



أحمد عجم

تنبّهت لأهميّة النساء
في العمل و السياسة

"I realized the importance of
women's participation in the
labor market and politics"

قصة إنسان مؤثر

HUMAN IMPACT STORY

Σ
KAFKA
ENOUGH VIOLENCE AND EXPLOITATION
كفّة العنف و استغلال

السويد
Sverige



UN
WOMEN

مساواة
جمعية عمل تموي لكل الناس

Twenty-three-year-old Ahmad Ajam is no longer reluctant to work with women. He no longer rejects the idea of reporting to a woman or having a female boss, but has rather become a young man aware of the importance of working with women and their right to assume prominent positions, as well as of the need for women to participate in the labor market and public sphere. The “Men and Women for Gender Equality” programme has transformed the concepts and ideas of this Tripolitan young man to become an activist in his city in northern Lebanon, in an effort to confront the mentality that excludes and imposes its norms and standards on women..

AHMAD SAID:

I realized that phrases that place blame on women contribute to the perpetuation of violence against them



AHMAD AJAM

The capacity of this Lebanese young man to influence his community is enhanced by the fact that he is a volunteer with several associations working with different age groups. He is a volunteer in the Lebanese Red Cross, Jarrah Scouts Association - the Northern Commission, and the Musawah Association, a non-governmental organization that aims to support women and help them access justice.

2021

About a year ago, before he embarked in the Project, Ajam's work was different. "When I joined Kafa's Project, which aims to challenge social norms and promote equality, I became more and more convinced of the idea of gender equality", said Ahmad. "I became aware that it is not limited to domestic work, but also includes women's participation in politics." He added, "after becoming aware of women's role in society, their rights and what they can offer, I no longer believed that working with them is tiring and confusing. I rather realized the importance of working with women."



IMPROVEMENT

Ajam began communicating these newly acquired concepts and ideas to the Scout Association in Tripoli through practice. As an example he tells us how “it was common practice to assign the leadership of a scout regiment to a young man, so I demanded to appoint girls as leaders, even if the regiment was in an area that did not tolerate that, where inherited traditional stereotypes prevail.”

In certain areas, girls members of the Scout Association were criticized for the way they dressed: “we started stressing to the leaders the right of the girls to choose what they would wear. The same applies to the boys who were ashamed to cry. We encouraged them to express their feelings and let go of the social stereotype that says boys don’t cry,” explains the Scout leader.

The young man asserts that he no longer exercises his male authority over his sister or interferes with her choices, since he realized that she has the right to choose what to wear and whom to love. He used to interfere with her decisions, asking her not to go out late and avoid unnecessary outings. But he then realized that she should be able to make her own choices, and that she has the right to decide when and where to go out and to choose her life partner, and that his role is to support her. He believes that these convictions improved his relationship with the women in his family and made it fairer and more equal.



AHMAD'S BEHAVIORS

In his relationship with himself, Ahmad explains how the criticism he used to be exposed to because he took care of his hair or wore a bracelet, behaviors that were considered as girly stuff, no longer embarrass him.

ADMIRABLE LEADER

The young man, himself, also used to hold some prejudice against women, as he admitted: “when I used to see a girl walking down the street at night, I would think to myself why would she go out at this time? I would judge her without thinking. The Project opened my eyes to the gravity of such judgments, their ability to cause harm and justify this harm.”

GENDER EQUALITY

Women's safety

As a Red Cross volunteer, Ajam comes across many cases of gender-based violence. "I became more attentive to the way I speak and the words I use. I realized that phrases that place blame on women contribute to the perpetuation of violence against them," says Ahmad. And he asserts that he is determined to continue confronting gender-based discrimination in his city, Tripoli, and to spread a culture that protects women.



MEN AND WOMEN FOR GENDER EQUALITY

This interview was conducted as part of the “Men and Women for Gender Equality” programme (2019-2021), which aims to challenge social norms regarding discriminatory mentalities on the subject of gender equality, as well as on positive fatherhood and gender-based violence. The programme is funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). As part of this project, KAFA, in cooperation with UN Women in Lebanon, supported CBOs in designing and implementing community-based solutions, tailored to suit local contexts, in order to challenge social norms and promote gender equality.

THANK YOU!

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