



أريج شريم

اكتشفتُ البعد الذكوري للغة
العربية وتجرأتُ على الاعتراض

"I discovered the sexist masculine
dimension of the Arabic
language and dared to disagree"

قصة إنسان مؤثر

HUMAN IMPACT STORY



السويد
Sverige



Just like any girl born in a patriarchal society, Areej Shreim has suffered from discrimination and the self-doubt it instills in her every time she does not give in to the rules and norms of society. But her participation in the “Men and Women for Gender Equality” programme cleared away her doubts and hesitation, made her feel supported, and revealed the sexist masculine dimension of the Arabic language that marginalizes women through the use of the masculine form and sexist discriminatory expressions, as this Arabic language and literature graduate puts it. The twenty-five-year-old young woman, who lives in Nabatieh, southern Lebanon, has found the courage to raise her voice and encourage other women to break the silence.

AREEJ SAID:

I wasn't aware of the masculinity of the Arabic language before



AREEJ SHREIM

Following her participation in the programme, Shreim's relationship with the Arabic language, which she taught, changed. This volunteer with Fe-Male Collective, a feminist collective working to eliminate discriminatory policies and injustice against women, relates how she now uses the language in a more accurate and aware way, avoiding the use of masculine expressions that undervalue women. She also started adopting the masculine and feminine forms. She adds, "I wasn't aware of the masculinity of the Arabic language before; I even used the masculine form to talk about myself. I did not realize that I could use the feminine form." The young woman talks about the possible use of feminism topics with her students, would she resume her teaching career. She also aspires to make her literary contribution by undertaking a study of literary texts from a feminist perspective.

2021

Today, Areej writes from time to time about feminist topics, and publishes some of them on the "Sharika wa Laken" website, which specializes in women's issues. The young woman thinks that she was able to help others through her experience; for instance, she has received a letter from a girl who told her how an article of hers helped her deal with a situation she was going through. And in her entourage, Areej encouraged her female friends to break the silence about disturbing situations they have been through, especially harassment, and to raise their voice and not blame themselves.



IMPROVEMENT

As a young woman who grew up in a patriarchal society in Nabatieh, she also had her own misconceptions about women and was convinced of gender roles as defined by society. But once her awareness of discrimination and gender issues expanded, she let go of these ideas. "I wasn't aware of the discriminatory ideas that were instilled in me; I used to think that mothers should always stay with their children and sacrifice everything for them, but then I realized that I was wrong. Today, I realize that I deserve to be appreciated for myself the same way I appreciate others and that I am not the one who always has to sacrifice," says Areej.

Before participating in the program at the end of 2019, the young woman avoided many things for fear of community judgment and pressure. She was frequently discriminated against at home, at work, and in the community. At home, she was not allowed to go out at night or stay out late, and she was forbidden to go out with her male friends. At work, she was discriminated against and treated differently than her male co-workers simply because she was a woman. However, Kafa's programme boosted her self-confidence, as she puts it, "I was able to transfer some of what I learned to my family through my behavior. I no longer avoided going out with my male friends and staying out late at night. I realized that I do not have to do what men want. I could handle many situations, such as harassment, without feeling guilty. I became convinced that my clothes and haircut, which do not comply to generally accepted social norms, are my right and others have no say in these choices," says the young woman.



AREEJ'S BEHAVIORS

After her experience with the programme, the young woman hopes for other girls, “especially adolescent girls, to have the opportunity to participate in such programmes, as this contributes to raising their awareness and changes their self-image, as well as their views on life and society.

ADMIRABLE LEADER

This will protect them, especially in difficult situations such as the one we’re facing in Lebanon, which leads to an increase in violence against women.”

GENDER EQUALITY

Women's safety

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.



MEN AND WOMEN FOR GENDER EQUALITY

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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