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I am She Network in the Eyes of its

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"I Am She" is a network of community-based women's groups or "peace circles" led by Syrian women, working to reinforce effective political, economic, social, and cultural participation of women in order to realize peace, freedom, justice, representation, and transparency for all Syrians. To realize this vision, the "I Am She" network conducts myriad activities including: training, advocacy, mobilization, technical support, and awareness raising in provinces throughout Syria and within Syrian communities.

Since it was launched in 8th.March 2016, I am She Network worked supporting peace circle for empowering them to be more effective in their communities. There have been eighteen training conducted in order to build skills and capacities regarding advocacy, civil leadership and political empowerment along with continuous following-up for increasing the peace circles' practical capacities through designing and implementing initiatives as well as leading those administratively. As a part of such following, local initiatives designed and implemented by peace circles were supported. There have been 37 local initiatives, all of which centered on including women in decision-making positions, combating gender-based violence, political, legal and community empowerment as well as other initiatives on promoting local peace and pushing the peace process forward. Those initiatives targeted over 6551 women and men.

Since it is significant to deeply learn the status of I am She Network's peace circles throughout the last year and half in order to define the positives to be promoted and negatives to be empowered as well as obstacles to overcome them, this report was accomplished and based on methodological questionnaire. This questionnaire mainly focused on the internally organizational mechanisms for peace circles, I am She Network management's effectiveness and impact measurement in accordance with the Network's objectives.

This assessment was conducted with twenty four peace circles, whose dates of establishment varied between three years to two months, with eight participants in each peace circle on average. There were 149 responses on the questionnaires.

In accordance with the methodology in use, this reports contains the following:

Peace circles' internal status.

Internal inclusion in peace circles

The main obstacles concerning peace circles' activities

Internal relationships within I am She Network

Peace circles members' effectiveness



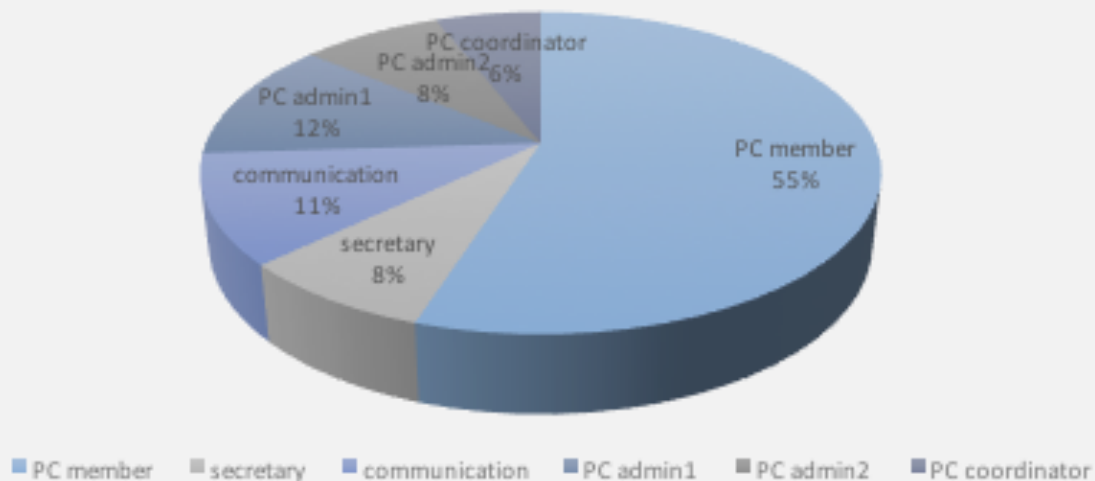
Peace circles' internal status:

The number of peace circles' member varied between six and twenty two in total in each peace circle , which makes the rate 10.8 for a peace circle.

In accordance with the unified organizational structure in all of the peace circles, there are: peace circle's administrative 1, peace circle's administrative 2, secretary and communication coordinator , in addition to peace circle's members.

According to the roles they play in the peace circles, the targeted people were distributed as following:

Respondents distribution according to roles



Significant findings:

- Peace circles' member are between 6 and 22 , which is in rate 10.8 for each peace circle.
- 15 peace cicles have local partnerships out of 24 peace circles.
- %62 of the targted people have had trainings individually apart from I am She Network.
- %65 of the targted people have had trainings while being members in their peace circles.
- All peace circles participated in initiatives or at least an activty of I am She Network's.
- Three quarters of the targeted people beilve that their peace circles include the different components that their community is composed of.
- About three quarters of the targeted people beilve that thier opinions are included.
- 7 out of every 10 of the targted people responded that I am She Network coordinators' support is good and very good.
- %17 of the targted people have not recieved any support from I am She.
- %13 of the targted people (exculding peace circles' coordinators) are invloved in a political working group.
- The rate of peace circles' acquaintance with different papers that I am She Network has developed is 3.1 in the rate of (5_1)
- The rate of peace circles' participarion in the joint activities that I am She Network has prepared for is 2.3 in the rate of (5_1).

Local Partners:

There are eight peace circles which do not have partnerships with local partners. Whereas, other peace circles have partnerships with different parties varied between local councils, some NGOs in their areas and even, sometimes, with local community leaders and figures. Building partnerships is considered as one of the key element of success in change and impact, which help in achieving goals that are desired to be worked on as well as promoting community reception and increasing allies.

Skills and Experiences:

Out the responses on the question on the trainings that peace circles' members had individually apart from I am She Network, we learned that %62 of members had such trainings. Topics varied between (projects management, Training of trainers, mobilization and advocacy, transparency, media, citizenship, drafting and writing reports, psychosocial support).

For the trainings they had within the peace circles, %65 responded that they had trainings and acquired skills while being in their peace circles. %26 responded that they have not any trainings before, and had when they became in the peace circles. Trainings covered topics like (advocacy, civil leadership, transparency, negotiations, and women rights as well as practical trainings on writing technical and financial reports, grants' management and other legal and political experiences through political empowerment). In addition to such individually acquired or skills acquired within peace circles, peace circles' members developed practical experiences through implementing initiatives and activities and following up political updates.

Initiatives:

During 2015 until mid2016-, I am She peace circles accomplished 37 initiatives which mainly focused in promoting women's roles in their communities as well as getting women involved in political processes and combating violence against women.

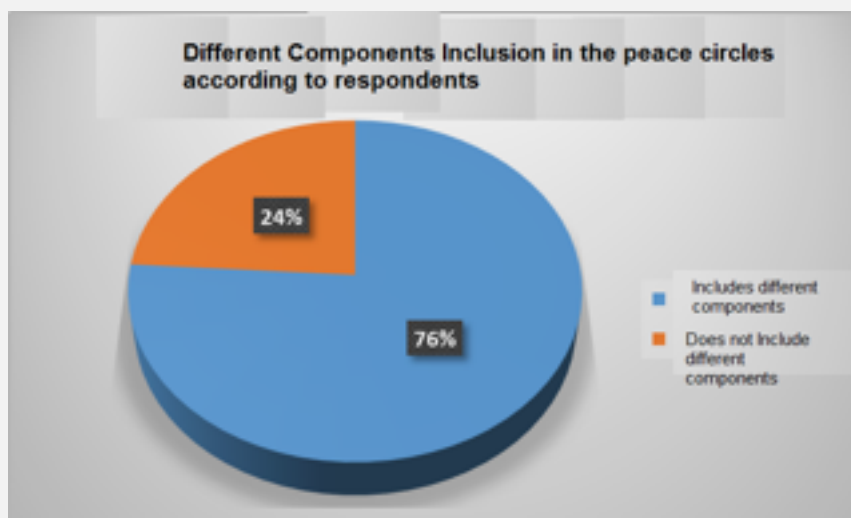
The initiatives implemented between March 8th, 2015 and July 30th are:

- 1 -Five initiatives on women's inclusion in local councils and administration.
- 2 -Three initiatives on combating child marriages.
- 3 - Two initiatives involved discussions on political and humanitarian issues.
- 4 -Nine initiatives on community, human rights and political empowerment.
- 5 -Three initiatives seeking change in discriminative laws.
- 6 -Nine initiatives on promoting peace and local peace.
- 7 - Six initiatives on increasing women's inclusion in civil society organizations.

Different components' inclusion in the peace circle:

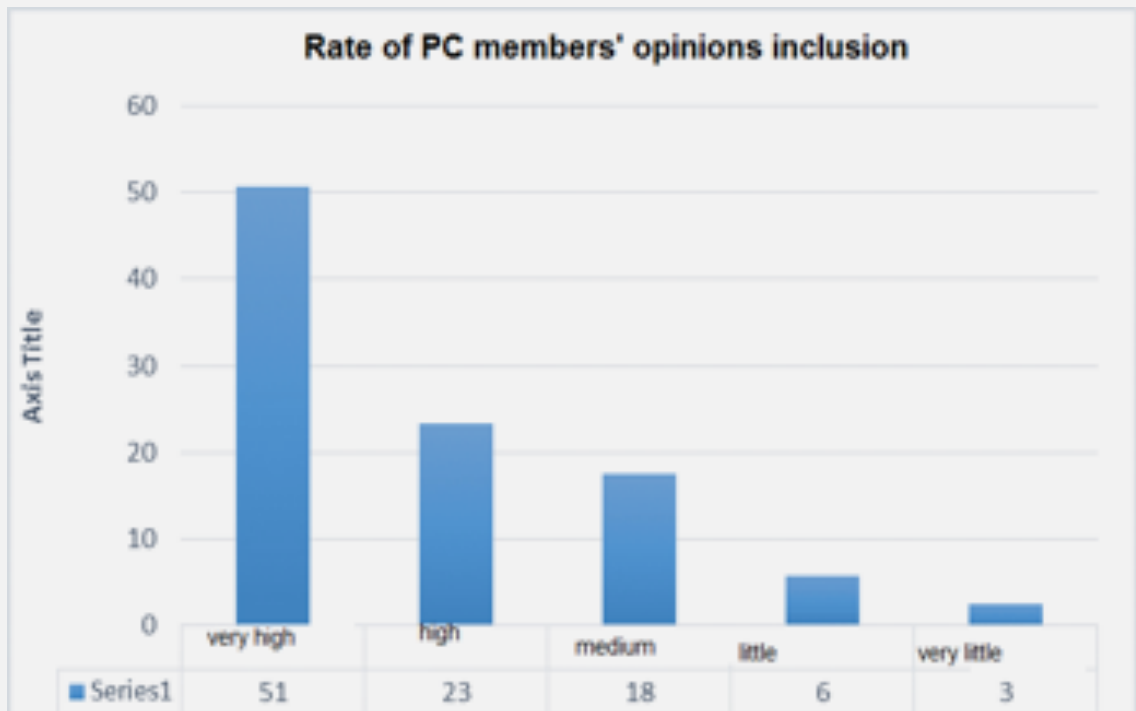
In fact, %75 i.e. over three quarters of the targeted people, responded that their peace circles include different components. Concerning the rest who believe that the inclusion is not sufficient, they suggested that certain topics should be worked on to increase inclusion.

- Increasing introducing peace circles' objectives and getting different components involved.
- Supporting peace circles to be extended to include more women.
- Conduct questionnaires and home visits to invite to participate in the peace circle.
- Joint activities with other local communities.
- Being further introduced to the components that are the peace circles' areas through meetings.
- Distributing brochure about the peace circle.
- Finding more flexible mechanisms in communicating with other components to be active and trustworthy.
- More initiatives, forums and meeting that support coexistence and local peace.



Including all peace circle members' opinions:

Concerning how far all member's opinions are included, the majority of responses were that their opinions are included. In fact, we learned that whose opinions are included are %74 which is almost three quarters of the total.



Main obstacles for peace circles' activities:

Problems vary according to the working area on which the peace circle is active. It is also up to the legal, economic situation.

Out the responses, we can categorize those obstacles in three groups:

Economic Obstacles:

The generally poor economic condition is considered as negative factor that undermines civil society activities. In addition, most of peace circles' members have commitments to other jobs in order to win bread. In addition ,

the fact that there is no sustainably stable financial support negatively affects the activities. Besides, prices vary according to the security situation which confuses planning processes.

Security and Safety Obstacles:

The worrisome atmosphere in which peace circles live enforces exceptional circumstances most of the time according to the severity of war and siege ; in addition to the fact that the controlling forces' tendencies play a major role.

Obstacles concerning Peace Circles themselves:

There is not an office for each peace circle to secure the sustainability of activities. In addition, there are not sufficient supplies like (laptop, camera, and internet connection). All of those are considered as obstacles for peace circles. Moreover, there is a lack of training and skills in significant topics. Concerning peace circles' members themselves, migration , marriages and living conditions led to number peace circles' members to decrease.



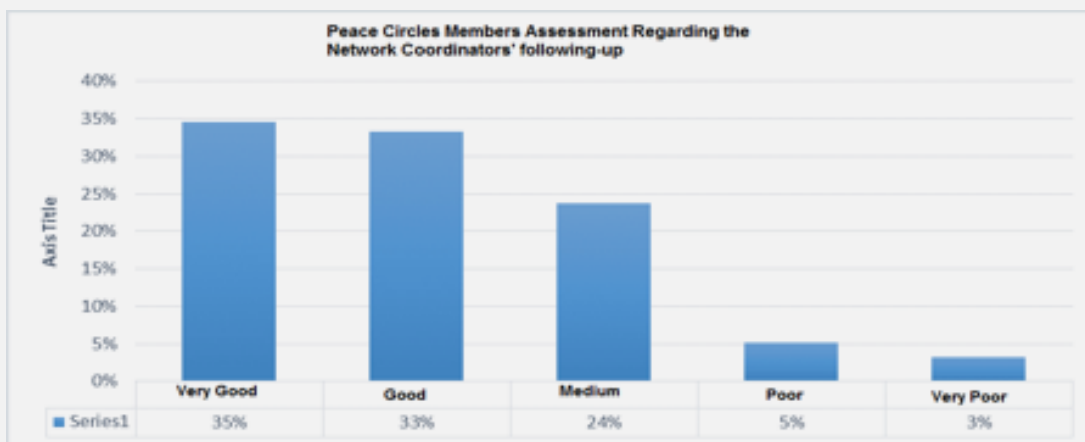
To overcome the above mentioned obstacles, peace circles suggested and recommended topics to be worked on:

Most of those recommendations included ways to overcome security and financial difficulties by demanding technical support and promoting experiences.

- Supporting developmental projects to help in providing income and developing an income resource for peace circle members.
- Token payments or rewards.
- Selecting topics that are applicable to their areas and less sensitive.
- Choosing calm times and avoiding the places where violence is likely to happen.
- Dialogue with the controlling forces in attempt to our send messages about what we do as well as working and cooperating with relevant people.
- enough time for planning well for all activities and topics as well as continuous analysis.
- Security cover from incubator organization when applicable.
- Security precautions are priorities and not to take any risk under any condition.
- Holding meetings in safe places like shelters or ground floors.
- Regular changes for places and times of meetings.
- An office would facilitate meeting processes.
- A monthly – based plan for activities in case there is no initiatives going.
- Providing work resources for peace circles (stationary, internet connection, computer and camera).
- Developing skills and experiences through training workshops that would fill the gaps in peace circle's performance.
- Providing a transportation mean for peace circles' members to the meetings' place.
- Holding collective activities to break barriers with the community.

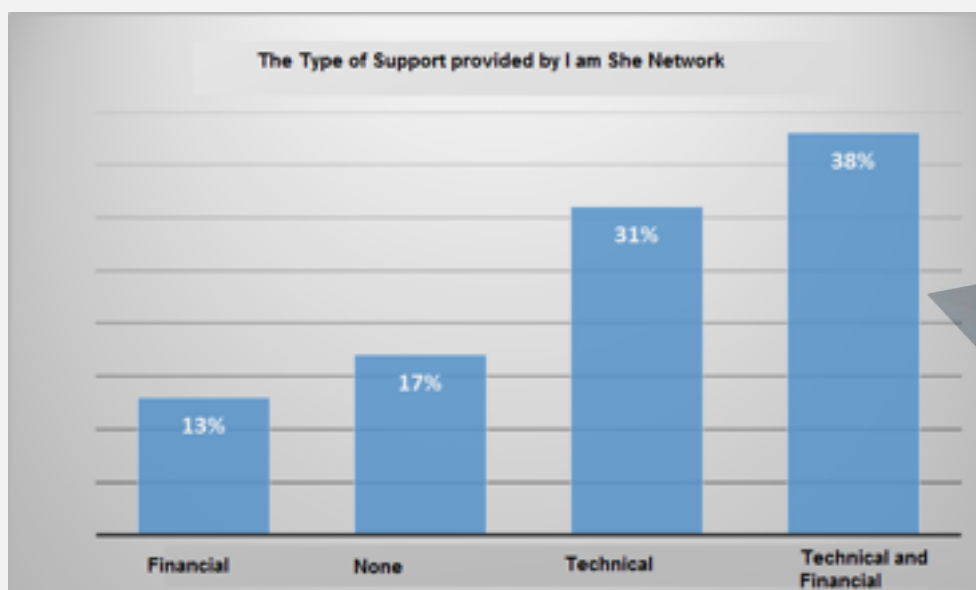
Internal relationships within I am She Network

I am She Network coordinators' following-up
Through the responses from peace circles' members regarding the Network coordinators' following-up, we notice that nearly seven out of ten members responded that the coordinators' following up is good and very good, with a percentage of %68.



Support provided by I am She Network:

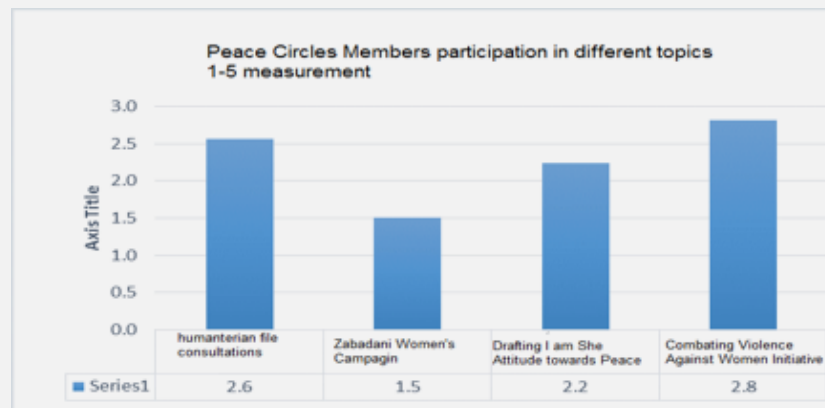
The following tables clarifies the targeted people's responses.



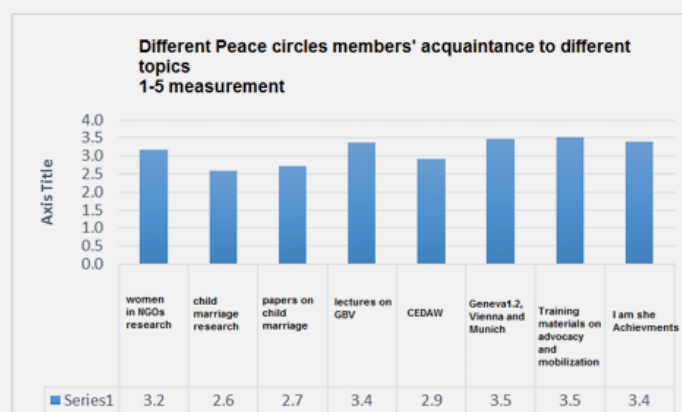
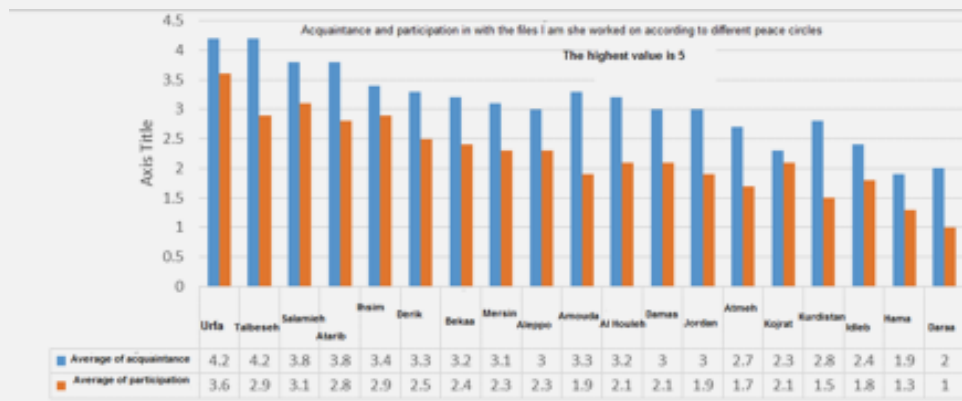
Peace Circles Members' Effectiveness:

How far peace circles' members are acquainted with different topics:

Here is a table that clarifies how far peace circles members are exposed to the papers issued by I am She Network in addition to I am She achievements.



The following table clarifies how far peace circles are participating and acquainted with different topics:



Peace circles Involvement in Political Groups

Participation in politics:

Indeed, we see that %13 of respondents have been in political working groups. We also see from the attached table that %8 of the targeted people responded that they are involved in some political working group.

Through peace circles' activities, several obstacles regarding women's participation in Syria's political process were found out:

Obstacles for women's participation on the political process varies according to the geographical range within which the peace circle works. An obstacle in some locations might not be considered so in other locations.

Traditions and Norms:

The masculine community in Syria is considered as an obstacles regarding women's participation in the political process. This is because it enforces restrictions for women's involvement. The war has deepened the gap even more and it led for women's opinions not be respected, or their efforts not to be taken into consideration, in addition to the burdens women have to carry.



Security Risks:

There is a terrifying atmosphere concerning detention and insecurity as well psychological instability and the radical controlling forces that reject women's participation in the politics. Obstacles regarding women themselves:

There is not sufficient experience in politics and political mechanisms. Education rate is also low in general, and among women in particular. All of these make the opportunities for women's participation in public life, including all political tendencies, very low.

In addition, there are not enough efficient women in politics in order to assist other women to get involved in politics, likewise. Moreover, there is a general mood of depression due to the Syrian political solution's failure. Besides, women suffer from the fact that there are not laws that backing women's rights in general, and women's political rights in particular.



Mechanisms recommended by peace circles to be worked on to overcome obstacles regarding women's participation in Syria's political process:

- Empowering women in order to activate their leadership roles, and conduct mobilization and advocacy campaigns to activate women's roles in community as well as implementing CEDAW.
- More activating for women's roles by raising awareness forums on the significance of women's roles in politics and spotting the light on such significance.
- Changing the stereotypical image of women through supporting centers for women to raise awareness about women's rights and roles as well as women's associations that meet women's needs.
- Economic empowerment and project management trainings for women.
- Rehabilitation of society based on open-minded values and liberated mentality away from dictatorships as well as unleashing energy to be a starting point towards specialization and public life's institutionalization apart from monopoly and all types of discrimination and conflicts.
- Promoting women's rights as legitimate rights in the constitution as well as in an harmonizing mechanism to secure women's participation that is equal to men's.
- Lobbying towards enforcing the forces on the ground to include women in the political process, and to plan for meaningful participation not only in figure.
- Convincing the society of the significance of what women can contribute.

In Brief

It is very difficult to work institutionally in war conditions when monitoring is challenging. However, it is even more challenging to plan for long terms when there are changes on daily basis.

The fact that I am She Network could achieve progress, in comparison with the contexts of work, and taking into account the stories of success that peace circles' women could achieve, this all proves our approach towards women's abilities to create, and their innovative capabilities to overcome obstacles. They only need the space they can make by their own, too.

The fact that solutions from the base is what give our work that power, and what give confidence of success without enforcing modules , no matter how successful they are.

This assessment points at many needs and issues that should be included in planning to be worked on in details, along with daily following-up. Undoubtedly, there are many challenges that are hard to overcome that change needs a long time. Therefore, sustainability is going to be a priority in the coming days.





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