

# The Voice of Libyan Women

2011 – July 2012



# Preface

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**Address:** Zawiat El Dahmani, Tripoli. Libya

**Phone/Mobile:** +218925409539

**Email:** [info@vlwlibya.org](mailto:info@vlwlibya.org)

**Website:** [www.facebook.com/thevoiceoflibyanwomen](http://www.facebook.com/thevoiceoflibyanwomen) [www.vlwlibya.org](http://www.vlwlibya.org)

The Voice of Libyan Women (VLW) was initially founded in August 2011 as a result of the February 17 Revolution which renewed not only our hope for equality in Libya, but also renewed the hope of the Libyan society as a whole in their basic human rights, including women's rights. This hope quickly translated into action, which VLW believes is the best method for any concrete improvement with regards to women's rights.

Although VLW has grown considerably since its founding, we remain a youth-led organization and have a strong base in our hometown of Zawia. As a group of young Libyan women from different backgrounds, our ultimate goal is to advocate for an increased investment into one of Libya's greatest resources which unfortunately has yet to receive the attention it deserves: women.

We focus our activities mainly on: improving the political participation and the economic empowerment of women in Libya. We are also active in advocating against gender based violence (GBV).

For more information on VLW, or for a greater understanding of the current challenges faced by Libyan women today and possible solutions for the future, please feel free to contact us at [info@vlwlibya.org](mailto:info@vlwlibya.org)

*It is women, who lead families, bond communities and truly reconcile a country, and it is only through their investment that Libya will realize its true potential.*

All our love,

The VLW Family

**2011**

## Surveying the General Public

**Date:** September 24 2011 – October 11<sup>th</sup> 2011

**Purpose:** At VLW it is our responsibility to amplify the voices of Libyan women so that they may be better heard by both local and national policy makers. However in order to do this we must first know what the aspirations of Libyan women are. For that reason we chose to determine some guidelines for our organization through public consultations and surveys. Over the course of nearly two weeks we had a booth in nearly every Bazaar in Zawia and Tripoli, asking Libyan women and men of all ages to write their hopes for Libyan women in the future. The result of one poster survey in Tripoli stated that: "Of 142 Libyan women surveyed, Nearly 50% think improvement in the education sector is most important for the new Libya to address, with economic growth (24%), healthcare (9%), infrastructure (9%), and other priorities (most notably safety, at 4%) following." The results from these poster surveys are some of the motivating factors for VLW.



## "The Voice" Newspaper

**Date:** September 2011 – April 2012

**Purpose:** We published a monthly newsletter in both Arabic and English, and are in the process of publishing a monthly magazine, which is written solely by Libyan women, for Libyan women.



## Zawia International Assessment

**Date:** October 6 2011

**Purpose:** Zawia a war ravaged city and one only 40 km west of Tripoli has unfortunately received very little international attention. In an effort to highlight many of the (still present) issues in Zawia, we organized an assessment with Ohtli International. Ohtli visited local schools, clinics and the teaching hospital in order to assess the damage.

## Open Panel Discussions

**Date:** October 5<sup>th</sup> 2011 – Present

**Purpose:** VLW felt it necessary to arrange Roundtable discussions to provide the platform for Libyan women to voice their concerns and opinions. Roundtable discussions were arranged between: civil society activists and decision makers, Libyan women and civil society, and Libyan women and international agencies & embassies which have quite a lot of influence on the Libyan government.

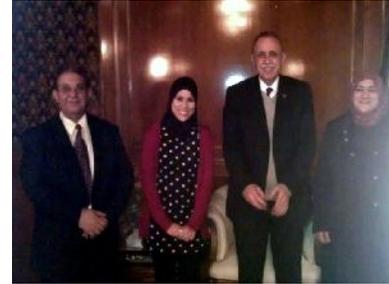
### **Activities:**

- Our first Open Panel Discussion was for Reporter Suzanne Saks of The Globe & Mail at The Radisson Hotel. Nearly 20 women from Tripoli, Zawia and Sirt spoke to the reporter about their views. At the time there was still fighting in Bani Walid & Sirt, so it was quite emotional for some.
- The Canadian Embassy [Ambassador Susan McCardell, and Foreign Minister John Baird] at the Corinthia. This was a roundtable of eight Libyan women, none of which had previous involvement in civil society, speaking about their basic needs from both their own government, and the international community.
- The United Nations [Mona Rishmawi, Ian Martin (UNSMIL SRSG), HansJoerg Strohmeyer & Ahmed Ghanem] at UN Facilities. It was a roundtable of over 30 Libyan women and civil society activists from Zawia, Tripoli, Misrata, Benghazi and Sebha.
- Zawia Local Council [Nabil Bshina, Mustafa Buteta] at the Medical Research Center. Following a general seminar in which over 60 women from Zawia and surrounding area deliberated the five most important issues for Libyan women. The women then presented their opinions and suggestions to members of the Zawia Local Council. The following discussion resulted in a heated *the first* anti – local council protest in Zawia.
- Yefren Local Council. Four women from Yefren presented their points of view to the Local Council which was very open to hearing them. The Local Council has since invited local women to all Council meetings and has asked them to be present during visits from International diplomats to the city.
- Deputy Prime Minister Mr. Bushagour met with four female members of civil society. They discussed the purpose of the quota and the need for greater government support and encouragement for female politicians.



- Members of VLW discussed the promotion of women's political participation with Prime Minister Dr. Abdulrahim Keib & his assistant Dr. Idris for nearly two hours.

- Erhabat Local Council – Following the completion of two workshops focusing on women's education and health 20 women from Erhabat presented their recommendations to the Erhabat local council, which reiterated its support.



- The women of Erhabat [Over 85 women from Erhabat]. One morning was spent at the Sewing Factory of Mrs. Ibtisam Swessi, who opened the abandoned factory in March to sew Revolutionary flags. The factory now produces everything from home clothes to wedding dresses, and Mrs. Ibtisam Swessi now employs over 15 women & the factory has the capacity to employ at least 80 more. Mrs. Ibtisam Swessi has taken full responsibility for the factory; she designs all final products and covers all the bills herself. Mrs. Swessi sat with nearly sixty women from Erhabat who expressed their challenges and concerns in terms of career and family.



- Jadu [NGOs Tufutintillily and Adrar organized for the attendance of over 100 women and 20 men] The organization of two open panel discussions focusing on the political involvement of women which highlighted what the women of Jadu want most from their local and national government. The discussions were heard on local radio, which reaches over four cities in the area and over 29,000 people.

- VLW was quite excited to meet with Zawian Civil Society on Sunday, December 25th. It was an excellent opportunity for nearly twenty local organizations to truly get to know each other.

- Regional NGOs [7 NGOs from Sermon, Sabrata and Zwara] On January 15<sup>th</sup> VLW conducted an open panel discussion along with representatives of Local Councils. The discussions centered on what civil society needs from their local governments so that we can be more effective and efficient.



- The American Embassy [Ambassador Cretz, Deputy Secretary of State Thomas Nides, Deputy Secretary of Treasury Neal S. Wolin] at Wadaan Hotel on January 26<sup>th</sup> 2012. Seven members of civil society, both male and female, presented their point of views on the NTC, government, election law and more.

- Over 60 Civil Society Activists from throughout Libya gathered in Tripoli on February 5th 2012 to truly define what was most important to Libyan women & how best to work with decision makers to ensure women's rights. The main focus was: Political Participation, Economic Investment, GBV, and Education.



- On February 15<sup>th</sup> 2012 over 80 Society Activists from throughout Libya convened to put forth focused recommendations on political participation, economic empowerment and GBV.

- Prime Minister's Office [VLW Member Alla Baiou, Prime Minister Abdulrahim El Keib, Former Finnish Prime Minister and Current leader of the opposition Mari Kiviniemi]



**Evaluation:** The Open Panel & Roundtable discussions have proven to be very successful. We have noted that discussions with international figures tend to give more importance to discussions with local figures. One of our most successful discussions was with the Erhabat & Yefren Local Councils, which spoke quite favourably of having women in politics. To follow up, we enlisted eight local women who gave political information seminars in nearby schools. For members of the community who are unable to read or write we created graph posters with pictures so they may select the issues most important to them. This has proven to be useful in local high schools as well, as it is a much more visual & interactive way to get the message across.

**Follow Up:** We will continue our Open Panel & Roundtable discussions as we have noticed they are a very effective way to ensure that decision makers & Libyan women can communicate on what is important and what we need to ensure it can be done.

### **Zawia Women's Center & NGO Hub**

Date: October 26<sup>th</sup> 2011 – Closed in January 2012.

**Reopening August 2012 with the support of Creative and the Finnish Embassy.**

**Activities:** The Educational and Development Center located in downtown Zawia has several roles. First and foremost an educational training facility in things such as: Beginning in Business classes, Understanding Politics Classes, English Classes, and a "Rejuvenation" Room. The center also has a playroom for children, and a library. Along with this, the center also acts as an NGO Hub to strengthen local civil society by providing basic things such as internet access, printing facilities, etc



*“Emphasise the importance of women's representation in local, regional and international diplomatic corps.”*

- One Voice Conference Recommendation, November 15<sup>th</sup> 2011

## **The One Voice Conference**

**Date:** November 11 – 15<sup>th</sup> 2011

**Supported by:** The British Embassy Tripoli, European Union, the Husni Bey Group, USIP and Al Hawari Import and Export

**Purpose:** During the five day conference participants addressed many of the major topics and debates affecting Libyan women and society today, including politics, religion, business, women's health, media & the process of NGO creation. One Voice 2011 was attended by over 150 women from all over Libya, with guest speakers Her Excellency Lady Catherine Ashton, High Representative - Vice President of the European Commission, Liesl Gerntholz, Director of Human Rights Watch Women's Division, Mr. Ian Martin, UN SRSG in Libya and Libyan officials NTC Chairman Mustafa Abdel Jalil, NTC Prime Minister Dr. AbdelRahim El Keib, NTC Former Prime Minister Mahmud Gibril, and over 10 more NTC members.

**Evaluation:** The conference illustrated that women in Libya are more than ready to be active in the political field, as well as in business and media in Libya. Furthermore this conference achieved the bonus of mobilizing women and stimulating dialogue in Libya. In the months following One Voice 2011 numerous conferences, meetings and forums occurred, all of which greatly impacted and strengthened the women's movement in Libya. The recommendations presented to the NTC and Libyan government during the conference are also the basis for our travelling workshops and were the starting point for our Women's Charter discussion.



## Psychological Abuse Campaign



Date: November 26<sup>th</sup> – December 10<sup>th</sup> 2011. As part of the 16 Days of Activism

Supported in part by: DanChurchAid, UNFPA

**Activities:** VLW posted insulting posters around numerous cities and on the internet from November 26<sup>th</sup> – December 9<sup>th</sup> 2011. On the final day, December 10<sup>th</sup> 2011, the poster stated "How have these made you feel? Millions of women suffer from psychological abuse every day, but for them it's not as easy as turning off their computers to get away from it". The campaign ran in both English & Arabic and focused on psychological abuse.

**Evaluation:** The local response was remarkable – insulting posters were ripped, written on, and torn down. People took pictures next to the final poster and we have since been asked over our radio show in Zawia to repeat the same campaign.

**Follow Up:** We will be repeating the campaign (with a few changes) as requested. We also followed up with GBV billboards and posters (pictured here). The campaign was presented at The British Council "Women & the Constitution" conference in November 2011, and following further presentations in Dubai, and Sana'a, Yemen (with a personal invitation from The Ministry of Human Rights) it has been implemented in several countries in the region. We feel unbelievably privileged & honoured that our campaign will be seen throughout the Arab region in selected schools, universities, and companies. The complete campaign can be found online at [www.facebook.com/thevoiceoflibyanwomen](http://www.facebook.com/thevoiceoflibyanwomen)



## Travelling Workshops

Date: November 28<sup>th</sup> 2011 – Present

Supported in part by: DanChurchAid, UNFPA

**Activities:** Giving workshops in: Political participation, Economic empowerment, education & Gender Based Violence in cities, towns and rural communities throughout Libya. The Workshops have been the platforms for our Women's Network,



Women's Charter and Open Panel Discussion Programs.

To date we have visited 17 cities: Erhabat, Jadu, Zwara, Ajalat, Sabrata, Sermon, Zawia, Gheryan, Yefren, Zintan, Derna, Sebha, Misrata, Maya, Khoms, Zwara and Tripoli.

## **International AIDS Day**

**Date:** December 1<sup>st</sup> 2011

**Activities:** We assisted in the funding, organization and management of the International AIDS Day program in Martyr's Square, Tripoli.



**Evaluation:** It was quite successful with over hundreds attending. VLW was partly responsible for ensuring all NGOs who would like a booth or to make a presentation were able. We also had a booth ourselves and got positive feedback from people in a number of ways (SMS, Phone calls, Email & Facebook).

**Follow Up:** We will be partnering with the Center of Infectious Diseases again next year for the same Dec. 1<sup>st</sup> Program. We are also incorporating an AIDS awareness campaign into our "Women's Health" Seminars.

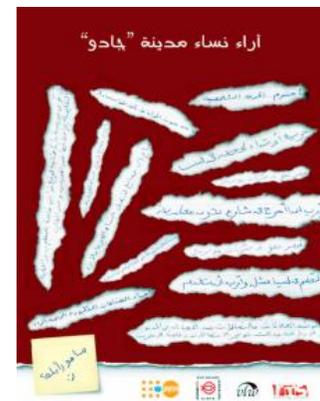
## **Women's Charter Project**

Selected by Women Deliver Top 50 Ideas and Solution Improving the Lives of Girls and Women Worldwide.

**Date:** December 4<sup>th</sup> 2011 – Present

**Supported in part by:** DanChurchAid, UNFPA

**Purpose:** VLW, in partnership with numerous local NGOs, is publishing a Libyan Women's Charter which will then be used to influence the Constitution. We have been receiving the benefit of The South African Women's Coalition expertise in the matter. Through discussions, seminars, workshops and assemblies in numerous cities and towns we are receiving data which we will then be assembled into a Women's Charter. We plan on visiting all cities and towns numerous times as we believe each time the audience will increase & become more involved and invested.



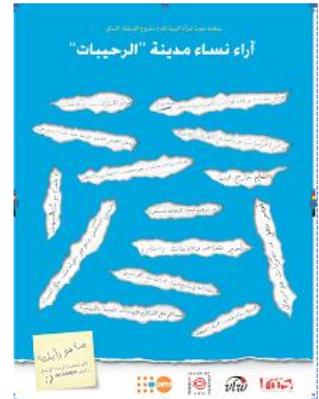
**Activities:** It is a four step project:

1. The documentation of the five most important issues written by each woman in attendance. We give her a blank white paper & ask her to focus on what is most important to her, in her own writing. We then make these into billboards & posters which we will take to other cities

to illustrate to Libyan women how united their desires truly are. With this information we will then be able to focus our demands based on what are stated as local needs during our travelling workshops. We have already travelled to numerous cities.

2. The distribution of a complete, representative and relevant survey with the help of the Local Women's NGOs, schools, universities & the Local Councils. We have also met with most radio & television stations in the cities we have visited and they have agreed to cooperate with us.
3. The publication of a DRAFT Women's Charter which allows for a three month feedback timeframe. After which amendments will be made and a second draft will be released for several weeks.
4. Our final step coincides with our women's Network Project, in which we will unveil the Final Women's Charter at the National union of the representatives from their own Local and Regional Councils and through previous discussions will come to the National Forum with a deep understanding of what is most important to them. This will allow for a unified and much more influential women's movement.

**Evaluation:** The VLW "Women's Charter" was recognized as a Women Deliver Top 50 Idea and Solution Improving the Lives of Girls and Women Worldwide in celebration of International Women's Day 2012. After receiving hundreds of online nominations from 103 countries, a selection committee of experts and advocates representing the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Medic Mobile, Room to Read, Man Up and the International Center for Research on Women narrowed down the original list of nominations for voting. Women Deliver President, Jill Sheffield, acted as Chair. They ultimately chose 125 finalists to be voted on by the public and thousands voted! "The solutions on this list show that with ingenuity, drive and dedication, we can build a better world for girls and women," said Jill Sheffield, Women Deliver Founder and President. "We are proud to celebrate these organizations and programs, which are pioneering real, lasting, social change at the local and global levels. We have seen time and time again that when we invest in girls and women, entire societies benefit."



We are currently still in phase two of the project and unfortunately slightly behind schedule despite their being support from the Libyan public. Our current challenge is financial – as the project requires costly travel & up until now it has been self funded. We have noticed that in smaller cities we are actually able to get a much more representative response and we have had, relatively speaking, more success. We would of course welcome any logistical or other support, please contact [info@vlwlibya.org](mailto:info@vlwlibya.org) .

Feel free to take a look at the list of 50 winners here: <http://www.womendeliver.org/knowledge-center/publications/women-deliver-50/>

### **"Be the Boss" Entrepreneur Courses**

**Date:** December 6<sup>th</sup> 2011 – March 21<sup>st</sup> 2012

**Purpose:** An intensive business course which is specifically targeted towards entrepreneur- minded women. Women are taught how to approach a business, how to start or operate a business, possible pitfalls and how to overcome them, etc. We then follow it up with our “Good Start” Internship program (for those who do not believe they are ready to enter the workforce on their own). The internship is to familiarize women with the business world and the responsibilities they would have.



**Activities:** In the city of Zawia we had over 25 female entrepreneurs (or running small businesses) undergoing a “Beginning in Business” Six Week Intensive Course which met four times a week for 2 hours. The course ran twice and focused on the fundamentals of business as well as how to open your own business.

**Evaluation:** Our Zawia courses are both complete and already showing great signs of success. Three women enrolled in the class have since opened small businesses in Zawia and we have been able to link their business to others which support them. Success stories include one woman who has since opened an out – of – home Desert Business and is now the sole supplier to the three major sweets shops in Zawia. Three members are currently completing internships through the “Good Start” Program.

**Follow Up:** We will begin the next course in Zawia in late September.

### **“Beginning in Business” Workshops**

**Date:** December 6<sup>th</sup> 2011 - Present

**Purpose:** We have noticed that many women are eager to enter the workforce; however they feel as though they do not have the skills or education to be a true asset. For this reason many of them avoid it.

**Activities:** In Tripoli we currently run three workshops a week with nearly 12 new participants each time which focus on The Basics of Employment: how to write a CV, how to approach an Interview, and of course, what work ethic is. We also run travelling workshops to: Sermon, Yefren, Sabrata, Erhabat, Jadu, Gheryan and more. As well as Train the Trainer workshops in smaller & rural areas. We train local women who then advocate and raise awareness of women’s economic rights in their own communities.



**Evaluation:** Attendees from the Tripoli workshops are funnelled into our “Good Start” Internship Program. To date six of them have been employed by some of the largest companies in Libya due to their outstanding performance during their internships.

## **The Human Rights Alliance**

**Date:** December 14<sup>th</sup> 2011 - Present

**Activities:** There is such an amazing group of women & men truly involved in the empowerment and education of Libyan women and many organizations seem to have quite a few of the same ideas & goals. For this reason we pioneered the Libyan Human Rights Alliance made up of several NGOs which will simply act as a mechanism for communication amongst human rights groups.



**Follow Up:** Each NGO in the Human Rights Alliance will continue its individual work, while communicating with the rest of the NGOs.

## **Workshops & TOT**

**Date:** UN “Celebrate Human Rights” TOT [December 14 & 15<sup>th</sup> 2011] & DCA “Women’s Rights” Workshop [December 27<sup>th</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup> 2011]

**Activities:** We’re currently running local workshops through international organizations such as the UN, DCA and through local trainers.

**Follow Up:** VLW followed up with DCA workshop participants, and the UN is following up with their own.



## **What Does It Mean to You? Video Series**

**Date:** December 16<sup>th</sup> 2011 – February 22 2012

**Supported by:** DanChurchAid, UNFPA

**Activities:** The first of our What Does it Mean To You Video Series, talked about 3 different subjects. What the words Democracy, Oppression and Equality mean to you? Our second video focused on Women’s Rights & Human Rights. Our third & fourth videos focused on how our younger generation (girls and boys aged 4-16) see their future. Our videos have now been picked up by Alassema TV & Radio, and will also begin to play on Alawalen TV. They have also received over 3600 views over facebook and we show them during our travelling workshops. The Local Council of Yefren has requested that we film a video there, focusing on the rights of Amazigh Women.



Videos Can Be Seen Here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QuOe6P9zZb8&context=C39c69b5ADOEgsToPDskJOZCXuSZMAydiAvXmIVfla>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aibYtitu5IE&feature=g-upl>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QaPi5uOO7AY&feature=youtu.be>

### **“Good Start” Internship Program**

**Date:** December 16<sup>th</sup> 2011 – February 24<sup>th</sup> 2012

**Purpose:** Many women became mobilized after taking part in our “beginning in business” classes but were unable to find jobs and were immediately disappointed. To prevent this we spoke to some of the largest privately owned Libyan companies in Tripoli & Zawia to provide one- month, unpaid internships to 20 women a month. Following a successful internship the women would then be interviewed & possibly hired by the company. Companies currently participating in the VLW "Good Start" Internship Program are: The Husni Bey Group in Tripoli & Benghazi, Attawabic Real Estate & Construction in Tripoli & Al Qabas Center for (Language & Computer) Knowledge & Training in Zawia.

**Evaluation:** Out of the first 20 women who completed their internships, six were employed by some of the largest companies in Tripoli & Zawia.

**Follow Up:** The internship program is monthly; our second group of 16 interns began on January 20<sup>th</sup> 2012. VLW will restart the program in October 2012.

### **Women’s Network**

**Date:** December 14<sup>th</sup> 2011 – Present

**Purpose:** Through the promotion of intra-regional relationships and communication amongst female activists, women’s rights based organizations and women in Libya we will strengthen regional integration and enhance the message delivered to the National Transitional Council, and local governing bodies. This will lead to more sustainable development in the region. It will also give the women’s movement in Libya a concrete agenda.

**Activities:** Through a four step program (in cooperation with our Charter Project)

1. Travelling to all cities and towns within Libya and establishing a database of all Civil Society and Individual Activists in the area.
2. Town Hall and Open Panel Discussions within the cities which allow for the women to network and debate on local and national issues. They then narrow down issues which are



most important to them. These Local Women's Networks then choose representatives who will communicate closely with the Local Council.

3. We will then act regionally, taking representatives from Local Women's Networks and uniting them in a Central city in the area. This will give them an opportunity to communicate and get to know each other. Through this we hope to establish regional ties leading to further cooperation between organizations.



4. Our Final step is the unveiling of the Final Women's Charter at the National union of the representatives from their own Local and Regional Councils. Through their previous discussions will come to the National Forum with a deep understanding of what is most important to them. This will allow for a unified and much more influential women's movement.

**Evaluation:** We have currently compiled a data base of over 200 NGOs in Libya of which nearly 60 are Women's Development NGOs. We are currently still on steps one & two however we do believe it has been quite successful so far. Of course through this we have been able to reach remarkable organizations and work with them. One example is Tiwatriwin, a women's NGO in the mountain town of Yefren which does not get many international visitors or funding opportunities. However after we met & invited them to our One Voice Conference, members of international NGOs & Embassies took note of their passion and is now assisting them. To us this is more than enough reason to explore the very dedicated organizations in the smaller cities and ensure that they are principal members of a national network.

**2012**

## **Radio**

**Date:** Monday January 2 2012 – February 2012

**Supported in part by:** DanChurchAid, UNFPA

**Activities:** Broadcasting twice a week, for a total of one & a half hours the radio show acted as a roundtable discussion by VLW with expert guest speakers. Issues we touched base on included: Political participation, Economic Empowerment, Gender based violence, Family life, Education, Cooking and more! It has been a great platform for discussion where women can further discuss their ideas, needs and wants.

**Shows:** Monday January 2: “Introducing the Voice of Libyan Women”, Wednesday 4: Introduction to Democracy (lead in to Women’s 10% Quota (Callers: One Male [22] = Islamically women are not able to hold the highest office, and as in Islam it is the parents/husbands blessing that will get her into heaven it makes sense that she will ask her dad/husband, and he will guide her as to who she can/ should vote for. He quoted from the Quran “Women are weaker in mind and religion”).), Thursday 5: Women’s Charter Project: Recommendations from first conference. ( Callers: Read out of only first 3 recommendations, and then a debate ensued about the best way to influence your husband by callers for nearly 15 minutes, which led hosts to decide in future shows to try to screen all callers.), Sunday 8: 10% Quota. Women’s Charter Project. (2 Callers, both women, 17 & 43, both against quota and say a Quota is embarrassing and unfair & women should win the same way men do – with hard work, not handouts.), Thursday 12: Introduction to: Beginning in Business. On air tutorial of how to write a CV., Monday 16: Gender Based Violence [Focused on Psychological Abuse] (1 Female caller, no age, called to thank our one male host for his support. 2 more female callers, both early 30’s, requested that this be spoken about again in a future show, as time ran out. Will be re discussed on the 30<sup>th</sup> of January.), Thursday 19: A look at the role of Libyan Women today. Sunday, 22nd: Reproductive Health. , Wednesday 25th: Education. How to fix Elementary schools in Zawia. We had a truly phenomenal response & are hoping to restart it in October 2012.

## **Political Protests**

**Date:** January 4<sup>th</sup> 2012 & January 22<sup>nd</sup> 2012

**Activities:** The first protest on the 4<sup>th</sup> was against the 10% quota written in the draft election law. We then noted that because the quota is not widely supported by the general Libyan public (as they do not fully understand it); we organized the second protest against the unjust election draft as a whole and to support greater calls for transparency & representation from the NTC. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6lksA1ktE2U>

**Evaluation:** The first protest resulted in a meeting with the Prime Minister’s office. Our second protest resulted in a phone call from the elections



committee itself requesting VLW's "input" on the draft election law.

**Follow Up:** We will continue to monitor the Libyan government & decision making bodies.

### **Free English Classes [Zawia & Tripoli]**

**Date:** January 11<sup>th</sup> 2012 - Present

**Purpose:** As Libya is a conservative society where the majority of women would not sign up for business or political classes on their own accord. In an effort to "get them in the door" VLW is providing free English classes which are in extremely high demand. Through these classes we introduce the idea of women in business & in politics as well as open the door to future classes & opportunities to women.

**Evaluation:** The program has proven to be one of our most in demand and we are currently in our third class. We are also collaborating with two local English schools in Zawia to give subsidized English classes as well.



### **The National Policies on Ensuring the Economic Empowerment of Women**

With consultation from the Ministry of Labour

**Date:** February 4 2012

**Purpose:** Only through their economic empowerment women can they truly contribute to society, effectively and equally. Through a combination of mediums, including but not limited to: educational seminars & workshops, social awareness, organized internships with internationally recognized companies, and the creation of a Business Women's Network, we will be able to create not only a platform for communication, but also a mechanism for support.

In order to ensure this is possible, VLW released: National Policies on Ensuring the Economic Empowerment of Women in Libya in an effort to encourage policy changes.

Feel free to request a copy. They can also be found here:

<https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B4S7VfVT1jajMDgwMDUxN2MtNDE5MCO0MTM2LTlIZGItNzFkZDM0MTU0MWE0/edit?pli=1>

### **Artist Showcase**

**Date:** February 4 2012

**Purpose:** Showcasing the art pieces of Libyan female artists. All pieces of art depicted the "role of Libyan women" and everyday moments.

## International Purple Hijab Day combating Domestic Violence

**Date:** February 12 & 13<sup>th</sup> 2012

**Supported by:** DanChurchAid

**Activities:** On February 12 2012, one day before International Purple Hijab, Scarf & Tie Day (February 13 2012), VLW visited The Martyr's of 17<sup>th</sup> of February High School (Formerly 11 July), in Zawia, Libya. Welcomed by purple as far as the eye could see we gave a seminar on Domestic Violence and then distributed & collected surveys an anonymous survey on Domestic Violence (both before and after the seminar). The survey asked three questions: 1) what does domestic violence mean to you? 2) Have you been personally affected by domestic violence? & 3) In your opinion, what can the Libyan Government & Libyan Civil Society do to help end domestic violence? On February 13 2012, these surveys, along with thousands more from high schools throughout Libya were presented to Libyan Prime Minister el- Keib. Keib requested an appointment with VLW, after hearing of the cause & happily wore a purple scarf in support stating, "This is such a great cause". Pictures of the students of Martyr's of 17<sup>th</sup> of February school, the Libyan Prime Minister, Libyans from all over the country & world who sent in their pictures, foreign diplomats, International supporters of the cause & numerous Libyan NGO's which wore purple Hijabs, scarves & ties in support of International Purple Hijab, Scarf & Tie Day can be found at [www.facebook.com/thevoiceoflibyanwomen](http://www.facebook.com/thevoiceoflibyanwomen)



**Evaluation & Follow Up:** Our support for Domestic Violence does not end here! Because of the amazing support and with the assistance of the Local Councils, as well as Ministries, we will Inshaallah be visiting high schools & Universities throughout Libya to touch base on this important & extremely sensitive issue. As one brilliant, impressive & truly inspiring young student said to VLW, "If we all demand that everyone is treated equally and with respect, then it becomes the standard and everything, not just domestic violence will change. All we need is respect - for ourselves, for each other, and for our community."



## **VLW Women's Day T – Shirt Design Contest**

**Date:** February 25th - March 8th 2012

**Purpose:** VLW chose to conduct a national competition which illustrated the strength of Libyan women and the importance of unity.

Participants were asked to design their own T -shirt, either by painting, drawing, through photography or digitally. The designs had to emphasize the importance of unity amongst Libyan women regardless of age, or region. The winner was chosen by popular vote.

**Evaluation:** With over 18 entries, a design receiving over 366 votes won. The album may be seen here:

<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.223063587792663.44704.135705886528434&type=3>



## **A day in the life of a Victim of Domestic Violence Video**

**Date:** March 2012 - Presently used in the majority of VLW Seminars & Workshops

**Purpose:** The video raises awareness and acceptance of victims of gender based violence and the daily struggle they go through. It aims to remove the cultural blame from the victim. Participants in the video (either actors or voiceovers) were girls and women of different ages and all of whom were not previously associated with any civil society initiatives. Some of which have (and still do) suffer from domestic violence.

**Follow Up:** The video is used during VLW Domestic Violence workshops and has been the most effective tool for us to introduce the topic of domestic violence. It has also allowed for us to explore domestic violence in a clearer way and allowed for participants to clearly understand the issues. By using such a personal method they are much more open to discussing their own situations.

## **Survey for Stay at Home Mothers**

**Date:** March 3 2012 - Present

**Purpose:** Unfortunately civil society and the various programs initiated by different local, national, regional and international NGOs rarely reach to the general Libyan public. Libyan housewives are mistakenly seen by many as politically unaware, inactive and their opinions are rarely been taken into account prior to the start of a local program. As this greatly affects the success of the program we have begun a survey in the city of Zawia, specifically targeted at stay at home mothers. The surveys focus on political, social, and economic issues in order to create a program which is truly targeted to their immediate and long term needs.

## **“Women and the Arab Spring: Taking their Place?”**

**Date:** Published March 8 2012

**Purpose:** VLW contributed to FIDH "Women and the Arab Spring: Taking their Place?" publication

([http://arabwomenspring.fidh.net/index.php?title=Women\\_and\\_the\\_Arab\\_Spring%3A20\\_measures\\_for\\_equality](http://arabwomenspring.fidh.net/index.php?title=Women_and_the_Arab_Spring%3A20_measures_for_equality)) as well as the follow up wiki page

([http://arabwomenspring.fidh.net/index.php?title=Main\\_Page](http://arabwomenspring.fidh.net/index.php?title=Main_Page)) which examines the situation in Libya, as well as the other countries, and allowing for a central area to share information and ideas.



## **Be one of the Decision Makers in Libya**

**Date:** March 25 2012 - April 19th 2012

**Purpose:** As a country aspiring to will be built on justice and democracy, women have the right in political participation. In order to have a major role in Libyan policy we conducted a series of intensive democracy awareness and political participation workshops.

**Follow Up:** These were followed up by the “Preparing for the First Elections - Women’s Political Empowerment in Libya” seminar, done in partnership with DEMO Finland and with the support of the Government of Finland. The Seminar took over 40 female candidates for the National Assembly and over the course of two days further honed their campaigning skills. Of the 33 Women elected into the National assembly, seven have participated in VLW Training.



## **The current political status of women in Libya – Interview with Policy and Change Makers**

**Date:** April 2nd 2012 – April 21st 2012

**Purpose:** VLW performed 22 interviews pertaining to the current perception of Women's rights in Libya and what their future role - politically, economically and socially - should be in Libya. Interviewees included members of The National Transitional Council such as Fathi Bajaa, Local Council members, Political Party leaders such as Ali Tarhouni and party members such as Dr. Majda Fallah, members of International NGOs and Institutions, such as EU Head of Delegation Ambassador Alistair MacDonald, Female activists and the General Public on their views of Women's rights in Libya.

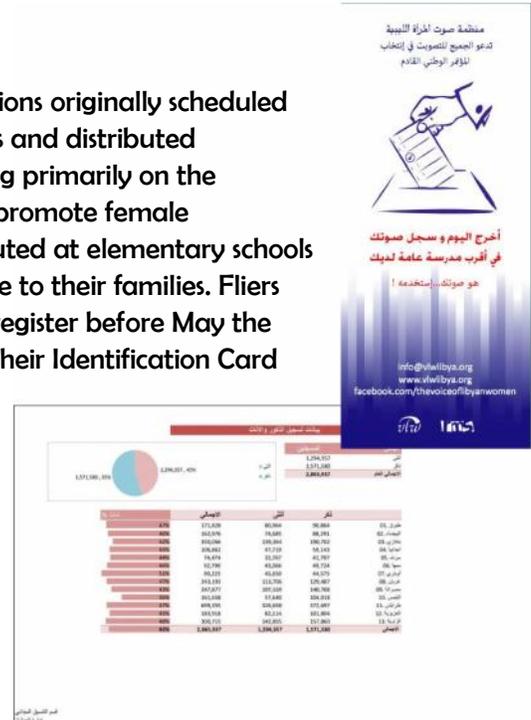
**Follow Up:** Clips of the interviews were shown frequently on both national and regional television stations.

## **Voter Awareness & Education**

**Date:** May 3rd 2012 - May 18th 2012

**Purpose:** Registration for the Libyan National Assembly elections originally scheduled for June 19 2012 was initially unpublicized. VLW set up booths and distributed thousands of fliers throughout cities in Western Libya (focusing primarily on the universities and colleges in Tripoli and Zawia) in an effort to promote female registration. Fliers were also placed in local stores and distributed at elementary schools and secondary schools so that students could take them home to their families. Fliers explained the requirements to register, asking all women to register before May the 14th (the initial deadline for registration), as well as to bring their Identification Card (Passport, Personal ID Card or Family Book). They also included important information for prospective candidates reminding them to be registered as both a voter and a candidate.

**Follow Up:** Over 45% of the registered voters were female. Unfortunately, the number of registered individual female candidates was not as high.



## **Preparing for the first Election – Women’s Political Empowerment in Libya**

**Date:** May 15 -16 2012

**Supported by:** The Government of Finland; the workshop was conducted by DEMO Finland.

**Purpose:** The training of 41 Female National Congress Candidates in how to build your platform and run a successful election campaign. The two day seminar was done through participatory approach and focused heavily on skill building. Speakers at the seminar included then – candidate (now a member of the national assembly) Dr. Majda Fallah, Tunisian Member of the Constituency Samira Merai Frai, Member of the Electoral Commission Mr. Abdullallah Fortia,



Deputy Minister of Culture & Civil Society Mr. Attia Al Ojaly, Mrs. Mari Kiviniemi, former Finnish Prime Minister & current leader of the opposition, as well as Mrs. Astrid Thors & Mrs. Satu Haapan, Members of the Finnish Parliament and Ambassador Tiina Jortikka-Laitinen.

**Follow Up:** Of the 41 participants, VLW provided follow up campaign management to nine.



## **Research and analysis of women's perceptions of security and security provision in Libya**

**Date:** May 21st 2012 – Present

**Supported by:** Saferworld, PCI

**Purpose:** The first initiative taken to discover the causes of concern and the potential for growth in security and security provision in Libya as viewed by women in different regions of the country. A series of questions were posed to multiple focus groups in cities with varying causes of security concern and varying levels of capacity to deal with these security concerns. The three initial cities chosen were Derna, Sebha, and Zawia. Six more cities: Misrata, Jmail, Zwara, Yefren, Sirte & Tawergha will be visited after the month of Ramadan.

**Evaluation:** Women in the Derna, Sebha and Zawia focus groups were very receptive and open to talking about their concerns in security in both a national and local context. A wide range of differing opinions was observed not only from city to city, but also from focus group to focus group and woman to woman. Geography and recent history did contribute a great deal to security issues that were specific to each city, for example in Sebha, the border and uncontrolled crossing and smuggling of goods was a major concern, while in Derna, religious extremism was viewed with suspicion. Following the studies of the six remaining cities, a full assessment will be made available.

## **Voting & Religion: Informational Seminars**

**Date:** June 16, 18, 20, & 21 2012

**Purpose:** In an effort to increase the general understanding of democracy and political awareness among women & because religion has been used to influence voters and political decisions VLW

organized an informational seminar in a local mosque in Tripoli. The seminar was conducted by a Religious expert and attended by 45 women. We had no initial plans to continue with the seminars; however following the initial seminar on June 16<sup>th</sup> attendees at the mosque requested that we repeat the seminar for more women. We also received requests from Alforooq mosque in Hay Demeshk, as well as the local city council of Tajoura both requesting that a seminar be done in local mosques there. These were conducted on June 18, 20 and 21<sup>st</sup> respectively and attended by around 60 women on the 18<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> and upwards of 75 women in attendance on the 21<sup>st</sup>. Attendees were extremely active and asked questions about Political parties, voting districts, and if their votes really count.



**Follow up:** VLW will be continues informational seminars throughout these three, and other mosques in both Tripoli and Zawia. Our next set of seminars will focus on the constitution.

## **Electoral Debates**

**Date:** June 30 & 31 2012

**Purpose:** There was very little knowledge of the political platforms of both individual and party nominees following up to the 2012 National Assembly elections which had been postponed from June 19<sup>th</sup> 2012 until July 7<sup>th</sup> 2012. For this reason VLW chose to host debates with both male and female individual and party candidates so that voters could raise their questions and concerns.

## **Addressing Domestic Violence**

**Date:** July 2012 – Present

**Supported by:** DanChurchAid, British Embassy Tripoli

**Purpose:** Over the coming months VLW is collaborating with X Y Z, Serman Hurra, Sabrata Spring, Ahaleena, Hakki, and more to address domestic violence in a number of educational and awareness campaigns focused predominately in Western Libya.



## **Libyan Women Can Too: Campaign for Inclusion of Women in the Constitution Drafting Committee**

**Date:** July 5 2012 – Present

**Supported by:** DanChurchAid, British Embassy Tripoli

**Purpose:** VLW is working in a network of over 24 local and regional NGOs in Libya. The project focuses on ensuring that there will be adequate female representation within the Libyan Constitutional Committee. The strategy, created during an intensive two day workshop by 15 Libyan NGOs, emphasizes the importance of public acknowledgement regarding female representation in the Constitutional Committee, as well as utilizing the media and lobbying direct key decision makers to ensure that there is encouragement from all sides.

# Upcoming Projects

## **The Constitution: Uniting a Nation**

**Date:** September 2012

**Purpose:** A call to 60 interested Youth (30 Female and 30 Male) throughout the country to attend a one – two day workshop on the constitution. Participants will be grouped into 5 people, and each group will be responsible for arranging seminars [venue (universities, local halls), local media, time, etc) in their selected city for the month of September. Each group will be assigned a manager from VLW & Collaborating Organizations to act as support. Participants will then spend the two days in each city/area (for smaller & closer cities), giving simultaneous workshops on the constitution in different areas. Youth will also do pedestrian education in unplanned areas. The end result of this workshop will be the participant's ability to thoroughly explain the transitional process, the constitution & the effect it will have on Libya (why it should be important to the average citizen). It will also strengthen Youth networks which will subsequently give youth a louder voice with policy makers. Initially this project was Female youth only, however we feel that men & women must work together to truly achieve women's rights in Libya, and empowering Youth leaders is one of the best ways to achieve this.

## **Female Youth Survey**

**Date:** September 2012

**Purpose:** In an effort to better address the concerns of Libyan females aged 17-24 VLW will be conducting a Survey. Assisted by Women without Borders, the survey will question the current situation and concerns for female youth as well as their demands and aspirations.

## **One Voice 2012: New Horizons**

**Date:** November 11 - 14 2012

VLW aims to hold our annual “One Voice” Conference, done in collaboration with Attawasul Association, to address the current needs of Libyan women and devise an action plan for immediate changes to take place through workshops, seminars, and lectures attended by women active in Libyan society, whilst also providing an international platform for Libyan women to network and influence policy makers. November 2011 witnessed the first “One Voice” Conference amidst a newly freed Libya – the first international conference centered on women in Libya’s history. Over a period of 5 days 150 participants, primarily from Libya, but also from such international organizations and institutions. One Voice 2011 has also been the only time that NTC Chairman Mustafa Abdel Jalil, Former Prime Minister Mahmoud Gibril, and Current Prime Minister Abdulrahim El Keib, along with over 20 members of the NTC and Government all communed to address women's rights in Libya. They remained for hours, hearing the opinions and concerns of Libyan women and sharing in heated discussions and debates.

"One Voice 2012: New Horizons" will focus primarily on The Constitution and influencing future policies which affect Libyan women.

### **Strengthening Women's Public Voice**

**Purpose:** VLW will be partnering with Saferworld UK on a regional project also implemented in Egypt & Yemen. The project focuses on consultations with female activists in all three countries which will assist in enhancing networks locally, nationally and regionally to better share experiences and lessons learned, providing capacity building and skills training and allowing for Libyan women to better advocate for greater women's participation.

### **The Voice of Libyan Women in partnership with AMICA**

**Purpose:** A two phase project, one of capacity building and the other of the implementation and continuation of concrete activities, including aspects such as: trainings for staff / volunteers in dealing with traumatised people and gender based violence, trainings in organisational development for women's organisations, social and judicial counselling, medical and psychological treatment, income generating trainings for women, set-up of women's centers (in Zlitan, Nalut etc.) aided by the German Foreign Ministry.

### **Promoting Youth Participation in Human Rights and Democracy through Media**

**Purpose:** VLW is partnering with the International Foundation of Electoral Systems (IFES) to develop a platform to centralise information on the latest developments on women's rights issues in each country, to share strategies and to inform about events and other actions including petitions which includes holding webinars that would serve as an interactive forum for youth groups, hosting sessions led by media consultants to teach youth how to utilize media for advocacy and civic engagement, and launching a competition for youth organizations to submit creative short videos about civic engagement within a democracy.



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☎ +218 (0) 925409539

✉ [info@vlwlibya.org](mailto:info@vlwlibya.org)

[www.vlwlibya.org](http://www.vlwlibya.org)

[www.facebook.com/thevoiceoflibyanwomen](https://www.facebook.com/thevoiceoflibyanwomen)

