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Glimpse





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Glimpse aims to shed the light on the Syrian Civil Society which was revived after the Syrian revolution in 2011, showing the civil initiatives and sharing inspiring stories led by grass-roots and civil society movement inside and outside Syria. Glimpse is envisioned to be a reliable resource for readers interested in knowing more about Syria, the history, the society, and the thousands-year-old civilization.

As a youth workgroup coinciding with the beginning of the Syrian revolution in Aleppo Northern Syria "Kesh Malek" was formed. Its first activities were sharing and taking part in the peaceful movement, demonstrating and spreading demonstrators' demands of "Freedom, Justice, and Dignity." The paigns driven by the group's long term vision to reach a better future for Syria. As "an Independent Democratic Pluralism state, respects human rights and devotes citizenship and justice values."

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The Local Community Initiatives to Support Education in Northern Syria, Hopes and Realities

By: Zohair Ashemali

Education is one of the essential requirements in northwest Syria. The difficulties and challenges facing the education sector, in general, are escalating and the sector has been affected at various times since the beginning of the Syrian Revolution in 2011.

The students were the main group affected by this reality, but also, we can say that the whole sector has been severely affected. Many of the teachers are not even receiving any of their salaries, furthermore, the educational infrastructure got partially if not totally destroyed over the past years.

In this harsh reality in Northwest Syria many local initiatives have been established, aiming to fix what can be salvaged of the damage done to the sector. These initiatives worked in parallel with opposition political bodies and the civil society organizations to fill the gap and reactivate the education sector despite minimal resources.

Statistics indicate that the education offices established in the local councils of the cities and villages were able to renovate 75 schools in Aleppo in the Northern suburbs, giving the opportunity to many of the students in those areas access to schooling.

However, there are still many huge obstacles facing the sector. Providing stable salaries and wages to workers in the educational sector, especially teachers,

remains to be a problem. Despite the presence of many civil society organizations and opposition-affiliated institutions that support the educational sector with various needs, such as logistical support for infrastructure and teachers' salaries, the support is not enough to ensure the sector is functioning properly and fully.

Local community Initiatives

First, we need to ask ourselves, is it possible for local donation campaigns – which are supporting the schools' expenses – able to alleviate the lack of education funding in Northwest Syria?

In this regard, Abdulwahab Mahmoud, the principal of Kfarhay secondary school in Idlib, said, "after three years of struggle and working voluntarily, there has been a failure of the concerned organizations to cover the costs of the educational sector. There has now been a failure in the sector as a whole, which unfortunately will lead to a social and humanitarian disaster. We have, therefore, come up with the local community Initiative ideas."

Abdulwahab confirms that all the initiatives are great and were launched based on the teachers' responsibility. The importance of these initiatives came from the importance of education itself and raising the next generation; "They are all important and effective", he added, in regards to the community initiatives. However, he noted that these initiatives alone are not enough. The situation also needs a governmental

effort as well as the civil society organizations.

When asked about the success of the initiatives, Adulwahab responded, "sure they can be successful, as all the teachers are convinced about the importance of continuing the education process". He confirmed that these initiatives are only partially enough as the education process is still going on. But they can't cover all the costs.

He went onto say, "these initiatives need great effort and communication with capital owners as well as obtaining credibility in society. They do give all the efforts and resources available to ensure the success of the initiatives. In one village we

were able to raise around 15000 US dollars".

Yaser Horieh, Ariha Educational Complex Supervisor and one of the people running the initiative, explained that the initiative is local community based and centred, and the idea came basically from the schools' principles. He said, "we also raised funds according to needs, in collaboration with a committee to set the criteria for the benefits, and to increase the efficiency of the initiative, we launched a social media platform and crowdfunding campaigns, in collaboration with the media outlets and activists. He also confirmed that this initiative is an urgent solution to limit the damage, but it is certainly not enough.

Education Milestones

It's not a secret that the education sector in Northern Syria is suffering. After it was targeted directly by the Syrian regime military campaigns in

2012 and later, which led to losing a huge part of the educational infrastructure in these areas. Due to the lack of logistic and financial support in the education sector, many students dropped out of schools and many teachers lost their jobs.

The Syrian civil defence documented 113 direct targeting of schools in Northern Syria by the Syrian regime and Russian aircrafts between 26 April 2019 and 5 March 2020.

UNESCO previously mentioned the dangerous reality of the education sector in Syria which culminated in the dropout rate of students in Syria reaching 39%.

Also, according to UNICEF the number of schools which got destroyed either partially or totally reached 400 since mid-2011 until 2022, around 40% of the total number of schools in Syria. Furthermore, 2 million Syrian students – A third of the total number – are out of schools and 1.3 million students are in danger of dropping out.

Abdo Amer, a teacher living in Idlib suburbs, commented on the current situation in Northwest

Syria; "the total number of students in Idlib governorate are around 450 thousand students.... The funding and support for the secondary schools is very low, as more than 650 schools are not receiving any funding."

Although the total number of workers in the education sector in Idlib is around 17300, many of them are not working on a daily basis. Abdo Amer sees this as the reality of the education sector in the governorate. Many of the teachers have left the sector to find some economic stability. Regarding Northern Aleppo, the teachers are not in a better situation, they receive very low wages in comparison to the relatively high cost of living.

In response to our questions regarding the local educational initiatives, he said "any community will collapse without education, and the next generation will lose their future"

It is important to say that civil initiatives to support education in Northern Syria is a vital corner stone in the continuation of the educational process, and their support has become an urgent necessity. Activists and teachers believe that local and international civil society organizations and government bodies operating in the North-west Syria should seek to support and encourage these initiatives, given their major role in supporting the continuation of the educational process in light of the lack of support provided.



Syrian Women Working in Public Affairs, Facing Stereotyping

By: Alaa Mohamed

Women are facing many challenges as a result of discrimination during all stages of their lives. Those challenges get harder for women working in public affairs, such as journalists, activist, artists, and politicians. This phenomenon in our eastern society stems from the patriarchal structure which is based on authority and obedience. Women suffer under the patriarchal authority of men in society, law, custom and religion. Therefore, these authorities will only accept the women as "subordinate", or those women will be prey of defamation and societal rejection.

Stereotyping

Dr. Samira Mobayed believes that the most important challenges facing women working in public affairs are stereotyping and attempted abuse. The society adopts a specific role assigned to women based on the patriarchal perspective. Dr. Mobayed sees these roles as a secondary role that do not allow women's

ideas to have a direct impact on the existing system. Instead, voices that are subject to these stereotypes and that are part of them are chosen as representing women's voices. This falsifies the meaning of feminist thought, she said. And if there are voices outside the system, they will be severely under attack and defamed in various forms and names.

Stereotypes and prejudices are the result of society's culture as a whole, which associates specific qualities with a particular gender, when in fact they can be found in all human beings of different social types.

The international human rights framework prohibits gender stereotypes that undermine the benefits of human rights and fundamental principles of freedom. Therefore, the state has the obligation to eliminate discrimination against women and men in all aspects of their lives and must therefore take resolute and decisive action to address gender stereotypes in public and private life.

Samira calls the term profiling "the - pretemplate - model" and says that it ends with the end of its users. That is to say, when women do not change themselves to be included in these stereotypes, they suffer and die.

Samira said that as long as there are women who accept stereotypes, stereotyping frameworks will remain in place. To get rid of this culture we must adopt clarity with women who are included in these stereotypes,

which show women in a position of vulnerability and dependence that they represent their personal choices and do not represent the voice of women. In addition, modern courses should be built to allow independent thought.

The Vulnerable Woman

The journalist, Baraa Salibi, said that there are many challenges facing women working in public affairs, including stereotypes and gender roles, focusing on one of them, which is that women are "vulnerable" since most Syrian men's mentalities believe that women should be only at home.

Baraa explains that men consider the presence of women in public spaces in a negative light, as it is believed to be the space for males more than for females, because by being in this space they give the males the green light to treat them as "vulnerable", therefore, "they are required to tolerate harassment and bullying."

According to Baraa, most men believe that women in the public space have taken their roles, positions, and jobs.

She goes onto say, "the problem faced by some women working in public affairs is that they have gone to work without being trained to defend themselves and their ability to prove themselves or to say no."

In fact, women working in public affairs sometimes face systematic violence. They are defamed and

accused. Their stumbles and mistakes are scrutinized and exposed to the public. They are in danger of being harassed, blackmailed, and many other violations.

UN Deputy Secretary-General, Amina Mohammed, said earlier that violence against women in politics is a human rights violation and is aimed at undermining governance. "The aim of some groups is to silence women and deprive them of their strength," she said.

Facing the Challenges

In the Syrian context, many women from all fields of work have had their capabilities and participation underestimated. Their participation or attempts to participate in the public sphere have been subject to smear campaigns. Some women working in Syria have been threatened with beating or have even received death threats. Others have been bullied and defamed on social media for taking off the hijab or for wearing it, and more recently the body of a female politician has been used in a cartoon caricature in a humiliating way, insinuating the woman's inferiority.

However, if we look at the general situation of women working in public affairs, we find that the challenges and those terrible actions from the society have had little impact. Today, women are proving their merit in all fields, far from the stereotypes.

Dr. Samira mentioned her experience in facing challenges while working independently in public

affairs. She said, "the harassment and assault trend were carried out by all political movements inherited from the previous era because there are movements that reject women and free thought with regard to their founding structure." She also showed it also included attempts to impose opinions, steal ideas, reject independence, reject women's leadership, exclusion, rejection of clubs, lack of the ability to speak to respected professionals and more. But she explained that all of these experiences were to break this irreparable system and a greater motivation for independence, perseverance, and action.

The challenges and obstacles that women face in our societies are mainly the result of the exclusion of women from any activity that can have an active significance or effect on decision-making and change policies and cultures, and that could revolutionize women's issues.

In addition to the fact that women themselves have played a major role in promoting and perpetuating stereotypes and justifying the prevailing intellectual system and its legacy to generations, societies need more intensive efforts to replace the system of justice and equality as a place of power and submission.



Mosaic Art in Idlib

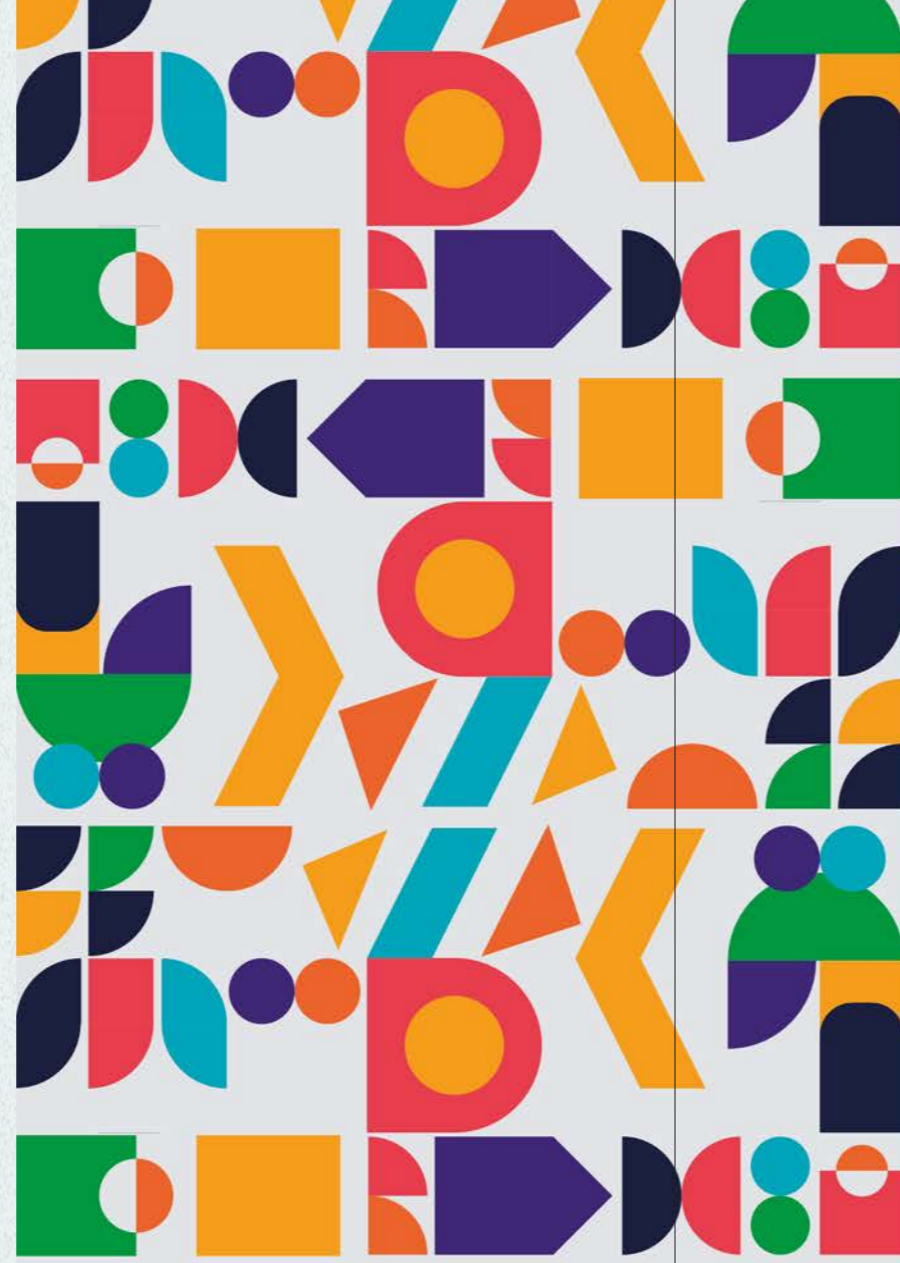
By: Abdulrahman Al Shayed

It is easy to get lost in the beauty of the different pieces, the variety and complexity of subjects, the colours and layers and its cohesion as well as the lines of the curves in each piece. All this without paints. Instead of using paints, artists have created a totally different art by sorting hundreds and thousands of tiny marble pieces to create an artistic piece describing and telling different stories. It's called Mosaic.

There are two types of Mosaic Art, in terms of history and the materials used in addition to the different techniques of the craft itself. The Wooden Mosaic which is considered the most famous nowadays originated from the city of Damascus 300 years ago. The art is based on the ornamentation of wood by seashells and ivory. On the other hand, there is Stone Mosaic, its origins go back to 1500 B.C in the west of Idlib.

Mosaic is an essential part of Idlib's heritage, especially in the southern part of Idlib. Ma'aret Alnouman Museum, in the city, is largest in the Middle East with around 2 thousand square meters of Mosaic art pieces. In Tebat Alemam Museum you can find the largest piece of Mosaic in the world; 700 m2. You can barely meet a person in the city who has not worked before in this kind of art which has created a collective sense of art for the whole city.

Walid Hamadi, a 52-year-old manager of a Mosaic Center, like many others of his generation in Kafrenbel, Idlib, grew up seeing and observing the mosaic pieces. Not only that but he also worked and made a living out of this art at the end of the nineties.



Walid said, "I started working in the mosaic craft in 1997 with a few artists, it was all by coincidence as of course we are seeing and watching now".

This craft was an essential part of the income for the people of the city before the beginning of the Syrian revolution. As a huge part of this craft was dependent on the export market, through Lebanon to all over the world. Women also played a major part in this craft as they were the majority of the workers in the beginning. According to Hamadi, there are at least 2000 Mosaic artists in Kafrenbel and it would reach 3000 if we counted the surrounding areas.

Nowadays, this art has become extremely effected by thy war and the shelling from the Syrian regime on these areas who have also targeted the museums themselves. Ma'aret Alnouman and Tebet Allmam museums were partially destroyed as they were targeted during the regime



campaign on Idlib's southern suburbs which led to forcibly displacing the people and the artists in Kafrenbel.

Hamadi said, "Since the beginning of the revolution the difficulties facing Mosaic art and the Mosaic artists increased massively. Starting from the high prices of the raw materials, blocking the export routes, and finally the migration of artists and workers"

These obstacles and the circumstances of the mosaic art industry were the motive for Walid and some Mosaic artists to organize a regular event to be the first of its kind in terms of the specialization and size in Idlib, aiming to shed light on this art and the ancient craft.

It is claimed that "the exhibition is aiming to spread the art of mosaic in Northern Syria and show the world that there are ambitious artists and people interested in cultural events

in Syria as well as to revive this craft."

The exhibition is also aiming to support the craftsmen who lost their main source of income and encourage new talents through workshops targeting mainly women and people with special needs.

The main goal of these workshops is to encourage different sections of society to work in Art; "we at Atheer Ebla establishment for mosaic organized several workshops to build the access of women and girls in this art, we graduated more than 1500 artists during the past few years".

Syrian Mosaic artists and craftsmen who mostly graduated from Idlib are working on spreading this art in their new residences, either personally or with help from organizations and establishments in Syria, like Atheer Ebla whose efforts led to organizing the first Mosaic exhibition in Northern Syria and launched several exhibitions outside Syria like Marsin Antakya, USA. All these efforts according to Mr. Hamadi, "confirm to the world that Idlib and Northern Syria is a land of culture and art, not war".

Syrian Women in the Agricultural Field; Limited Opportunities, Low Wages, and Lost rights

By: Alaa Mohamed

Women working in agriculture is not a modern trend or a new habit in the Syrian community, but for a long time they faced challenges in this field, those challenges got more complicated after and during the ongoing war. Not only did it get more complicated, but also new types of challenges have appeared, leading to new types of unjust discrimination.

Although there are no accurate statistics on the number of women working in agriculture, reports confirm that the number increased after 2011. This work has become a source of livelihoods for many women in different areas of Syria.

Working in agriculture is not a problem per se, it is quite the opposite. Agriculture is an essential part of growth in rural communities, and it has helped some women become financially independent and to overcome poverty. A study by the International Center for local Agriculture (ICBA) stated that women in developing countries depend to a large extent on the income they earn from farming-related activities in order to provide for their families.

Hard work and low wages

Um Ahmad, a Syrian woman living in Idlib, leaves every day in the early morning to the fields and farms. She said, "I work on the soil, removing surrounding weeds in addition to harvesting and olive picking. Her children stay alone for 8 hours every day so she can earn less than one dollar for the whole day.

Most of the women working in agriculture spend long hours under the sun. Samira, 42 years old, said, "I work 9 hours a day, on 2 shifts. It's exhausting. when I arrive home, I can't do anything".

Syrian journalist Abdullah Al Aboud said, "the job opportunities in North-west Syria in general are scarce, for both men and women. The wages remain very low especially in the agricultural sector."

He added, the women working in agriculture leave their home at 5 a.m. until the late evening, and the wage is not more than 1 or 2 dollars per day. Aboud believes that some of the employers and bosses take advantage of the women's situation and their needs to have a stable income. He explains that these wages are not even enough to buy 1 kg of potatoes or tomatoes.

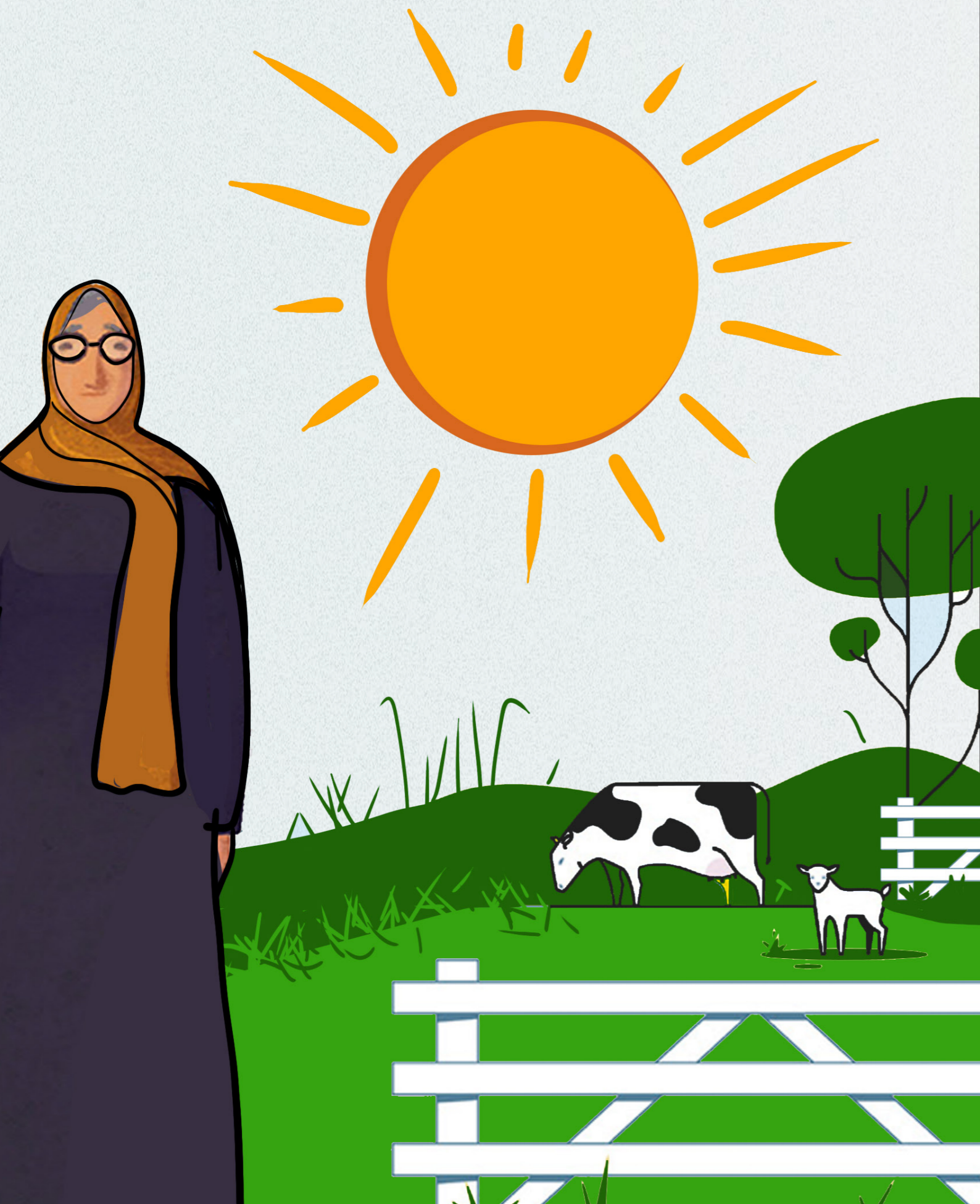
Dangerous working opportunities

During my interviews of many women, it was remarkable that many of them were telling me, "I'm lucky to have a job". It means that finding or obtaining a work opportunity is totally by chance, as the economic situation in those areas are deteriorating due to high unemployment rates as a result of the huge population. Some of the available working opportunities can be risky and life threatening, as women sometimes work near the military frontlines between Syrian regime forces and the oppositions, like in Hama and Aleppo. Also, they may be exposed to mine explosions in many areas.

Riham, a 31-year-old woman from Raqqa, said, "my only opportunity for income in order to support my family is through agriculture. I work in harvesting and purging the fields of weeds"

Riham contemplated, "there were many women who have passed away as a result of mines, I feel terrified sometimes, but this is my only income. I didn't finish my education, and I don't have a craft".





Lost rights, inside and outside the home.

Women working in areas where there is no law or government institutions responsible for protecting workers' rights, put them in great danger. They all work without any medical insurance, as well as material exploitation and fraud, they are at risk of sexual harassment.

Social norms and traditions make their lives harder. Most of the women working in agriculture have to go back home to start cooking, cleaning, and taking care of the children without taking care of their health or getting the required rest. Society sees that when women are helping their families, they are undermining the man's masculinity and diminishing their prestige. Qamar said, "me and my brother work in agriculture. We come back home in the evening, and I have to start cooking and cleaning, but he rests. It feels unjust but I can't complain".

Social specialist, Wadha Othman, said, "in some societies, working in agriculture for women outside the family is not familiar, it is considered a duty for the family".

she added, "We see men having drinks and having fun, and their women are harvesting and working in the field. In the end the men get the income from this work and don't pay the women any of the money. This is a masculine inheritance which sees the women as servants to the males in the family".

Wadha mentioned that the current situation has put the women in vulnerable positions, either socially, economically, or even sexually, because of the need for

an income. She said, "letting the women carry all the responsibilities financially and in terms of taking care of the family, severely damages their mental health and could lead to social isolation and depression".

Women farmers are the future

Many civil society organizations have given grants for women aiming to fund small projects, many of them were agricultural projects, especially in the countryside where agriculture is the only source of income.

Mostafa Abdullbaki a project coordinator in Assistance coordination Unit, explains to us the agricultural projects which have been implemented in Northern Syria. The most important ones' fund vital material and resources such as seeds, fertilizers, agricultural tools, and pesticides and they have been implemented through distributing kits to the farmers.

Abdullbaki said, "irrigation projects have been implemented, with farmers being supported by drip irrigation equipment or other irrigation methods".

Most of these projects have targeted female farmers, especially the women in the agricultural areas of whom many of them are working with their families or they are the owners of the land.

Globally, women participation in agriculture is a leading factor for food security around the world and a major source of income in the suburban and rural areas.

Michel Patchilli, former Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations, and Executive Director of UN-Women, said, "empowering women to claim their

rights and access leadership opportunities will improve food security and raise expectations for current and future generations".

According to officials in the Syrian Regime's Ministry of Agriculture in 2012, 70% of Syrian women work in agriculture, and in large areas that has increased because hundreds of women have lost their husbands due to the war.

NEWS

1-United Nation Human Rights office: more than 300 thousand civilians killed in Syria since 2011.

The UN Human Rights Office today published a report that, following rigorous assessment and statistical analysis of available data on civilian casualties, estimates that 306,887 civilians* were killed between 1 March 2011 and 31 March 2021 in Syria due to the conflict. This is the highest estimate yet of conflict-related civilian deaths in Syria.

“The conflict-related casualty figures in this report are not simply a set of abstract numbers but represent individual human beings. The impact of the killing of each of these 306,887 civilians would have had a profound, reverberating impact on the family and community to which they belonged,” UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet said.

“The work of civil society organizations and the UN in monitoring and documenting conflict-related deaths is key in helping these families and communities establish the truth, seek accountability, and pursue effective remedies. This analysis will also give a clearer sense of the severity and scale of the conflict.” Michelle Bachelet added.

2-UN Syria Commission of Inquiry on Syria: Member States must seize moment to establish mechanism for missing persons

“Member States must act now on behalf of the millions who are looking for their missing loved ones in Syria,” Paulo Pinheiro, Chair of the UN Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, said today as the Commission released its paper “Syria’s Missing and Disappeared: Is there a Way Forward?”, containing its recommendations for a mechanism with an international mandate.

The UN Secretary-General will soon publish a study, requested in UN General Assembly resolution 76/228, on how to bolster efforts to clarify the fate and whereabouts of missing people in Syria, to identify human remains and provide support to their families.

since 2016, the Commission has recommended that the international community support the creation of a mechanism to assist Syrians in tackling the challenge of the tens of thousands of missing and forcibly disappeared. As set out in its March 2021 report on detention (para 113.b), the Commission has recommended that UN Member States facilitate the creation of “an independent

mechanism with an international mandate regarding missing persons, including persons subjected to enforced disappearance” to help coordinate efforts on this issue; consolidate claims filed with a wide variety of non-governmental and humanitarian organizations so as to efficiently and effectively track and identify those missing and help their families; and coordinate overtures to parties to the conflict to offer technical assistance and advice regarding detainees and other missing persons and their remains, including those found in mass graves, which meanwhile must be protected.

The call for a mechanism has since gained increasing support, including by UN Secretary-General Guterres and High Commissioner Bachelet, the ICRC, the IIIM, the European Parliament and Commission, by individual Member States, in the EU-UN Brussels V Conference co-chairs’ declaration (point 15), and by many international and local human rights organizations and defenders, separately or jointly. Importantly, a number of Syrian Victims’ and Family Members’ Organisations also called for a mechanism in their “Truth and Justice Charter - A Common Vision on the Question of Enforced Disappearance and Arbitrary Detention in Syria” as well as in a report they

commissioned, entitled “Humans Not Numbers: The Case for an International Mechanism to Address the Detainees and Disappeared Crisis in Syria”.

These efforts culminated in the General Assembly adopting resolution 76/228 in December 2021, in which it requested a study on how to bolster efforts, including through existing measures and mechanisms, to clarify the fate and whereabouts of missing people, identify human remains and provide support to their families (para 64). At the time of writing, OHCHR is leading the preparation of the UN Secretary-General’s study, and in doing so is consulting with a wide range of Syrian victim, survivor and family associations and other civil society organisations, as well as UN Member States and relevant entities.

Source: The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

nto the Syrian civil society

