one's own future and the power of diversity in leading change.**



Website



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## Algeria



There is no shortage of well-educated and qualified women in Algeria. In fact, Algerian girls are more likely to finish high school than boys, and more of them pursue higher education each year. These women are full of fresh ideas, capable of furthering development in Algeria,

and eager to better society, yet they hold a disproportionately low percentage of leadership and decision-making positions in the country.

ALWANE Algeria's vision is simple: enable more women to overcome the obstacles that prevent them from obtaining decision-making roles. The country committee worked to create a mentorship system that promotes women to pursue leadership positions. They also provide support for existing organizations that work for women's empowerment and advancement. The mentorship system utilized capacity-

building workshops and forged strong connections between mentor and mentee. Currently, ALWANE Algeria is working to translate the strength of this mentorship system to an online mentoring network, thereby expanding access to women in rural areas, women who are handicapped, and stay-at-home mothers. Additionally, the ALWANE Algeria team is in the process of applying for ALWANE/Algeria to become an official NGO so they can continue to seek funding and organize campaigns.

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## Bahrain

The ALWANE Bahrain committee focuses on the economic side of women's empowerment. They believe that women who are able to become economically independent gain the ability to help themselves in other fields, and can have more of a say in decisions that impact them. The goals of ALWANE Bahrain's campaigns are twofold: they seek to provide women with training to perform jobs or start their own businesses; and work to create opportunities for women seeking employment.

ALWANE Bahrain's most recent program is the innovative "Ruad Café Cart." The crux of this program is not a workshop or training, but rather an actual, tangible café. In conjunction with the Ministry of Labor, ALWANE Bahrain has bought and outfitted two carts to be fully functioning cafés. A committee of the program's partners (WCI, the Ministry, UNIDO, and Milad Marketing) will select the right candidates from a list of unemployed women, who will then be trained in how to prepare the coffee and manage the cart. The carts will be located in large buildings that receive

a good deal of walking traffic and do not have other cafés or shops. While there is still work to make the project a reality, the Ruad Café Cart already has one of its locations—inside the Ministry of Labor building, itself!

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## Egypt



ALWANE Egypt seeks to find a way to provide Egyptian women with the information, training, and skills they need to succeed. One of the ongoing programs started by ALWANE Egypt sets out to break common stereotypes about women that have a negative impact on their self-esteem within society.

By working with debate clubs and advocates who lobby for changes in laws and regulations, this campaign, called Anahuna ("I am here"), examines and dispels stereotypes of women in films. ALWANE Egypt's training-based program focuses on unions and the small number of women working in this field. The program trains women for every position inside a union (lobbyist, advocate, facilitator, organizer) so they will be qualified for any role they choose to seek out. The trainings build on the women's natural skills and talents, utilizing team-

based activities and role-playing.

The idea behind this particular program is one that Shereen Allam, ALWANE Egypt's country officer, relates to very closely. "It doesn't make a difference if you tell anyone else the information because we all use it in different ways," Shereen explains. "Maybe somebody else would have given up. I don't want anyone to give up."

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# Iraq



From the start, ALWANE Iraq’s approach to addressing issues of women’s advancement and empowerment in the country has been one that organizes distinct programs and

engages diverse—and sometimes unexpected—stakeholders.

ALWANE Iraq’s participation in WCI’s ALWANE Future Search embodies just that. Future Search brought together stakeholders from a variety of fields and perspectives for two days of debate and conversation which resulted in a concrete “action plan” to advance leadership and participation for women. While creating actionable goals, Future Search fostered an atmosphere of collaboration and unified a vision for the future of women throughout the sec-

tors of Iraqi society.

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# Jordan

ALWANE Jordan committee is dedicated to ensuring that justice is served for women, that women know and understand their rights, and that they can be self-reliant. Since the last ALWANE regional summit, new leadership in the Jordan country committee has taken the campaign in an exciting and different direction. This fresh focus is targeted towards developing the self-esteem of women and young men in universities. Currently, although about 50% of university students are women, only 10% of them go on to enter the workplace.



Through weekly workshops with a regular audience of 18-20 enthusiastic participants, the programs presented lessons in emotional intelligence, time management, conflict resolution, and many other topics. The workshops also invited experts to attend and speak about their experience and knowledge. ALWANE Jordan’s new programming hopes that through self-esteem development and capacity building, the students can be encouraged to enter the workplace in spite of the obstacles they perceive.

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# Kuwait



Kuwait currently maintains some of the highest levels of female equality and freedoms in the region. Where other countries have restrictive laws prohibiting women from driving, traveling, and

working outside of the home, Kuwait guarantees these freedoms for their female citizens. It would be easy for many activists to then focus on nations that are less progressive in their policies towards women. It would be simple to say that Kuwaiti policy regarding women is “good enough”. However, the ALWANE Kuwait committee is not taking “good enough” for an answer.

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## Lebanon



**A**LWANE Lebanon's main focus is enabling women in rural areas of the country to achieve economic independence. Through its programs, the country committee strove to reach

communities in marginalized areas, which tend to be neglected by the majority of urban-based women's advocacy groups. Women have little or no access to education in rural areas, and therefore face bigger obstacles to pursuing individual economic endeavors. ALWANE Lebanon worked with women's leagues in those areas to host interactive workshops with successful entrepreneurs and inspire women to help build the women's skill set, and to motivate them to succeed.



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## Libya

**W**hile much of the MENA region has undergone substantial changes over the past several years, few nations have been transformed as dramatically as Libya. Libya has emerged from the chaos of its revolution with many challenges, struggles, and issues. Much of the world has watched with bated breath to see what type of government, institutions, and policies will be enacted by the newly-formed State of Libya. Unlike some, the members of the ALWANE Libya committee have decided not to

simply be observers in this tumultuous but historically important era in Libyan history. The brave members of the committee understand the exceptional position in which both they and their nation find themselves, and are taking steps to ensure that their future as a country is one that promotes equality and opportunity for all of its citizens.

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## Morocco

**T**he members of the ALWANE Morocco committee believe that education is the key to future development and success, for individual advancement as well as for national improvement. In a recent change of leadership, the previous country officer, Rim Hajji, passed the position to ALWANE Morocco's exuberant new leader, Maroua El Hani. The ALWANE Morocco committee sought to identify and raise awareness about the many factors that contribute to the educational disparity between



men and women throughout the country. Through intensive research, the committee identified and outlined several important social, economic, and governmental issues that serve as obstacles to both

women's access to education and their advancement within the academic system.

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## Oman

The goals of ALWANE Oman are rooted in the belief that raising public awareness about women's rights is not only the first step to empowering women to claim these rights, but also a means of shaping society's reaction to the recognition of these rights. ALWANE Oman holds that when women take advantage of the rights they already have, the country's development will progress more rapidly and more sustainably.

One of the programs through which ALWANE Oman

addressed these issues was called "My Rights, My Blessing in Life." These efforts strove to expand the depth and breadth of understanding of women's rights in the country, seeking to reach a larger number of people and to improve the knowledge of young men and women who were already interested in the subject.

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## Palestine

The struggle faced by women in Palestine is made more profound by the turbulent political situation in which all Palestinians live. While, in many cases, traditional culture prevents women from being able to travel alone or find accommodating job opportunities, in Palestine, it is first political instability that poses as an obstacle for women. Culture says that it is not typical for a woman to live alone before marriage; but the reality of an incredibly dangerous political situation practically forbids it.



The ALWANE country committee must try to navigate these sticky circumstances in order to further women's advancement and empowerment in Palestine. ALWANE Palestine's focus is on economic empowerment. One of ALWANE Palestine's programs provides technology training and job opportunities for women to work jobs from their homes. These women work in search engine optimization, social media, online marketing,

translation, programming, and graphic design, among others, and none have to face the physical risk or cultural restrictions of commuting to a job. This program has the added benefit of allowing women who are handicapped and women living in rural areas to work, when otherwise they could not. Initially an ALWANE Palestine program, this endeavor has since evolved into a private company.

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## Qatar

There are few nations in the world that can rival the rapid economic growth and expansion of Qatar. Rich with natural energy reserves, Qatar has developed into an entrepreneurial, tourism, academic, and cultural hotspot throughout the MENA region, as well as the world. Yet with this newfound prosperity comes the challenge to rise above the social and economic inequalities that still plague the nation. Through its work and campaign, the ALWANE Qatar committee has sought to shed light on many problems that inhibit both social evolution and economic

development in Qatar and the region as a whole.

Using a multi-strategy approach, the ALWANE Qatar committee, which was led in 2012 by Aysha Al Mudehki, advocated for the legalization of home businesses in Qatar. These businesses, dominated by women, are not currently treated as legitimate enterprises in the Qatari economy, and are, in fact, illegal, though the government does not strictly enforce this. The fact that these businesses are unable to attain legal status means that they are unable to

expand, making it impossible to create true profitability for both the business owner and its employees. The ALWANE Qatar committee has actively lobbied the Qatari government to put in place mechanisms for legalizing and legitimizing these important but marginalized enterprises.

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## Saudi Arabia



Women in Saudi Arabia face not just cultural obstacles to finding work, but the obstacle of inconvenience—businesses see

hiring women as detrimental to the company because of the costs they incur due to the segregation law. ALWANE Saudi Arabia strives to turn these many obstacles into opportunities for women by working with companies and with the government to improve women's ability to seek economic empowerment.

ALWANE Saudi Arabia initiated a private-public partnership with the Ministry of Labor, called "Hafiz," through which unemployed women can get a stipend for being

job-seekers until they are able to find a job. At the same time, Hafiz works with the Ministry to advance laws so that they better enable women to find and hold employment. One such law required every organization with more than 50 women working in it to provide childcare services during the workday.

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## Tunisia

The revolution in Tunisia as part of the Arab Spring brought a great deal of change to the country. The women of Tunisia already had many rights, and the Arab Spring saw a push for more rights for women, but resulted in a new dilemma: the women of Tunisia learned that not only do they have to fight to obtain new rights, but they also must fight to protect the ones they already have.

With this in mind, ALWANE Tunisia works for both



the economic and the political empowerment of women. One of ALWANE Tunisia's efforts involves providing financial support for women in poor, rural regions through a social entrepreneurial

project. This program allows marginalized women with less access to opportunities than urban women to benefit from economic independence, thereby improving their entire communities. Currently, Tunisia's country committee is working to translate this program into a national network, an endeavor that will expand its reach and make the program more efficient.

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## Yemen



Art of all kinds holds the potential to evoke a wide range of emotions in any society. These artistic representations of cultural, social, or economic issues and events can transform communities, as well as

deliver universal messages that breach the barriers of culture and language, uniting peoples and promoting dialogue about complex and often overlooked subjects present within society. Once this dialogue has been opened, however, they can generate increased awareness of obstacles to equality, justice, or freedom, or even change the views and opinions on these pertinent topics. The hard-working members of the ALWANE Yemen committee continue to seamlessly blend art and political advocacy into poignant and effective messages for their nation, as well as the region as

a whole.

Led by Ahmed al Yemeni until August 2013, the ALWANE Yemen committee seeks to provide ongoing capacity-building support to activists working within Yemen to advance women's empowerment, as well as other pressing social concerns. Through their tireless efforts, ALWANE Yemen has become a springboard for progressive advocacy efforts from a wide range of sectors.

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