

Narrative Report

GiveOut aims to keep our reporting requirements proportionate to the size of the grants awarded, minimising the administrative burden on our grant partners. If you have already submitted a narrative report to another funder covering a similar period as your grant from GiveOut, you may submit that report instead of using this template and we will follow up if we require any additional information. Alternatively, you can opt for a video call with GiveOut's Head of Grant-Making to provide a verbal report instead of completing this document.

Section 1: General Information

Organisation name	Hemaya Lejami AL-Mouhamashin
Contact person	Sandy Mteirek, Executive Director
Location(s) (areas, countries, regions)	1st Floor, Daghilian Building, Mar-Mikhael, Beirut, Lebanon
Start date of grant period	01/08/2023
End date of grant period	31/08/2024
Amount of funding received	GBP 20,445
Amount of funding spent	GBP 20,445

1.1 Please provide information on any significant changes that may have affected your work in the past year, such as changes in government, shifts in LGBTQI movement building, funding variations, or notable environmental, political, or social issues.

In the wake of the current crisis and ongoing war, Lebanon has witnessed significant displacement of individuals from high-risk "red zone" areas such as the Beirut suburbs and the south of Lebanon and Bekaa. As an LGBTQIA+ rights NGO traditionally focused on advocacy and human rights, we recognize the urgent need to support our community members during these challenging times. Drawing from our experience during the 2020 Beirut Blast, we have mobilized an emergency response to address the immediate needs of war affected and displaced LGBTQIA+ individuals and their families.

Our helpline has received an overwhelming number of requests, exceeding 800, from war-affected and displaced queer individuals seeking assistance. Many are living with friends or family members in unsafe and non inclusive overcrowded conditions across different regions of Lebanon. While we have been able to provide shelter and daily meals to 40 individuals (with plans to reach 50) in locations such as Ashrafieh, Gemayze, Jal Dib, and Byblos, we have identified a critical need for food support among those who are not housed in our shelters. Given our limited staff and volunteer capacity, providing daily hot meals to individuals dispersed throughout the country has become logistically challenging.

It's important to note that while we have received numerous requests for cash assistance, we didn't provide cash support. Instead, we focused our limited resources on delivering essential in-kind services such as shelter, food, and medical support directly to those in need.

Our Emergency Response

To effectively address these needs, we have established an emergency response team comprising five specialized committees:

1. **Shelter Committee:** Securing safe accommodations for displaced individuals.
2. **Food Committee:** Providing nutritional support through hot meals and food parcels.
3. **Health Committee:** Supplying hygiene kits and managing medication needs.
4. **Helpline Extension:** Operating from 9 AM to midnight, including weekends, to document requests and provide immediate assistance or referrals.
5. **Assessment Committee:** Evaluating the needs of individuals based on helpline documentation to prioritize assistance effectively.

1.2 Please list any governance or executive staff changes within the past year, including roles affected and the reasons for these changes, if relevant.

Over the past year, Helem has undergone significant changes at the executive and governance levels. The Executive Director (ED) transitioned out of their role, and a new ED has been appointed to lead the organization. This change marks a pivotal moment for Helem, as the new ED is actively reshaping the organization's strategy and action plans to better align with its mission and objectives.

The new ED is focused on reinvigorating Helem's advocacy efforts across all departments, ensuring a cohesive and impactful approach to LGBTQIA+ rights in Lebanon. Additionally, this leadership change has sparked the reactivation of key activities and initiatives within Helem, further solidifying its role as a leading voice for the community.

In December 2023, Helem formed its first advisory council, representing a major milestone in the organization's governance. The advisory council provides strategic guidance and oversight, supporting the leadership in achieving Helem's vision and strengthening its impact. This addition enhances Helem's governance structure and reflects its commitment to transparency, accountability, and community-centered leadership.

These developments underscore Helem's dedication to adapting and evolving in response to the needs of the LGBTQIA+ community while ensuring robust governance and operational frameworks.

Section 2: Narrative Reporting

2.1 Please summarise the work your organisation undertook during the grant period. Include a short summary of key programs, activities, and achievements.

I - To establish a comprehensive and accessible online resource hub (LGBTQIA+ Nexus Q&A) that addresses key topics related to SOGIESC (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics), family, religion and faith, health, politics and history, and law. This initiative aims to empower LGBTQIA+ individuals and allies by providing accurate, relevant, and localized information in an inclusive and user-friendly format.

Impact

The LGBTQIA+ Nexus Q&A will serve as a vital tool for community members, advocates, and allies seeking reliable information on issues impacting LGBTQIA+ individuals in the Middle East and beyond. By addressing gaps in accessible resources, the Nexus Q&A will contribute to greater awareness, advocacy efforts, and individual empowerment.

Key Objectives

1. **Enhance Accessibility:** Create an easy-to-navigate online platform that delivers concise, accurate, and culturally relevant answers to common questions.
2. **Empower Individuals:** Provide LGBTQIA+ individuals with the tools and knowledge to address personal, social, and legal challenges.
3. **Support Advocacy:** Strengthen the capacity of activists and allies by equipping them with well-researched information to advance LGBTQIA+ rights.
4. **Foster Community Engagement:** Encourage interaction and feedback to ensure the platform reflects evolving needs and priorities.

Outputs

1. Development of a user-friendly Q&A section integrated into the NGO's existing website.
2. Creation of a database with answers to 100+ commonly asked questions related to LGBTQIA+ topics.
3. Translation of the Q&A content into multiple languages (e.g., Arabic and English) to enhance accessibility for diverse audiences.
4. Marketing and promotion plan to raise awareness about the resource among community members and allies.

5. Training sessions for staff and volunteers on using and promoting the Nexus Q&A effectively.

Outcomes

1. **Increased Knowledge:** Community members will have greater awareness and understanding of issues related to SOGIESC, family, religion, health, politics, and law.
2. **Improved Advocacy:** Activists and allies will use the platform to support their work and amplify their impact in advancing LGBTQIA+ rights.
3. **Enhanced Support:** LGBTQIA+ individuals will feel more informed and confident in addressing challenges, fostering a sense of agency and resilience.
4. **Community Growth:** The platform will foster stronger connections between the organization and the communities it serves, creating a feedback loop for ongoing improvement.

II- To foster community engagement, build solidarity, and promote acceptance of LGBTQIA+ individuals through targeted focus groups and the Family Solidarity Initiative Program. These initiatives aim to create safe spaces for knowledge sharing, self-expression, and capacity building for both LGBTQIA+ individuals and their families, ultimately enhancing understanding, reducing stigma, and building inclusive networks of support.

Impact

Through the focus groups and the Family Solidarity Initiative, Helem has successfully built bridges within the LGBTQIA+ community and between queer individuals and their families. These programs have directly contributed to community empowerment, emotional resilience, and greater societal acceptance of LGBTQIA+ rights.

Key Objectives

1. **Empower Community Members:** Create specialized focus groups for clubs and committees (e.g., Economic Club, Literature Club...) to nurture talents, develop skills, and encourage collaboration within the LGBTQIA+ community.
2. **Promote Family Acceptance:** Equip families of LGBTQIA+ individuals with the knowledge and tools necessary to foster acceptance, reduce stigma, and strengthen family bonds through the Family Solidarity Initiative Program.
3. **Encourage Dialogue:** Provide safe, moderated spaces for open discussions on social, cultural, and economic topics that affect LGBTQIA+ individuals and their families.

Outputs

1. Conducted 12 focus group sessions across various clubs and committees, with over 120 participants actively engaged in discussions and workshops.
2. Delivered three capacity-building workshops for families of queer individuals under the Family Solidarity Initiative Program, reaching 30 families.
3. Developed and disseminated educational materials tailored to families and allies, focusing on understanding SOGIESC and addressing biases.
4. Strengthened ties between Helem and its community members, fostering a sense of belonging and active participation in organizational activities.

Outcomes

1. **Skill Development and Networking:** Participants in the Economic Club and Literature Club focus groups reported enhanced skills, greater confidence, and stronger networks within the LGBTQIA+ community.
2. **Improved Family Relationships:** Families who participated in the Family Solidarity Initiative reported increased understanding, improved communication, and greater acceptance of their queer children.
3. **Empowered Community Advocacy:** Focus groups helped nurture new leaders and advocates within the community, contributing to greater visibility and collective action for LGBTQIA+ rights.
4. **Cultural Shifts:** Family-focused programs contributed to a cultural shift by fostering understanding and dismantling prejudices, creating ripple effects within their broader social networks.

Integration with the LGBTQIA+ Nexus Q&A

Insights and feedback gathered from the focus groups and Family Solidarity Initiative were instrumental in shaping the content of the LGBTQIA+ Nexus Q&A. By addressing the most pressing questions and concerns raised during these sessions, the Nexus Q&A became a more comprehensive and responsive resource for the LGBTQIA+ community and their families.

2.2 Please describe how this work led to progress for the LGBTQI community, and where possible, include any evidence to demonstrate this. For example, how did

the work increase capacity, change attitudes, create safety and protection, build community, or lead to changes in laws, policies, or practices? If there were any challenges or barriers, please also briefly mention these.

Helem's work in the community center, Nexus, capacity building, and digital security over the past year has significantly contributed to advancing LGBTQIA+ rights in Lebanon and beyond. These efforts have not only increased the organization's internal capacity but have also created ripple effects that directly benefit the LGBTQIA+ community in terms of safety, advocacy, and empowerment.

1. Increased Internal Capacity and Efficiency:

Eight staff members completed specialized training programs that strengthened Helem's operational and programmatic effectiveness. For example:

- The **Administrative Coordinator's training in global human rights frameworks** enabled better alignment of administrative processes with international standards, streamlining documentation and enhancing efficiency by 20%.

2. Enhanced Community Engagement and Services:

- **Art therapy integration** into our advocacy lab diversified programming and improved the mental health of over 50 community members in just three months. This holistic approach supported community members' emotional well-being while fostering safe spaces for expression.
- Outreach-focused training improved stakeholder engagement, elevating Helem's credibility and forming partnerships with three new organizations, amplifying the organization's reach and advocacy efforts.
- The introduction of advanced project management and **Programs Management certifications** streamlined resource allocation and improved service delivery, benefiting over 200 community members in the last quarter alone.

3. Strengthened Advocacy and Documentation Efforts:

- Training in **proposal writing and business development** enhanced the HRV Documentation Coordinator's grant-writing capacity, raising Helem's potential for securing future funds. This allowed us to expand human rights violations (HRV) documentation efforts, leading to a 30% increase in reported and analyzed cases.
- Skills in coaching and psychological flexibility fortified team resilience, boosting retention rates in advocacy workshops by 25%.

4. Safety and Protection Through Digital Security:

As part of our capacity-building initiatives, digital security measures were strengthened to protect sensitive data and community members' confidentiality. This has been instrumental in creating a safer environment for LGBTQIA+ individuals accessing Helem's services.

Evidence of Progress:

- The enhanced administrative and financial processes have led to measurable improvements in operational efficiency and donor relations.
- Expanded programming and outreach efforts have directly impacted over 250 community members through improved service delivery, mental health support, and advocacy activities.
- New partnerships have bolstered Helem's advocacy efforts, increasing visibility and impact at local and regional levels.
- The 30% increase in HRV documentation demonstrates tangible progress in addressing and analyzing human rights violations faced by LGBTQIA+ individuals.

Challenges and Barriers:

Despite these successes, Helem faced challenges, including resource limitations and an increasingly hostile environment for LGBTQIA+ advocacy in Lebanon. The economic and political instability in the country presented barriers to scaling our efforts, but Helem's investment in capacity building ensured resilience and adaptability in the face of these difficulties.

By focusing on strategic capacity building, Helem has positioned itself as a stronger, more effective advocate for LGBTQIA+ rights, creating meaningful change for the community while laying the groundwork for continued progress in the years to come.

Section 3: Stories

In this section, please bring your work to life with stories, including individual experiences and/or quotes from LGBTQI activists, volunteers, employees, event or workshop participants, re-grant partners, or any other community members. Below is a suggested format you could use.

Situation

- Describe the context or situation that necessitated this work. If the case study is about a project, explain why it was needed and what issues it aimed to address.
- If the case study focuses on an individual, what challenges or circumstances led them to seek support?
- If the case study is about a longer-term advocacy piece, what are you advocating for, and why is this important to the community or broader movement?

Task

- What were the key tasks or objectives that needed to be accomplished to address the situation? Outline any initial planning, specific challenges, or obstacles that needed to be overcome?

Action

- Detail the specific actions you took to address the task or situation. Include information on the approach, strategies employed, resources used, and why these actions were critical to achieving your goals.

Result

- If the case study has a completed outcome, what was the result of your actions? Describe the impact of the work on the individual or community, and any measurable changes or successes.
- For ongoing projects or long-term advocacy efforts, what are the intended outcomes and impacts? How do you anticipate these efforts will address the initial situation and benefit the community in the future?

3.1 Please share a story that brings your life to work, including quotes where possible

Situation

During the recent war, Helem encountered a displaced individual, a young man from the LGBTQIA+ community who, along with his family, sought shelter and safety. He came from a conservative background and carried deeply ingrained stereotypes and stigmas about LGBTQIA+ individuals, particularly transgender people. His displacement not only placed him in a vulnerable position but also exposed him to a diverse group of individuals within Helem’s shelter network, many of whom were members of the LGBTQIA+ community. His initial interactions were marked by hesitance, discomfort, and a lack of understanding.

At the same time, Helem faced an increased need to advocate for the importance of our work among partner organizations. The urgency of the crisis demonstrated the critical role we play in supporting vulnerable communities, while also highlighting the need for collaboration and understanding among stakeholders.

Task

The key tasks involved addressing the young man’s immediate needs for safety, shelter, and emotional support while fostering a supportive and inclusive environment. Simultaneously, our outreach team worked to engage partner organizations, emphasizing the significance of our mandate and the necessity of LGBTQIA+ focused support during crises.

Specific challenges included:

- His initial resistance to engaging with LGBTQIA+ individuals due to his pre-existing biases.
- Ensuring that our support services met both the practical and emotional needs of displaced individuals.
- Gaining the trust and collaboration of external organizations unfamiliar with our mission and approach.

Action

Helem’s team provided him and his family with safe shelter, food, and basic necessities while also introducing them to the community environment fostered within the shelter. He was exposed to LGBTQIA+ individuals, including

transgender members of the community, through daily interactions, shared meals, and open conversations facilitated by Helem’s staff.

Our team prioritized inclusive dialogue and education, creating spaces for him to ask questions and confront his biases in a safe and respectful manner. Community members shared their personal stories, offering him a perspective he had never encountered before.

In parallel, our outreach team engaged with partner organizations, sharing case studies, emphasizing our commitment to our mandate, and showcasing the direct impact of our work during the crisis. By hosting joint meetings and providing transparency about our processes, we strengthened our relationships with these organizations and demonstrated the unique value of our services.

Result

His transformation was remarkable. Through his interactions with the community, he not only shed many of the stereotypes he held but also developed a deep respect for the individuals he met. In his words:

"I came here thinking I knew who ‘they’ were. I leave knowing that we are all just people, each carrying our own pain and strength. I’ve found hope here—hope I didn’t think I could feel during this war."

His journey serves as a testament to the power of dialogue and inclusion in breaking down barriers and fostering understanding. His family, too, expressed gratitude for the care and support they received, recognizing the humanity and resilience of the LGBTQIA+ community.

For Helem, this experience strengthened our relationships with partner organizations, who came to better understand the importance of our mandate. One organization representative remarked:

"Your work is essential, not just for the LGBTQIA+ community but for everyone. You are showing us how to build bridges even in the most difficult times."

Intended Outcomes

For him and others like him, these experiences foster lasting change in perspectives and contribute to breaking the cycle of stigma. On a broader level, Helem’s advocacy and outreach efforts aim to ensure that more organizations understand and support LGBTQIA+ rights as integral to humanitarian responses. By continuing this work, we aim to create a more inclusive and equitable society, even amidst crisis.

3.2 Please attach any photos, videos, printed materials, publications, newsletters, leaflets, illustrations or other materials that could be used to promote your work.

N/A

Section 4: Partner Support

Through GiveOut's LGBTQI Legal Aid Fund, we have global law firms available to provide pro-bono legal services to our grant partners. Are there any areas where you could benefit from pro-bono legal services? If so, please describe the project or work required, and how legal support could assist.

Request for Pro-Bono Legal Services

We are planning to reactivate Helem's legal aid program within the advocacy department in 2025, aiming to address the legal needs of the LGBTQIA+ community in Lebanon. Pro-bono legal services could significantly enhance the effectiveness and reach of this initiative by supporting the following areas:

1. **Community Legal Assistance:** Pro-bono services could assist in answering community members' legal questions on issues such as discrimination, workplace rights, housing, and family conflicts. Having access to expertise from global law firms would ensure accurate and timely responses to pressing legal concerns.
2. **Strategic Litigation:** We aim to pursue impactful legal cases to challenge discriminatory laws, policies, and practices that hinder LGBTQIA+ rights. Legal support in strategic litigation would provide us with the capacity to navigate complex cases and achieve systemic change.
3. **Legal Training and Capacity Building:** Assistance in developing training materials and conducting workshops for Helem staff and volunteers to better equip them in handling legal cases and providing community members with informed guidance.
4. **Resource Development:** Pro-bono legal support could help create a comprehensive FAQ and resource section within the LGBTQIA+ Nexus Q&A, addressing frequently asked legal questions and empowering the community with knowledge about their rights.

How Legal Support Could Assist:

- Providing expert consultations and legal advice to community members and Helem's advocacy team.
- Drafting legal documents and submissions for strategic litigation cases.
- Supporting the development of educational materials tailored to the Lebanese legal context.
- Offering guidance on navigating international human rights frameworks to bolster our advocacy efforts.

These services would play a pivotal role in ensuring the success of Helem's reactivated legal aid program, ultimately providing much-needed support and protection for LGBTQIA+ individuals while advancing systemic change through impactful advocacy.

Information sharing consent	
<p>I give my consent that any images, videos and information I have/my organisation has provided to GiveOut and The Funding Network may continue to be shared with third parties in private correspondence, on GiveOut and The Funding Network’s social media platforms and website.</p> <p>I understand that I/my organisation are free to withdraw consent at any time, particularly should security and safety concerns arise.</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

This form was completed by:

Name	Samer Dada
Role	Programs Manager
Date	December 2024