



2020

ANNUAL REPORT



A MESSAGE FROM OUR FOUNDER

HH SHEIKHA INTISAR ALSABAH

Dear humanitarians and advocates of mental health,

Through the troubling times we are all living, taking the time to read this shows that you want to make a difference. It is evidence that you and I care about the same mission and goal, to self-empower women and help them find inner peace in their journey of improving their mental health. It is evidence that we are all keen on bringing Peace to not only these women, but to the Arab Region and consequently, the whole world.

As I write this reflection, I am thinking back about this year and all the hardships that occurred. I, as well as many, realized the impact of human connection on our lives. I am grateful that with the advances made in research, life will soon return to normal, but I am also grateful that people are now more aware of how important mental health is for them to help and make an impact on people's lives. Mental health is a vital aspect that can no longer be ignored and our contributions, whether to one person or many, can make a difference. I am sure many share the same gratitude as me for being healthy and surrounded by their loved ones and I hope, Peace will be a goal we will reach together.

Intisar Foundation has seen many great achievements in 2020;

After the start of 2020, it had become clear that conducting our programmes in-person would not be possible. Our teams therefore surveyed the women interested in our programmes in Lebanon and Jordan and implemented virtual drama therapy sessions. This led to several virtual programmes that self-empowered and supported women in their journey of healing through Drama Therapy. The programmes proved to be successful, and we saw firsthand how much these women needed these programmes while isolated in their homes.

As Covid-19 research grew, so did our understanding of how we can protect ourselves and others from this virus. Our team took all of that into consideration and returned to the field with several precautions that allowed these women to experience a sense of connection again. Tragically, on August 4th, the capital of Lebanon, Beirut, was rocked by an explosion that led to the death of over 200 individuals and injured over 7000. Our teams realized the need to get involved and launched an EMDR programme to help these women heal their trauma.

We also continued our scholarship programme to help grow the field of Drama therapists in the Arab world to grow our mission of Peace. Moreover, to help grow the field of research for drama therapy and its impact on mental health in the Arab World, we published a qualitative research paper on the impact of drama therapy on the mental health of women affected by war and a research booklet on the impact of drama therapy on the neurobiology of the brain.



We held several fundraising events that allow us to continue our work and we launched three successful campaigns on the Global Giving platform that funded our programmes held in Lebanon. Additionally, we received a grant from the University of California, Irvine, Medical Humanities Center for our ongoing research projects.

Through the turbulent and tragic times lived in 2020, we were determined to always find a way to continue our work and to help as many women as possible as we saw that these women needed our support more than ever. We will continue with our mission, and we will continue finding innovative ways in the face of challenges and obstacles.

Whether in Lebanon, Jordan, the Arab region, or the world, the need for mental health services has never been clearer and we are ecstatic that we are able to provide this support to those who need our support in improving their mental wellbeing.

We now know that our mental health is as important as our physical health and can even affect us physically, mental health is not a luxury, it is a necessity for survival. The Covid-19 pandemic only highlighted what we merely knew, mental wellbeing is a priority for individuals and our societies to improve and flourish.

I am honored to be leading this mission, alongside our spectacular Board members, generous Donors, our dedicated teams, and our NGO partners for all the amazing work they do.

Through our interactions with these women and our research, we learned that these women truly appreciated and loved the safe space that they had in sessions which allowed them to finally discuss their trauma and focus on themselves.



Throughout the sessions, these women realize how they have not focused on their needs and their mental health and start to do that while forming strong bonds and establishing a non-judgmental community alongside their group. They no longer feel alone in their struggles because they have shared them and received continuous support from the other women and from Intisar Foundation. This allows these women to know that they have a community ready to help any time it is needed and that they have a strong support system set in place. Through this realization, these women don't stop the journey of healing after our programmes end, they take what they have learned, the friendships they have forged, and the emotions they explored, and they use them as a tool to improve. As the only NGO in the region that uses Drama therapy as a way to improve mental health, we can see the impact of using a non-stigmatizing group therapy approach on their lives.

ONE STORY OF SELF-EMPOWERMENT

"I now believe that if we do not talk about our troubles they will never get resolved. There were many things that I had never shared with anyone, but I was able to freely talk about them during the foundation's drama therapy sessions. This was the cure to the pain I had been suffering. The weight of the secrets that I carry has now subsided."

Rose,

One of our #1MillionArabWomen
For Peace

*Name has been changed to maintain anonymity

TABLE OF CONTENTS

02	Message From Our Founder HH Sheikha Intisar AlSabah	18	Intisar Foundation's Research Projects
05	One Story of Self-Empowerment	20	Conferences and Webinars
06	Table of Contents	22	Webinar with UN75 Talks
07	We Support UN SDGs	23	Fundraising and Grants
08	Inspirational messages from our Board Members	24	Our Response to the 2020 Beirut Explosion
09	Our Champions of 2020	26	The Memorandum of Understanding with the USEK
10	Life in the Camps during COVID-19 in the Refugee Camps	27	Visionary of the Year Award
12	COVID-19 and Virtual Sessions	28	Fundraising Activities
14	Virtual Drama Therapy Programme	31	Success Story of the Year
15	Testimonials	33	"Seeds of Peace" Documentary
16	Return to the Field	34	They Said About Intisar Foundation
		36	New Board Members and Technical Committee
		37	Our Partners
		38	Be Part of our Peace Mission
		39	Get in Touch

WE SUPPORT UN SDGs



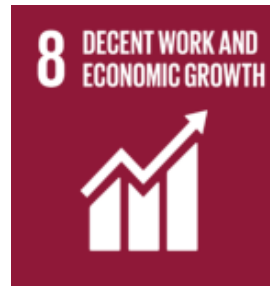
Pages: 6,8,10,11,13,15,16,21,26,30



Pages: 23



Pages: 6,11,13,15,16,27,28,30



Pages: 20,26,27,28



Pages: 20,26,27,28



Pages: 17,18,19,24



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SDG 3

Mental Health is as important as Physical health

There is a clearly documented relationship between psychological well-being and overall health.

By addressing the mental health of Arab women, we are contributing to their overall health and well-being.

SDG 4

Expanding the pool of Drama Therapists

By providing 15 scholarships annually in partnership with USEK to prospective drama therapists, we are contributing to the quality education of Arabic speaking women in the Arab world.

SDG 5

#1MillionArabWomen Initiative

Our programmes provide psychological support to women who are the cornerstone of every household and community and the leaders in bottom-up Peace building.

SDG 8 and 12

Building a Peaceful Arab world

We work directly with war and violence affected women to reduce inter-group tensions and promote bottom-up Peace building on a community level.

SDG 16

Local and International Partnerships

Our work with partners in the fields of humanitarian initiatives, academia, psychology, education, and media creates a sustainable map for the achievement of our goal #1MillionArabWomen.

SDG 17

Our Main Funders

Ebbara and Intisars Jewelry follow a strict business ethic of using only traceable and sustainable raw materials, and provide fair and sustainable work opportunities.

Mrs. Hania Ahmar
Advisor and Board Member

"I joined the Intisar Foundation because it is time for our community to tap into the extraordinary resource that is a women's full potential. Creating the space for Arab women to succeed socially and economically, through encouraging independence, career-training, and self-sustainability will help equalize our society. Supporting these women will help advance the Arabic region in ways we need now more than ever. Providing psychological aid and developing other tangible support systems will help heal the aches of generational inequality; and that is what we are here to do."

Ms. Karima Anbar
CEO of Intisar Foundation

"I believe that the only way to fix society is to fix its humans, and we can do so only by providing psychological support. This is indeed the core mission of Intisar Foundation that is working to improve the Arab world's societies, and thus to pave the way for more Peace in the region"

H.E. Christian Nakhle'
International Advisor and Board Member

"There is the need to act and not just condemn. We should individually and collectively act and fight to protect women and children from violence and ignorance."

Mrs. Karma Ekmekji
Advisor and Board Member

"The mental health of any community is only as good as the well-being of its women. I joined the board of the Intisar Foundation with the full conviction that through our programmes, we will be able to create healthier, safer and more tolerant arab societies for our women and girls."



HH Sheikha Intisar AlSabah,
Founder of Intisar Foundation

"I believe that women are the cornerstone of every household and the material that holds the community together at Peace. We must focus our efforts on women's psychological needs to have a more Peaceful society. If we want to revive a society after a war or any natural or manmade disaster, mental health has to become a compulsory component of our first response. We need to work on rebuilding the broken souls of people, not just their homes and communities,"

**INSPIRATIONAL MESSAGES FROM
OUR BOARD MEMBERS**

Mr. Abdul Muneeb
Financial Advisor and Board Member

"The phrase "ladies first" has its origins in the view that women are fragile and delicate, needing special protections. This is one reason that women are among the first to be evacuated in dangerous situations. I believe empowering them psychologically can endure any situation."

Mr. Philip Stoltzfus
Advisor and Board Member

"The Intisar Foundation has as its principal aim the nurturing and healing of women who have been the victims of war and population displacement, our daughters and sisters and mothers and grandmothers who are the binding fabric of our communities and therefore so often the targets of violence. Such a mission deserves the support of us all."

Mrs. Marianne Kafena,
General Secretary and Board Member

"Every woman who can find healing through drama therapy can also share that new voice within her family and in her wider community. Empowering women in this way makes each a true agent for healing change in a region that remains one of the most geopolitically volatile on earth."

OUR CHAMPIONS OF 2020

Global Women leaders is an international network of female leaders that combines the expertise and knowledge of its members to help in tackling global challenges. Some of the issues members of this network have included education, health, food & water security, and financial inclusion.

HH Sheikha Intisar AlSabah has become a member of the Global Women Leaders network which has offered support through communication, advocacy, and shared expertise.

GLOBAL
WOMEN
LEADERS

STRATEGIC PHILANTHROPY

“



"Intisar Foundation is a cornerstone of our Global Women Leaders community, supporting, empowering, and listening to women affected by war and violence. We also believe 'empowerment belongs to Arab women and Peace belongs to the Arab world,' and we will continue to support and collaborate with the Foundation on important initiatives.

I think there is an element that women bring - because we support each other as much as the women in your community are supporting each other. There's that collaborative approach where I think women work quite well together."

Kimberly Gire,

Founder of Global Women Leaders

LIFE IN THE CAMPS DURING COVID-19 IN THE REFUGEE CAMPS



COVID-19 has been the foremost topic on many minds in 2020, changing the lives of billions around the world. Social inequality, financial difficulties and mental health problems grew worldwide in the wake of the pandemic. Refugee women bore a heavy burden of many social, health and financial problems. In Shatila Camp, where life was already marked with over-crowded homes, less than sanitary conditions and extreme poverty, the COVID-19 pandemic worsened the pre-existing issues to a grim degree.

Life within refugee camps in Lebanon moved from bad to worse in many aspects.



NO ELECTRICITY



NO INTERNET



NO WAGES



LOCKDOWN

Difficulties in refugee camps in Lebanon became compounded with the pandemic, resulting in never before seen levels of stress, depression and anxiety among refugees and the war affected population. In May of 2020, the **UN High Commissioner for Refugees**, Filippo Grandi, declared COVID-19 as a cause of a mental health crisis as well as a health crisis. It is fundamental to acknowledge and work on solutions for the repercussions on populations who were already disadvantaged, marginalized and susceptible to mental health issues.

Mental health is a crucial part of any post-crisis humanitarian intervention. Therefore, in the wake of pandemic, Intisar Foundation expanded its efforts to ensure the continued support to its beneficiaries in refugee camps.

As lockdown measures started around the world and in Lebanon, Intisar Foundation's team conducted a survey with the beneficiaries of the drama therapy programmes to assess the possibility of holding online sessions. When it was determined that the majority of women had the ability to attend virtual sessions, Intisar Foundation began to hold twice monthly one hour sessions for smaller groups of women. Overall, over 75 virtual sessions were held for over 100 beneficiaries.

COVID-19 AND VIRTUAL SESSIONS



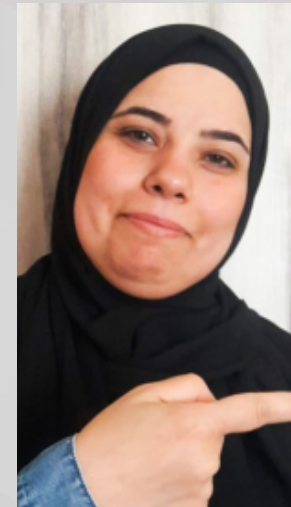
In 2020, Intisar Foundation overhauled its approach to suit the new reality of life after COVID-19. Our usual operation in refugee camps and war affected areas had to stop due to lockdown measures. We found new and innovative ways to continue our mental health support efforts through drama therapy.

In order to accommodate these circumstances, our team began efforts to reinvent the approach of drama therapy for an online implementation. We began with weekly drama therapy sessions held over WhatsApp and Zoom for our beneficiaries in Lebanon and Jordan.

Drama therapy exercises were adjusted to a video or audio format and sent to our beneficiaries and shared through our social media to reach those stuck at home during the lockdown. Furthermore, Intisar Foundation launched its first fully virtual drama therapy programme in July of 2020. The programme was a great success in reducing pandemic related stress and Improving emotional wellbeing.

INNOVATIVE Response

DAILY Check-in Call



One-on-One Session

Daily MENTAL HEALTH Support



Online DRAMA THERAPY

VIRTUAL DRAMA THERAPY PROGRAMME

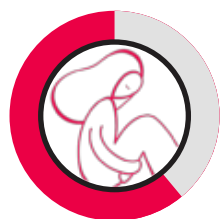
The COVID-19 epidemic has had terrible psychological consequences. In view of the pandemic's impact, the UNHCR has stressed the need of prioritising refugee mental health. Indeed, since the outbreak began in March 2020, early reports from Lebanon showed an upsurge in complaints of suicide and self-harming ideas among refugees.

As the pandemic spread, the humanitarian sector struggled to cope and maintain its daily operations.

Due to lockdown measures, Intisar Foundation started to find creative ways to continue its work. A fully virtual drama therapy programme was launched in June 2020.

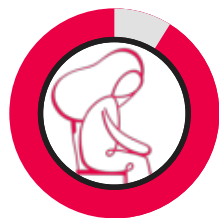
Weekly Zoom sessions were held as part of this programme, while new activities were developed to adapt to the new virtual setting. The sessions focused on familiarizing participants with the body's reaction to stress and how to deal with it, as well as exploration of personal narratives and history through storytelling.

FINDINGS FROM RESEARCH ON VIRTUAL DRAMA THERAPY



60%

of the participants reported lower symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.



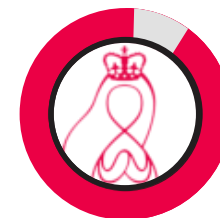
90%

of the participants reported lower symptoms of Depression.



100%

of the participants reported lower symptoms of Anxiety.



90%

of the participants reported improvement in Self-Esteem



50%

of the participants reported improvement in Life Satisfaction.



"I used to be angry at my son whenever he wanted to tell me something while I'm working. He used to be afraid of me. Currently, I would respond to everything he says, even the least important things. For example, whenever he asks for something, I would leave anything aside to give him whatever he wants. I felt mentally relieved."

Noura,
One of our 1 Million Arab Women



"When I'm tired, I just want Peace and quiet, and no one is allowed to speak. But now, I count to 10, take deep inhales and exhales, and try to have a more give-and-take approach, whereby I engage in conversations and discussions. After the sessions, I have this curiosity and this willingness, and we became not just a mother and her children, but friends."

Loujain,
One of our 1 Million Arab Women



"After practicing the exercises, I become calm and relaxed. I used to always be very stressed, but after the movements I'm much calmer now. My son and I get along much better now, and I don't get as angry at him as I used to."

Mona,
One of our 1 Million Arab Women



"My behaviour has changed a lot, definitely with my children, because all my stress, all my irritation and anger, all the pressure I was feeling, I would take out on them. At the end of them day, because of how angry, tired, and stressed out I was, I used to blow up in their face."

Mariam,
One of our 1 Million Arab Women

RETURN TO THE **FIELD**

When lockdown measures were eased in Lebanon, Intisar Foundation introduced a number of changes to its programmes in order to ensure that they are being held in a safe manner while maintaining the integrity of their content. Intisar Foundation's response to the COVID-19 pandemic was implemented with the following changes and adjustments:



Sanitization
efforts



Compulsory
masks



Social distancing
in sessions



Shorter
sessions



No contact
activities

"Today, one year later, I have changed a lot. I changed to a shocking degree. The way I treat my children has changed, I haven't hit my daughter since we started the programme, not even one slap. Before I used to have explosively violent episodes. I got to a point when I would raise my hand, I would stop, and I would remember certain things from the sessions. This was when I really started to pay attention to the changes that the programme was making in me and I started to realize what the purpose was."

Samar,
One in our #1MillionArabWomen
of Peace

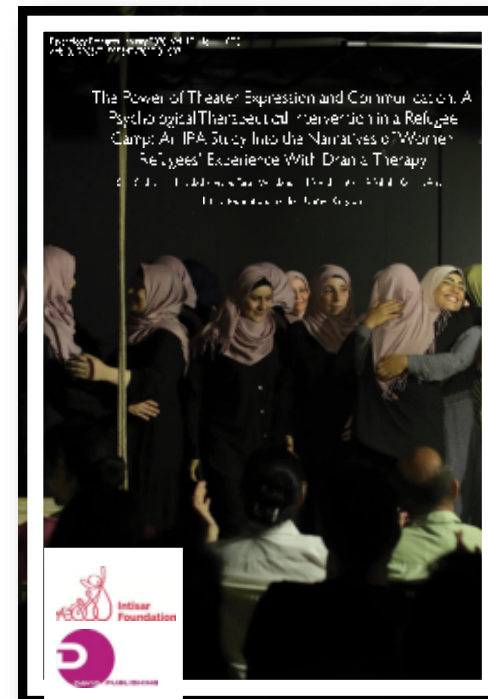
INTISAR FOUNDATION'S RESEARCH PROJECTS

Research on the impact of drama therapy on war-affected women's mental health

In 2020, Intisar Foundation researchers published a qualitative research paper entitled *“The Power of Theater Expression and Communication: A Psychological Therapeutic Intervention in a Refugee Camp: An IPA Study into the Narratives of Women Refugees’ Experience with Drama Therapy”*.

This scientific paper explored the subjective experiences of seven Syrian refugee women who took part in a drama therapy programme offered by Intisar Foundation. This research is the first of its kind in the Arab world, highlighting the effects of drama therapy on these women's mental health and self-empowerment. The study found that drama therapy can help women displaced by war to deal with emotional trauma. Additionally, it can implement positive changes by reducing negative affect through catharsis and anger regulation and improving positive affect through an improved outlook on life, emotional release through physical activity, and increased self-confidence within the participants. Furthermore, it fosters a sense of community and friendship between the participants through shared experiences and deep disclosures.

 Click here for
full research



12

THE POWER OF THEATER EXPRESSION AND COMMUNICATION

Psychological well-being is often given a back seat compared to other necessities refugees have, this comes in stark contrast to the reality of how common psychological distress is among war survivors. Being exposed to pre-migration and post-displacement experiences can take a large toll on the refugee population (Mental Health Foundation, 2018).

Countless factors play into the development of psychological distress among refugees. Losing their homes and living stability, being forced to undergo an extreme change in culture and environment might negatively affect their emotional well-being (World Health Organization, 2018). This complex tapestry of distress is complicated further when considering that many refugees lose a life's worth of hard work, social status, and financial security once they gain refugee status (Miller, 1999).

Refugees are more likely to suffer from psychological afflictions than the general population (Kimmyer, Narsiah, Munoz, Rashid, Ryder, Gunder, & Pottie, 2011). As many as one in four Syrian refugees suffers from anxiety and one in three suffers from depression, and posttraumatic stress disorder (Georgiadou, Zbidat, Schmitt, & Erni, 2018; L. Kerdie, M. Kerdie, & Aissi, 2019). Refugee women are especially more vulnerable, as they are more likely to suffer from emotional distress compared to refugee men and non-refugee women (Hollander, 2011). Cases in which people underwent extreme trauma like war and torture would cause them to lose their sense of self (Halboun, 2018), causing them to become dissociated with their feelings. This makes women refugees at-risk population that requires special attention and greater levels of psychological aid. This fact is compounded when considering that one refugee woman is likely to be the caregiver of several children and the head of a household when men are more and more likely to be missing due to injury, death, or disappearances (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2014). The fact that one woman's depreciated mental health can likely affect an entire household, impacting her children's and family members' overall well-being (Arnyo-Borelli, Renat, Saurina, & Saez, 2017) underscores the significance of psychological counseling and intervention.

Obstacles to Accessing Mental Health Services

Providing psychological support to refugee women is a necessary first step in helping them rehabilitate and reintegrate into society (Langlois, Haines, Tomson, & Chaffar, 2016). This goal is immediately met with internal and external obstacles. An example of an internal obstacle is the stigma associated with mental health care (Shannon, Wieling, Simmelink-McCleary, & Becher, 2014). A refugee seeking mental health care would entail multi-minority status, which would put her at a greater disadvantage. An individual with multi-minority status is a person who belongs to two or more minority groups at once and is therefore more likely to face social discrimination (Dentato, 2012).

A refugee who suffers from mental illness or emotional distress is therefore likely to face more stressors compared to a refugee who does not require psychological aid. The issue also permeates into the immediate social circle, with the possibility of facing discrimination from family, husbands, and co-workers. Acknowledging one's need for psychological help can be cause for ostracization and limitations in employment or aid access (Corrigan & Watson, 2002). Mental health stigma is one of the main reasons refugees do not seek mental health help (Shannon et al., 2014).

External obstacles include shortcoming from the governments, NGOs, and health care providers in the host country. Refugees will usually have less access to mental health care compared to the general population (Mental Health Foundation, 2018). Lebanon is lacking in many areas necessary to provide adequate care for the

THE POWER OF THEATER EXPRESSION AND COMMUNICATION

11

looking for security and basic needs. Since the 20th century, the Arab world has been witnessing continuous periods of violence, occupation, and persecution that led to an increase in number of displaced people who are highly prone to suffer from trauma. Whether internally displaced or refugees in foreign host countries, their move is usually shaped by physical, socio-economic hardships and psychological trauma.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), along many governmental and non-governmental, global, and local organizations has intensified their efforts to protect the displaced people's human rights, and to provide immediate relief and intermediate term solutions, whose impact in promoting a healthier, more productive, and peaceful communities need to be a priority. Our study focuses on long term benefits of mental health care for refugees, mainly women. According to the UNHCR women represent 50% of the over 25 million world wide refugees (2019). Gender equality has been the goal of many international organizations to include UN and World Bank strategies to reduce gender inequalities by the provision of physical, educational, and financial support to abused women suffering in the midst of conflict areas, human trafficking, and domestic violence (Marques & Walker, 2017). In line with the fact that women are the cornerstone of healthy society, our work emphasizes the significance of the mental health of vulnerable women living in camps in Lebanon. Our study (1) stresses the need to explain and treat the psychological impact of war, violence, and persecution on women refugees, (2) presents a case study where those vulnerable women refugees experience added stressors because of the situational socio-economic difficulties of the host community, (3) evaluates the impact of drama therapy in treating women refugees, suffering from trauma related disorders, and (4) analyzes firsthand experience of the women who underwent drama therapy.

The paper consists of 7 sections: (1) Case Study: Refugee Crisis in Lebanon; (2) Literature Review on Mental Health; (3) Literature Review on Drama Therapy; (4) Methodology; (5) Drama Therapy Intervention Program; (6) Findings and Analysis; (7) Discussion and Conclusion.

Case Study: The Refugee Crisis in Lebanon

The civil war in Syria started in 2011, and has since displaced 5.6 million individuals out of Syria (Council on Foreign Relations, 2019). Lebanon is home to 1.1 million of those Syrian refugees (Union of Relief and Development Associations, 2017). It is a geographically small country, its area is about 6% of the landmass of Syria, and its population is fairly small, standing at 6.002 million in 2017 (World Bank, 2019).

This influx of refugees in a country that is already economically and politically unstable (International Labour Organization, 2014) has created a dire humanitarian catastrophe. The Syrian refugees in Lebanon have to live through circumstances full of distress, with almost 70% living below the poverty line (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2018). Foreign aid in all forms has been a much needed and welcomed intervention to help the country handle the situation. As countless NGOs, governments, and charities scrambled to provide aid in the form of food, shelter, and education (Chemaly, 2018), a vital necessity is often overlooked. Refugees face intense challenges during the post-migration period. Besides the daily struggles for basic necessities like shelter, food, and medical care, displaced refugees are likely to be suffering from emotional and psychological anguish (Miller, 1999). This fact hinders their overall well-being, rendering any efforts for self-improvement excessively grueling.

Literature Review on Mental Health

Mental Health and Refugees

THE POWER OF THEATER EXPRESSION AND COMMUNICATION

13

refugee population within it. The country is tackling a large influx of refugees over a short period of time (Union of Relief and Development Associations, 2017), which has strained the country's resources. Furthermore, mental health care access is usually deprioritized by various agencies in the absence of more immediate necessities like shelter, education, and security (Bartolomei, Baeriswyl-Cottin, Framarando, Kasira, Premand, Eytan, & Khazal, 2016). Despite efforts to reform psychological aid for refugees in Lebanon, there are still gaps in funding, awareness, and effort (Fleck, 2016). All these factors create a compounded situation in which refugee women in Lebanon who need help cannot receive it.

Literature Review on Drama Therapy

What Drama Therapy Is and How It Works

Drama therapy is a multifaceted approach to treatment. It entails the use of theater, props, and music to facilitate psychological growth and healing. Drama therapy can aid in the development of body awareness, improve communication skills, facilitate catharsis, and create a sense of community among its participants (Pomock, 2018). Its use can develop better emotional regulation and expression skills (Powell, 2012). The theater setting enables participants to express their feelings, tell their stories and create by proxy of a fictional character (Landy, 1990).

Using characters and story development therapy gives participants a chance to express themselves while dissociating from their pain (Dieterich-Harwell & Koch, 2017). This experiential allows for somatic and traumatic memories to be examined without reliving the pain. Drama therapy can help to reconstruct personal identity in vulnerable populations, these features facilitate therapeutic healing without the stigma or taboo associated with psychological services (Newman, 2017). Drama therapy can be used for refugees following resettlement to address an array of psychosocial issues, and can be an effective method when compared to more traditional approaches like CBT (Murray, Davidson, & Schweizer, 2010). Drama therapy is consistent with recommendations for mental health care for refugees as it offers a culturally-based non-formal approach that is grounded in community rather than a sterile psychiatric atmosphere (Miller, 1999).

Drama Therapy and Refugees

Drama therapy has been used with the refugee population before with promising outcomes. The effects on the refugee population go from psychological well-being and into better social adjustment.

When drama therapy was used for a group of immigrant and refugee adolescents, research found it gave them an opportunity to give their losses and empowered them by focusing on the strength they gained because of their journeys as immigrants or refugees (Rousseau, Gauthier, Lacroix, Alain, & Bourassa, 2005). The state of limbo experienced by many refugees, where their past is done and their future are unclear, can be alleviated with the use of drama therapy to provide them with a conceptual "home", wherein their authenticity is maintained and explored (Dieterich-Harwell & Koch, 2017).

Overall well-being, the ability to maintain better mood levels and feelings of fulfillment (Diener, Lucas, & Scollon, 2006) has been observed to increase in refugees following their participation in a drama therapy program (Gangli, 2014). The researcher believes this to be a result of the reassuring, creative, and rewarding experience that drama therapy offers (Gangli, 2014). Drama therapy, as a part of creative therapies, has also given refugees the ability to navigate homesickness and nostalgia while retaining their unique cultural identity (Dieterich-Harwell & Koch, 2017).

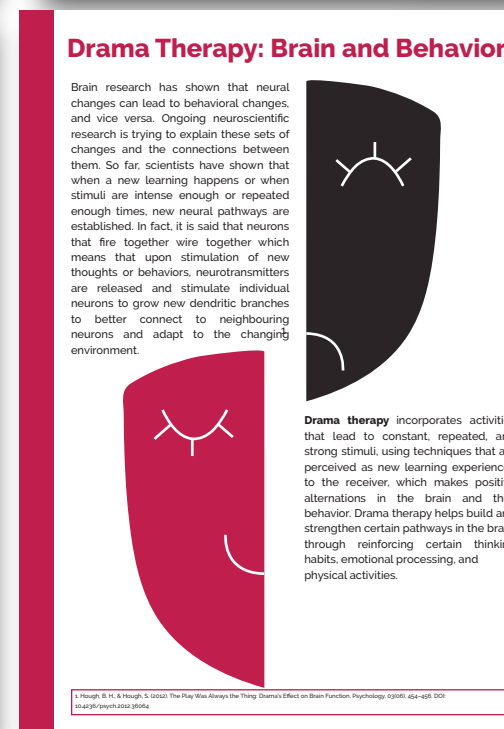
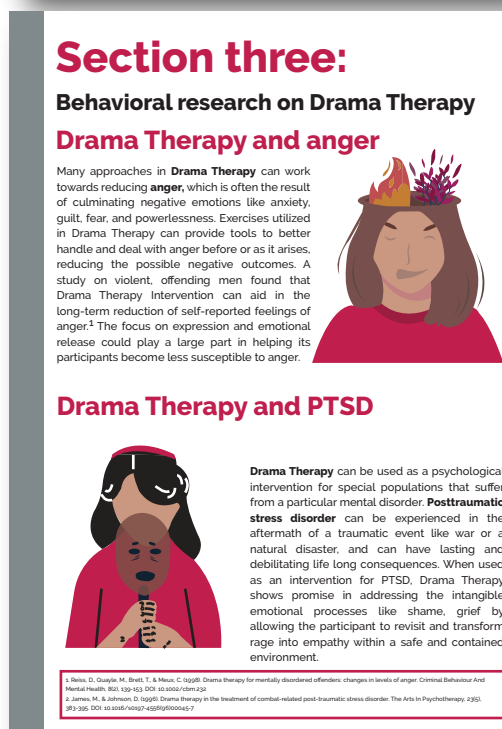
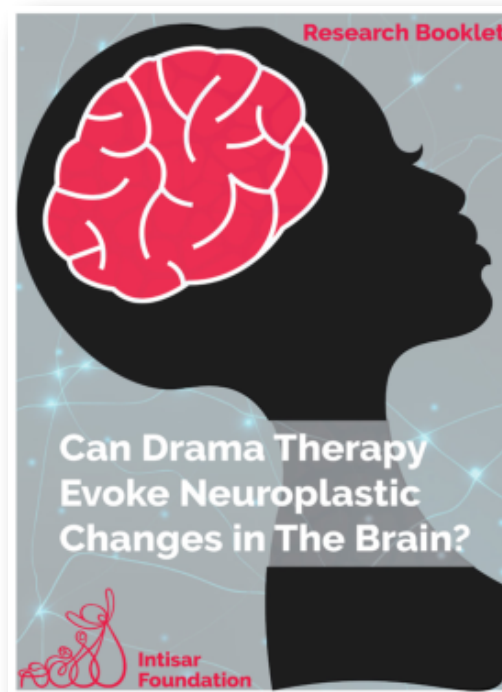
Ongoing and Existing Research on the impact of drama therapy on the neurobiology of the brain

"Can Drama Therapy Evoke Neuroplastic Changes in The Brain?" is a secondary research booklet published by Intisar Foundation that further explores the findings on drama therapy and the human brain from our previously published research paper.

This unique booklet is the first of its kind due to combining our findings on drama therapy and neuroscience. As drama therapy is a new and promising approach in the field of mental health and psychosocial support, not many neurobiological studies have been carried out on the impact of drama therapy on the neurobiology of the brain. However, due to the many activities that drama therapy incorporates, positive alterations can occur in the brain and subsequently, behaviour. drama therapy helps aids and strengthens specific pathways in the brain, through the reinforcement of particular thinking habits, physical activity, and emotional processing. Intisar Foundation is leading the way as the first and only organisation focusing on drama therapy and its neurological impact through the implementation of research projects.



Click here for
full research



CONFERENCES AND WEBINARS

In 2020, Intisar Foundation was honoured by the invitations to participate in several conferences and webinars in order to share our team's experiences, as well as to learn from other advocates of mental health care and self-empowerment for women.



Milken Institute International Conference – Abu Dhabi, February 11 & 12, 2020

“Wellness, Performance and Longevity | When Words Fail: Healing Through Creative Self-Expression”

“How Philanthropy is Driving Shared Prosperity in Emerging Markets”

“Reclaiming The Narrative: Redefining Womanhood in the MEA”



Against all Odds - Entrepreneur Magazine ME July 15 2020

This live discussion hosted by Entrepreneur Middle East Magazine provided insight into the origins of Intisar Foundation, the research backing up its work, as well as its plans to expand the field of drama therapy in the Arab world. HH Sheikhha Intisar AlSabah also spoke about her past and the personal experiences that led her becoming the philanthropist and Peace advocate and activists that she is known for today.



Virtual Victoria Forum October 15, 2020

“ Bridging Gender Divides: The Impact of Covid-19 on Equality”



World Humanitarian Forum Virtual Summit

September 23, 2020

"Modern Obstacles To Gender Equality & COVID-19 Effect On Women"



Global Women Leaders Strategic Philanthropy - UNICEF

October 14 2020

In this panel, HH Sheikha Intisar AlSabah spoke about Intisar Foundation's response to the Beirut Port explosion. The foundation launched an Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing programme to help women affected by the blast to overcome their trauma.



Women's Forum Global Meeting - Women's Forum 18 - 19 November 2020

In this virtual conversation with Women's forum, Founder and Chairwoman of Intisar Foundation, HH Sheikha Intisar AlSabah, discussed the psycho-social support designed to women affected by war through Drama Therapy in the Arab World.



Negotiating Access to Women in Conflict Zones - Frontline Negotiations

22 October 2020

In this panel, Intisar Foundation CEO Karima Anbar discussed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women, how drama therapy can be an effective tool in reducing gender inequality, and explained the essence of the Intisar Foundation's interventions for women affected by war in conflict areas. The panel discussion also strived to provide insights and solutions for the challenges related to negotiating access to women in conflict zones.



Women Digital Summit - Women Power Summit December 7 2020

Joining the live discussion "In Your face: Stories About Trauma" by Women Power Summit that aimed to explore and provide the solutions for the trauma and oppression that Arab women face in their daily lives, Intisar Foundation CEO Karima Anbar spoke about the drama therapy programmes offered by Intisar Foundation to Arab women affected by war.

WEBINAR WITH UN75 TALKS

In commemoration of World Refugee Day, Intisar Foundation, the United Nations in the State of Kuwait, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in the State of Kuwait and the UN Women held a webinar entitled "Women, War, Mental Health and The Quest For Peace" on July 22nd 2020.

The webinar was hosted by philanthropists, researchers and representatives of different UN agencies, including HH Sheikha Intisar AlSabah, Dr. Tarek Elsheikh, Mr. Mohammad Naciri, Dr. Lina H Kreidie, Dr. Samer Haddadin, Mrs. Karma Ekmekji and special guest Ms. Fatima Khalife.

The webinar explored the necessity and efforts of mental health support for vulnerable women, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Recommendations and highlights from the webinar **included:**

Recommendations:

- ❶ To support research on the state of mental health in the Arab world conducted by local/regional mental health focused charities, NGOs, and other organisations.
- ❷ To overcome mental health services deficit in the MENA region.
- ❸ To acknowledge deeper social changes resulting from the work of local/regional mental health focused charities, NGOs and other organizations.



FUNDRAISING AND GRANTS

In 2020, Intisar Foundation succeeded in securing several funding opportunities for its programmes and research projects. The University of California, Irvine, Medical Humanities Center recognised the research effort invested by Intisar Foundation through a financial grant that is aimed at support the foundation's further research on refugee women in Lebanon.

Three successful crowd-funding campaigns were launched on the Global Giving platform in 2020 to successfully fund both drama therapy and EMDR programmes held in Lebanon.

OUR RESPONSE TO THE 2020 BEIRUT EXPLOSION

On August 4th 2020, the port of Beirut was rocked by a cataclysmic explosion that resulted in devastating consequences, including over two hundred lives lost and over seven thousand people injured. In addition, thousands of homes and businesses were partially or fully destroyed, leaving many homeless and out of work.

Within one month, Intisar Foundation launched its Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing Therapy (EMDR) programme in partnership with Embrace, a local Lebanese NGO focused on mental health, as a response to this deeply traumatic event. EMDR is a standardised and systematic psychotherapy meant to relief symptoms of trauma and allow for a speedy recovery.

Our programmes have helped in reducing symptoms of anxiety, depression and PTSD for women affected by the 2020 Beirut blast.



33.3%

Reduction in
PTSD symptoms



31.2 %

Reduction in
Anxiety symptoms



38.7 %

Reduction in
Depression symptoms



“

If I didn't attend the desensitization and eye movement retreatment programme (EMDR), I would not have been able to go back to my normal life

”

Ms. Sara Tourjoman,
One of the women who participated in the
EMDR programme



Watch full
interview here

The Memorandum of Understanding with the USEK



On August 4th 2020, the port of Beirut was rocked by a cataclysmic explosion that resulted in devastating consequences, including over two hundred lives lost and over seven thousand people injured. In addition, thousands of homes and businesses were partially or fully destroyed, leaving many homeless and out of work.

In 2020, **Intisar Foundation** partnered with the **Holy Spirit University of Kaslik (USEK)**, the only university in the Arab world that offers a post-graduate degree in drama therapy, to launch a scholarship programme for prospective drama therapists.

From 2020, Intisar Foundation will be providing 15 annual scholarships for enthusiastic young Arab women interested to enter this field. In the long term, we strive to have educated, trained, and employed over 600 drama therapists in the Arab world who are expected to contribute to achieving the 1Million Arab Women For Peace initiative, a 30-year plan to alleviate psychological trauma in one million Arab women impacted by the brutality of war and violence through the use of drama therapy.



VISIONARY OF THE YEAR AWARD

On December 15th 2020, HH Sheikha Intisar AlSabah, Founder and Chairwoman of Intisar Foundation, was awarded the Visionary of the Year award for her philanthropic work in the Arab world at the Enterprise Agility Awards by Entrepreneur Middle East.

The award was received by HH Sheikha Mounira Basil AlSabah and HH Sheikha Alanoud Basil AlSabah, daughters of HH Sheikha Intisar AlSabah.

Entrepreneur
MIDDLE EAST



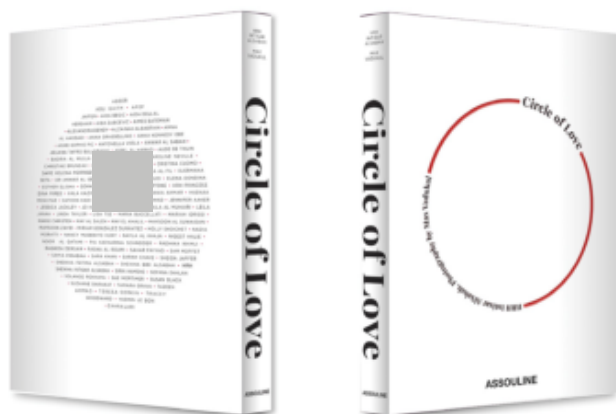
FUNDRAISING ACTIVITIES



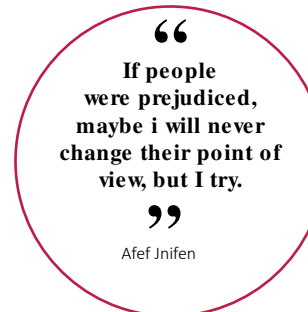
CIRCLE OF LOVE BOOK LAUNCH

On January 29, 2020, HH Sheikha Intisar AlSabah officially launched the "Circle of Love" book at the Cap Gallery in Kuwait. The book features deeply personal stories of resilience of 87 magnanimous women from Kuwait, the MENA region, and around the world, including Princess Dina Mired of Jordan, Afef Jnifen, Yasmin Le Bon, Radhika Khimji, Maria Buccellati, as well as HH Sheikha Intisar herself.

Illustrated by Max Vadukul, a world-renowned British photographer noted for his portrait photography, the book sends a powerful message of support to all women, encouraging them to be heard and seen through vocal and visual expressions of their own merited stories. All proceeds of the book purchase go to the Intisar Foundation.



<https://intisarfoundation.org/circle-of-love/>

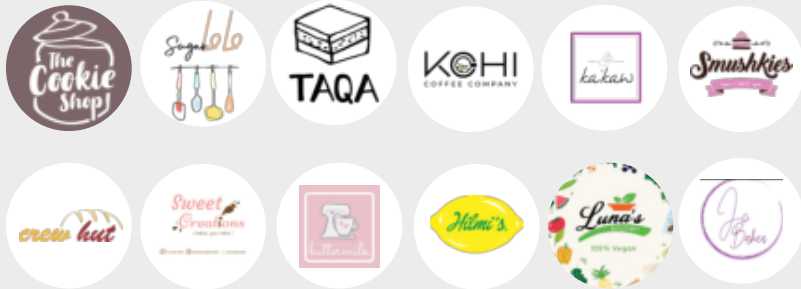


INTISAR FOUNDATION FOR MENTAL HEALTH: COPING WITH TRAUMA

During the Intisar Foundation's fundraising event held in partnership with Laban Studio and Antwork attendees got an opportunity to experience some of the elements of drama therapy live. Actors from Laban Studio presented a playback theatre session, allowing attendees to share traumatic personal stories and have them enacted in an improvisational manner. This event aimed to raise awareness on Intisar Foundation's work by enabling the active participation of the audience.



Sponsors



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SUCCESS STORY OF THE YEAR:

Fatima Khalife: *From Being a Refugee to Becoming an Entrepreneur*

Achieving success despite adversity, war and displacement is a rare and difficult achievement. This year, we are proud to share the story of Ms Fatima Khalife.

Ms Khalife is a Syrian refugee woman who fled to Lebanon in search of Peace during the Syrian Civil War. However, in crowded alleys of refugee camps, she found only what proved to be a new ordeal. Throughout her life in Lebanon, Ms Khalife struggled to find fair and decent employment. In 2018, she joined the first drama therapy programme implemented by Intisar Foundation in Shatila camp. After over 18 sessions, Ms Khalife was able to renew her personal strength and confidence which had previously been buried due to years spent in a struggle for survival.

In early 2020, Ms Fatima Khalife launched **JANA Studio**, a cooperative traditional embroidery business. She started out with only three employees, blooming to over 35 employees within 14 months. Fatima's business employs refugee and local women in the art of bespoke traditional Arabic embroidery. In mid-2020, she reached out to Intisar Foundation to implement the same programme she had benefitted from years ago for her own employees.





“

I definitely see a difference in them, they are more productive, happier, and less stressed after the Intisar Foundation programme.

”

Fatima Khalife said upon the completion of the drama therapy programme implemented by Intisar Foundation.

We salute women like Fatima Khalife, who did not give up in the face of adversity, and continued their journeys with their heads held high.

SEEDS OF PEACE

DOCUMENTARY

The "Seeds of Peace" documentary depicts one woman's journey towards Peace after attending our group drama therapy sessions. It provides an insight into the implementation of the drama therapy programme by Intisar Foundation in Jordan.

While the Intisar Foundation's focus is on providing mental health support to Arab women affected by war and violence, our work in Jordan is dedicated to the victims of domestic violence to a large extent due to a higher need for focusing on this societal issue there.

"It felt like someone was holding me and embracing me because I was very tired," said Mona, one of our 1 Million Arab Women For Peace.



Watch full
documentary here

THEY SAID ABOUT INTISAR FOUNDATION



Online and Print Media

marie claire Entrepreneur MIDDLE EAST WOMAN Forbes VOGUE

MAKING CHANGE HAPPEN

H.E. SHEIKHA INTISAR SALEM AL ALI AL SABAH

The founder of the Intisar Foundation—who is also a princess of the Kuwaiti royal family and a serial entrepreneur—is on a mission to empower one million Arab women

by TAMARA POPIC

Globally, one woman emerges about Arab women in all general, which that they are less likely to be active members of society. However, my hope is that those of you who read this could not be further from the truth. In Kuwait, for instance, female citizens outnumber male citizens in the workforce. Last year, the country appointed three women among the eight new ministers in Kuwait's latest cabinet, one of them being the first woman to hold the post of Minister of Interior in a Gulf state. Indeed, when I talk with H.E. Sheikha Intisar Salem Al Ali Al Sabah, a princess of Kuwait's ruling royal family, the House of Al Sabah, she asserts that Kuwaiti women have had greater economic independence and a voice in domestic and international affairs ever since the 1970s. Al Sabah herself is sufficient proof of that. After being a full-time mother to her five daughters,

Al Sabah was 35 when she decided to test the waters in the business environment by taking up a board position at Selfinvesting Industries and Storage Company SAK, her family business, and one of the first air-conditioning companies in the Gulf. "I realized that I didn't like being idle," she says. "I need to read a lot, and attend a lot of training courses, so I was not the usual kind of a stay-at-home mother sitting in coffee shops. For that kind of person, it was easy to transition to business. However, I didn't have experience, and there was nothing I could compare it to, so the hardest part was knowing how well I was actually doing, knowing my value."

Over the next eight years, she climbed the corporate ladder to become the Chairwoman and Managing Director of the company, having fully restructured the business that had been through the turmoil of overvalued, loans, and "lots of open projects with lots of problems."



March 2020 ENTREPRENEUR MIDDLE EAST 209

INNOVATOR



"WE DID CHANGE THE FACE OF THE MAGAZINES IN THE ARAB WORLD, AND HOW THEY ADDRESSED WOMEN, AND HOW FEMALE CELEBRITIES WERE PORTRAYED IN ARABIC MAGAZINES."

In 2011, Al Sabah says, it started to dawn on her that, although she was doing the work, she was not making a real difference to the world at large. "After thinking up the idea, I realized that this business was not what I wanted to do until the end of my life," she says. "It did not bring me pleasure. I liked the challenge, because, in my life to live a peaceful and you have to know where to put each piece, and check whether and how it fits. So, in that sense, I liked the energy of getting things done, but my passion was doing." That was when she launched Intisar Publishing, a Kuwait-based media house where publications were aimed at enhancing people's mental and physical well-being. With the motto "Yes, but simply better," Intisar Publishing's portfolio included Good Health Arabia, a monthly magazine promoting optimal health and wellbeing for women and families, and Horizons of Travel Arabia, a quarterly magazine dedicated to passionate travelers. "We did change the face of the magazines in the Arab world, and how they addressed women, and how female celebrities were portrayed in Ar-

abic magazines," Al Sabah says, noting how Intisar Publishing stood out in the market. "It used to be mostly about fashion, beauty, and gossip. We would not have covered women on the cover. We would have a celebrity looking around but not say. To me, all of that was very disappointing to women. Women in the Gulf are extremely educated, and to give them these with those topics, was simply unacceptable for me."

In 2012, Intisar Publishing released The Alchemy of Wisdom, a book that celebrated the achievements of 40 inspirational Kuwaitis, and, more recently, Al Sabah published Circle of Love, which had 47 prominent, powerful, and resilient women from all over the world share their personal stories and insights.

For other women to learn from. All the proceeds from the book go to Al Sabah's Intisar Foundation for women affected by war. Before we delve into more details about her work with the foundation, it is worth also noting other businesses Al Sabah has initiated, including Promodige, a award-winning luxury brand she launched in 2003 with her daughter R.E. Sheikha Fatima Al Sabah, to help people manage daily stressors with color therapy. In 2007, she launched Intisar, a luxury jewelry brand whose pieces she describes as "meaningful reminders of love". Al Sabah explains, "50% of proceeds from Intisar go to the Intisar Foundation. I realized that women like giving, but after a while you get tired of giving. Charity can be depleting for many reasons, so I thought of making something, which is considered a gift, and it's not charity. It makes both the buyer and the recipient happy. In addition to the donations that we receive, we are also trying to sustain the Intisar Foundation by having products to sell."

Intisar Foundation's Drama Therapy Heals Arab Women Effected By Wars

Jackie Abramson Contributor @ ForbesWomen

I cover women social entrepreneurs, peace builders and change agents.



Intisar Foundation is the world's first and only nonprofit, charitable organization that offers...
[+] INTISAR FOUNDATION

Women comprise 50 percent of the over 25 million refugees, internally displaced, or stateless population worldwide. Of the nearly 80 million displaced people worldwide, over 50 percent are from the Arab region. With the Arab world plundered in escalated militarism and wars, over one million Syrian refugees live in Lebanon—nearly 70 percent live below the poverty line, one in four suffers from anxiety, one in three from depression and two-thirds of Syrian refugees in Lebanon have post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

HH Sheikha Intisar is Empowering Arab Women Through This Innovative Form of Therapy

by SHEKHANABEEN

HH Sheikha Intisar Al Sabah is helping heal a generation of traumatized women using a novel form of therapy to tap into their inner power.



NEW BOARD MEMBERS AND TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

In 2020, our Intisar Foundation family grew with new appointments on our Board and Technical Committee.

NON-EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBERS



Mr. Christian Nakhlé

International advisor
and board member



Mrs. Karma Ekmekji

Advisor and
board member



Mr. Philip Stoltzfus

Advisor and
board member

TECHNICAL COMMITTEE



Dr. Lina H Kriedie

Advisor and
technical committee



Mr. Yasser Dhouib

Technical Committee
advisor and fundraising
expert



Dr. Nisha Sajnani

Head of Drama Therapy
department at New York
University

OUR PARTNERS

FUNDING PARTNERS



EDUCATION PARTNERS



MEDIA PARTNERS



FIELD PARTNERS



BASMEH & ZEITOONEH
RELIEF & DEVELOPMENT

OTHER PARTNERS



BE PART OF OUR PEACE MISSION

\$350

To cover drama therapy sessions to self-empower one woman.

\$1000

To cover a full drama therapy programme to empower one woman.

\$1600

To cover one drama therapy session to empower 15 women.

\$20000

To cover a full drama therapy programme in Lebanon and Jordan



GET IN TOUCH

Intisar Foundation is apolitical, not profit-making, and secular. Additionally, Intisar Foundation's activities are undertaken without discrimination, direct or indirect, because of race, ethnicity, religion or faith, status of nationality, gender, handicapped status, or any other circumstances.

For more information, please visit



IntisarFoundation



IntisarFoundation



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IntisarFoundation.org

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Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN48AS
Charity
UK Registration Charity Number: 1182384

**ACT
for
PEACE**