

en.v Impact Report

2019-2020





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What Keeps Us Motivated

Dear friends,

We are so excited to share with you an overview of our journey over the last two years. We have learned and changed so much, although our core values – inclusion, collaboration and compassion – have remained the same.



It would be impossible to write this introduction without addressing how distressing and challenging the last year has been for most people around the globe, particularly for those who were already lacking a social and financial safety net, and found themselves even more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. As we as a team were struggling to adjust to our own “new normal”, it was the stories of resilience and hope from these very communities that kept us going. They reminded us to listen more and better to those around us, and inspired us to become more adaptive and responsive in our work.

In these past two years, our programs and partners have become ever more interconnected and aligned, making us feel like an integral part of a gradual yet powerful movement towards a better and stronger society. A society that promotes transformative citizenship amongst its youth; that values diversity and innovation, and builds bridges between people from different backgrounds and communities. A society that is willing to question existing power relations and envision more inclusive and equitable futures. We are so grateful to be a part of this movement, and can't wait for what comes next.



Vision

A united, compassionate and resilient society

Mission

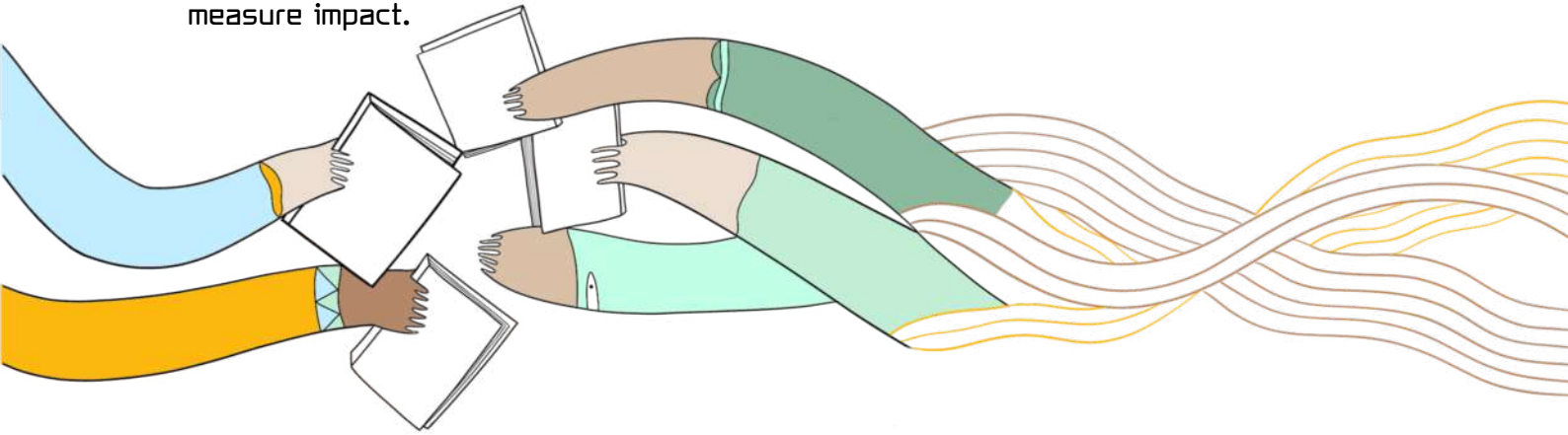
To promote more inclusive and equitable narratives and systems



Our Priorities

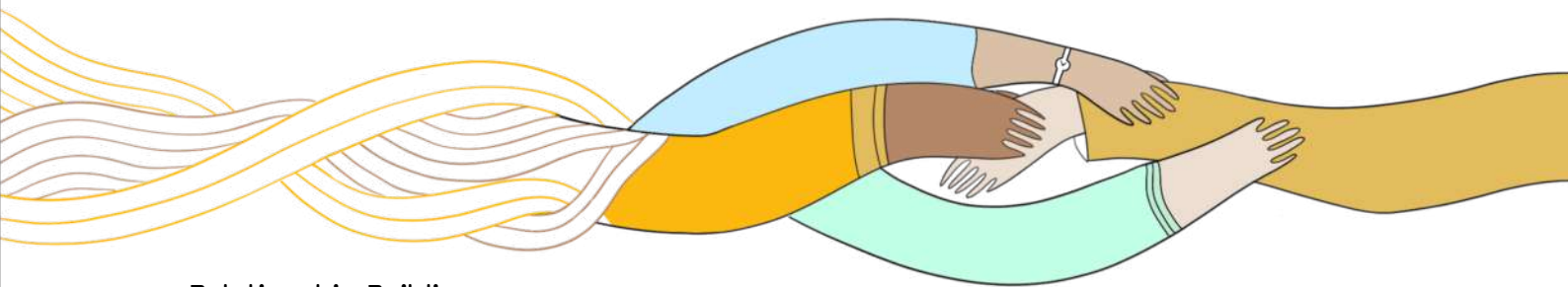
Community-Centered Design

Through participatory research, feedback loops and storytelling, we gather input and experiences from the community to help identify priority areas, inform strategies and measure impact.



Collective Impact

We regularly bring together change-makers and diverse members of the community in safe spaces to share experiences and insights, identify alignment and synergies, and construct a shared vision for change.

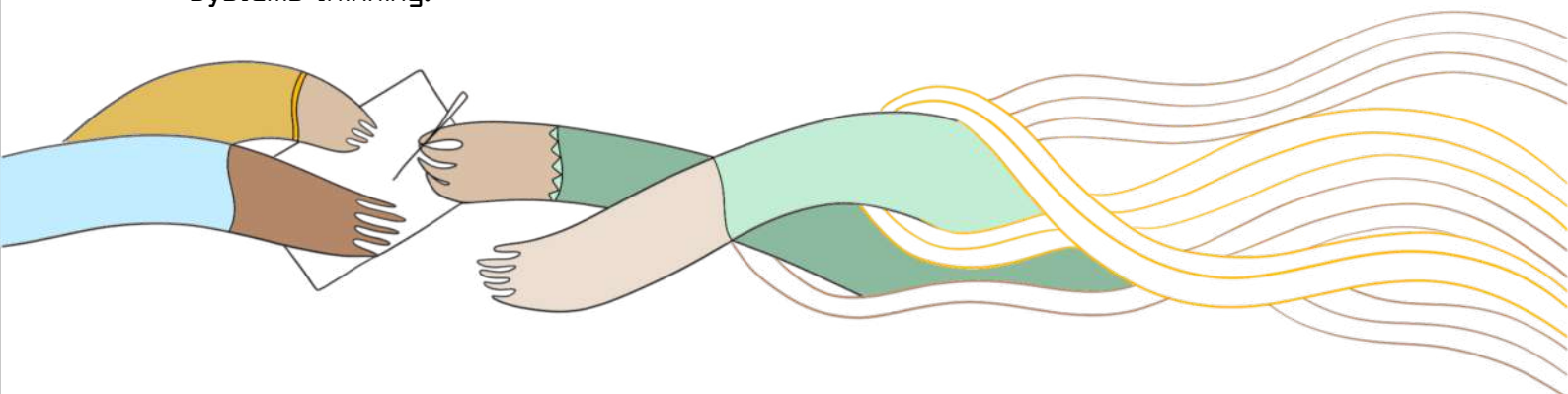


Relationship Building

In order to truly come together as a more resilient community, it is important that we create spaces to have difficult conversations about our assumptions and biases, and that we recognize our own and each other's agency and potential.

Learning

We are always learning – from each other, our partners, and our community – and piloting new models and approaches inspired by the arts, academia, design and systems thinking.

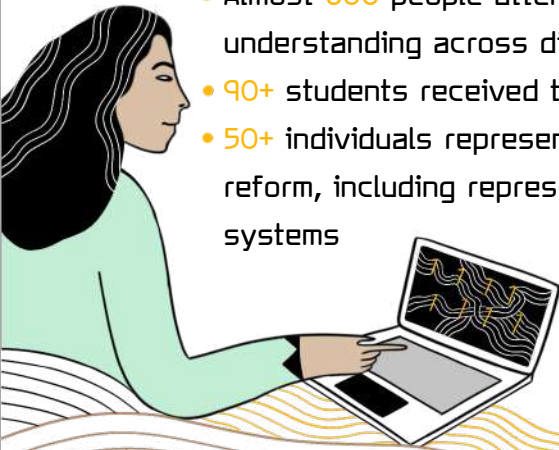


The Numbers Tell a Tale

A tale of how diversity, inclusion and collaboration have the power to generate change. Of how process and community-building are key to achieving real social impact. Over the past two years:




- Almost **600** people attended our public events promoting greater dialogue and understanding across diverse communities
- **90+** students received training in compassionate thinking
- **50+** individuals representing **25+** institutions joined our coalition for educational reform, including representatives from diverse backgrounds and education systems



- Over **50%** of these individuals are active members, participating in monthly strategy meetings and developing collaborative strategies within their working groups
- **30+** people become involved in the field of migrant rights for the first time following their participation in our BUILD program
- **14** new collaborations were sparked to support vulnerable migrant communities
- **22,500** migrant workers benefited directly from collaborations initiated through our programs

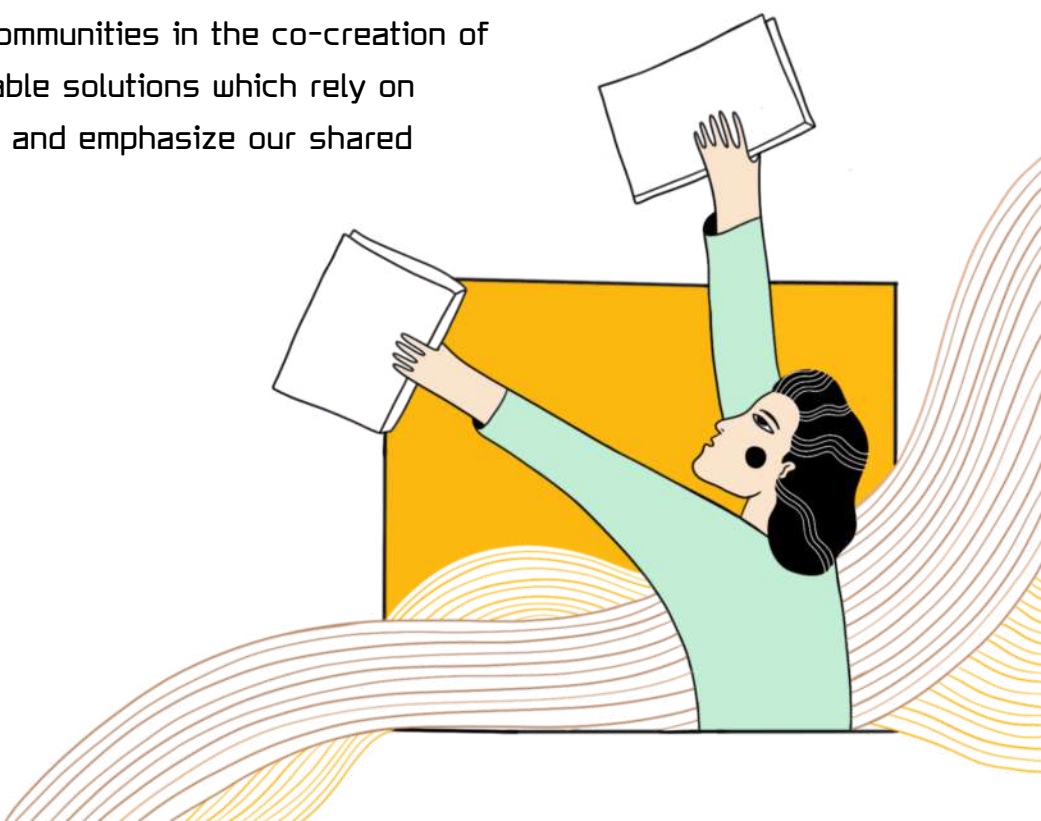


Stories of Impact



Our work over the past two years has primarily been focused on bringing people together across sectors and communities to exchange experiences and insights, and collaboratively develop locally-relevant, ambitious and people-centric solutions to shared challenges. Our coalition for educational reform, now in its third year, has become a space in which educators, students, parents, administrators and stakeholders across the civic, private and public sectors collectively strategize to promote bottom-up change within the educational system, continuously expanding our understanding of what is needed and what is possible.

Through our BUILD program, we have been able to put the voices and lived experiences of migrant communities at the center of initiatives meant to serve them, starting with the COVID-19 response; we have also created opportunities for youth, CSOs, designers, academics and other allies, to engage with these communities in the co-creation of innovative and sustainable solutions which rely on locally available assets and emphasize our shared responsibility.





Our community-building program, AWAKEN, has consistently created safe and carefully curated spaces – both offline and online – which have enabled individuals of all ages and backgrounds to question some of their biases and assumptions, and (re)discover their agency and power to create change. The data, knowledge and relationships we have been able to gather throughout our programs have created the foundation for a deeper normative shift within the civic sector, one that is rooted in the concepts of responsiveness, transparency and inclusion.

Read ahead for some of our most powerful impact stories.

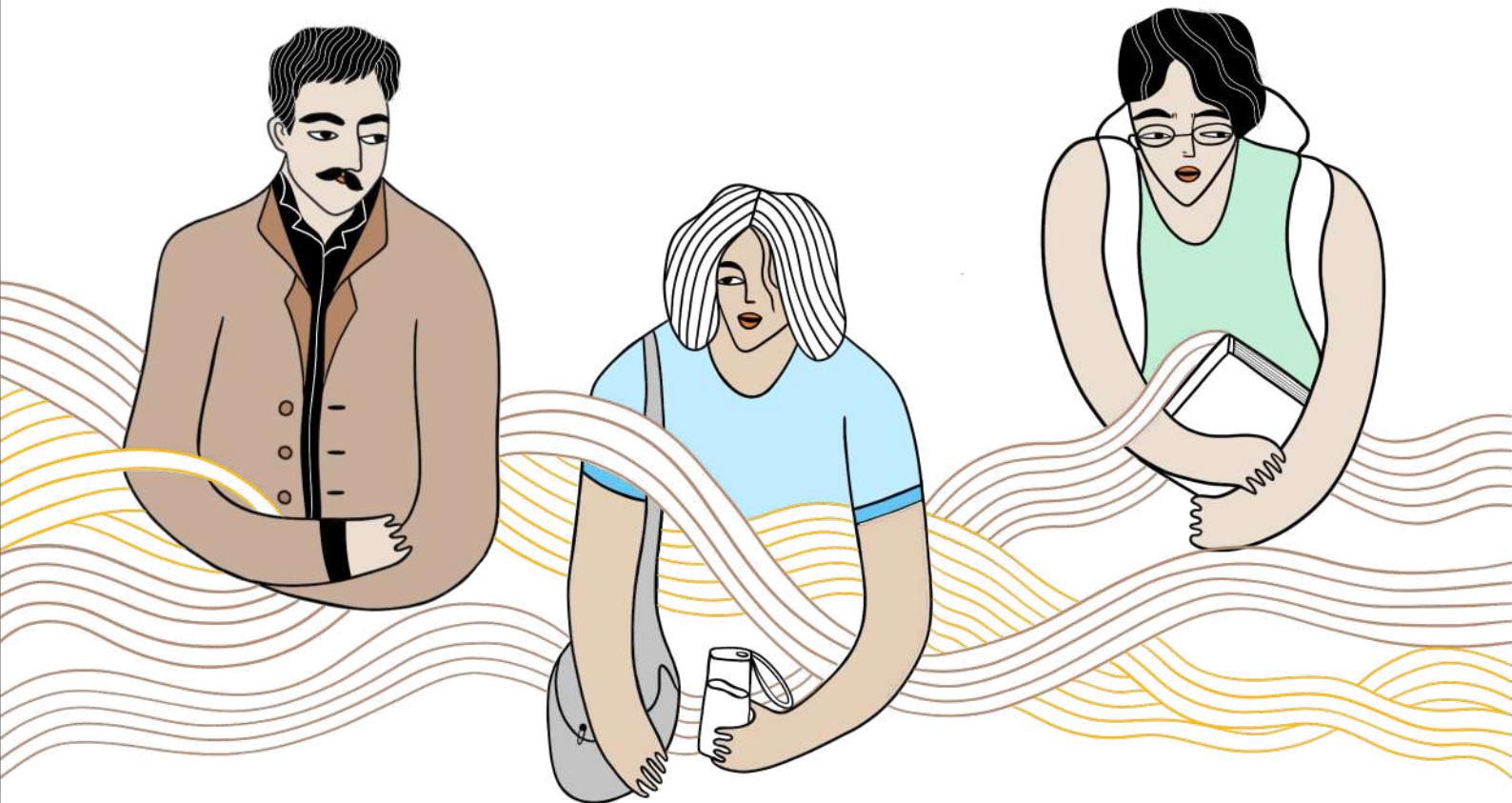
1. Creating shared meaning around 'Education'

Over the past four years, we have been asking our stakeholders across all sectors, ages, and experiences, what their top priority would be if they could tackle one issue as a community in Kuwait. What would they want to address first? And in every workshop, every survey, every focus group, and within every community, we heard "education reform". But the issues facing us in the educational system were all about lack of equity, inclusiveness and creative multidisciplinary learning. How could we address this without replicating some of the very systemic issues we wanted to address?




Two years ago, we chose to create a coalition which started to represent the community--multicultural, inclusive, and tapping into the collective knowledge of students, teachers, professors, administrators, educational consultants and researchers, private sector leaders, design thinkers and artists. Using the collective impact approach centered in equity we began working together with the goal of creating a population level shift in the educational system over the long-term.


Collective impact is a grassroots approach which requires input from all stakeholders and, rather than simply reacting to a problem, employs appreciative inquiry. It helps us look at what we want to grow in our education system, imagine how we can unleash the potential of different types of learners, and engage with diverse communities to create a shared vision for our educational future. We are still in the "runway" phase, making sure our members get the hard skills they need to implement all the necessary steps, but it has already been gratifying to be involved in a process that has young students, professors, and private sector executives working side-by-side as equal partners to advance a different kind of educational agenda.




As part of the work, we have hosted several focus groups of teachers, administrators, students and parents from private and public schools, offering participants what was often their first experience engaging with people from other educational institutions in Kuwait. One administrator from a private Indian school said that in his 35 years in Kuwait, this was the first time he had ever met administrators from other private schools. Similarly, students from different schools got to discuss their experiences within distinct educational models - Arabic, Bilingual, British, Indian, American, Canadian - and found that despite their schools' cultural differences, they were facing similar challenges. These focus groups highlighted the hunger for connection and the value of sharing knowledge and experiences with people across the community, and how rare this opportunity is in Kuwait.



The Coalition has given me a renewed sense of hope that the education culture in Kuwait can be reinvigorated. Why? Because the right people are at the table. Students, teachers, administrators, cultural, scientific, non-profit, government, and private sector are all represented. It's a wonderful group, representing all major sectors, age groups, and nationalities. It's wonderful to be provided the opportunity to work side by side with thinkers, doers, and believers in a bright future for Kuwait.



This whole experience has left me believing in real magic. Plans and a positive change in the world can be created from ideas and creativity! That's amazing! I'm proud to have been a part of such an amazing group organization and community and look forward to seeing how the ideas and goals are further continued and progress to make a real positive impact in the world.



Do you know how often people get to have those conversations here? Never. I think for some of us, making the connections between our values, worldview and work is really crucial...

2. Finding Hope in Shadows

When Laila learnt that she was one of only a few people amongst her family, neighborhood and friends that were still able to work and earn a living during the government-enforced lockdown back in March 2020, she decided to split her (already limited) time and money across each of them, in order to help pay rent, purchase food staples and in some cases, return home with dignity. When she wasn't working, she was on the phone, coordinating with people in the community that were at food and financial risk, logging their personal information on an online database, and supporting a team of social workers who were delivering aid and assistance on the ground, in the thick of the pandemic.



Living in her employers' house as a shadow teacher restricted her from being there in person, and yet she sought every possible avenue to offer her support. When the pandemic hit, Laila wasn't burdened by her own personal circumstances alone, but by that of the many people around her. She chose, with all that she had, to show up for others, even when it was really difficult to do so. Laila teaches us the value of community and the true meaning of resilience—which, as she demonstrates, doesn't lay within our capacity to forego or to simply survive adversity, but especially, in our ability to think past ourselves and to consider the whole, of which we are a part.

Laila is one of thirty very diverse, and resilient individuals who we met (virtually) and interviewed between June to September 2020. As part of our Neighborhood Tales: Kuwait Under Lockdown project, we spoke to nurses, doctors, domestic workers, teachers, parents, taxi drivers, salon workers—stepping intimately into the lives of people from thirteen different nationalities living in Kuwait, asking them to reflect on their experiences in lockdown, the ways in which they navigated being alone/ sharing space, as well as their fears and uncertainty around the pandemic and the effect it had on their financial, social and food security and access.

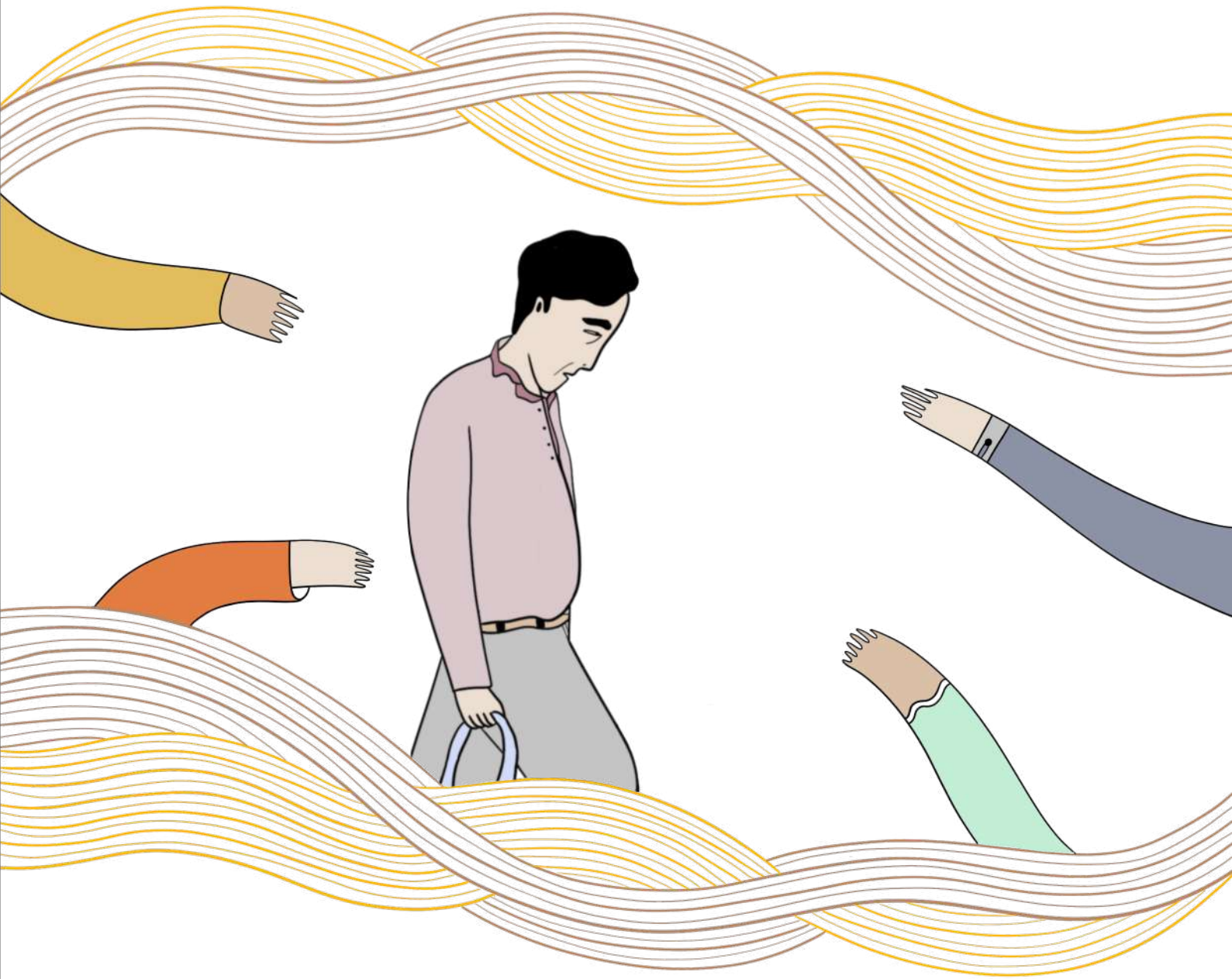
We were able to have these conversations in four different languages, with the help of our team of multilingual interviewers, and from them gathered many lessons, learnings and insights— on resilience, community, loss, hope, faith, the importance of social capital and mental health, and everything in between. These stories became central to the trainings which we then held with diverse groups, and hosted in virtual classrooms and shared online spaces with our community partners, in an effort to build compassion, promote critical thinking and envision more inclusive and equitable narratives and communities. During these sessions, participants were not only moved by the stories they heard, but also pushed to see past their own personal experiences and preconceived ideas, shifting deeper into curiosity and unlearning.



3. Organizing community during lockdown

Late one evening we got a call from our friends. As COVID-19 numbers hit a high in Kuwait, the government had opted to lock down certain areas, especially those with large numbers of expatriates, and our friends, who work to support migrant communities in Kuwait, had received over 30 calls in one night from people who were hungry and fearing eviction. Together, we spent three days calling all the official aid groups, but were still unable to access food aid for the people reaching out to us. This was due to aid platforms being directed primarily towards Arabic-speaking family groups, and their inability to cater to other languages, "single" marginal workers, not to mention trafficked or undocumented individuals. Those living paycheck-to-paycheck and sending money home had no savings to buffer them during this difficult time and were quickly thrown into vulnerable situations. Single women were particularly at risk as they could neither access aid through the platforms nor from charity trucks as it was unsafe.





In response, we asked migrant leaders to map their communities, assessing those most at risk for food, health, housing and wage security so we could understand the real situation on the ground. We quickly mobilized our network of labor and human rights lawyers, doctors, private sector executives, civil society organizations, and youth activists as well as UN representatives to organize a coordinated response based on this data mapping. Each meeting, the migrant leaders updated us on the dynamic situation on the ground, and we all left with tasks to complete to respond to emerging priorities. Everyone coordinated to make sure that culturally appropriate food boxes, baby formula and diapers, as well as PPE, masks, soap and other necessities were delivered with COVID health information translated in the target languages.

Local churches provided large warehouses to ensure the health safety of volunteers making the supply boxes and provided psycho-social support for depressed at-risk individuals. Lawyers, doctors, and local CSOs coordinated to provide accurate information and translations of materials on health protocols and changing legal issues around the Amnesty program for the diverse language groups. The migrant support associations organized for local nurses with permits to deliver aid into the lockdown areas, where community volunteers (migrant workers living there themselves) would then pick it up and deliver it to designated households in a safe and dignified manner, documenting each delivery. Private sector representatives reported on the situation with laborers in their companies and provided food boxes and trucks to deliver to the warehouses. Our UN partners relayed information about the situation on the ground to government counterparts in an effort to assist them in developing appropriate measures.

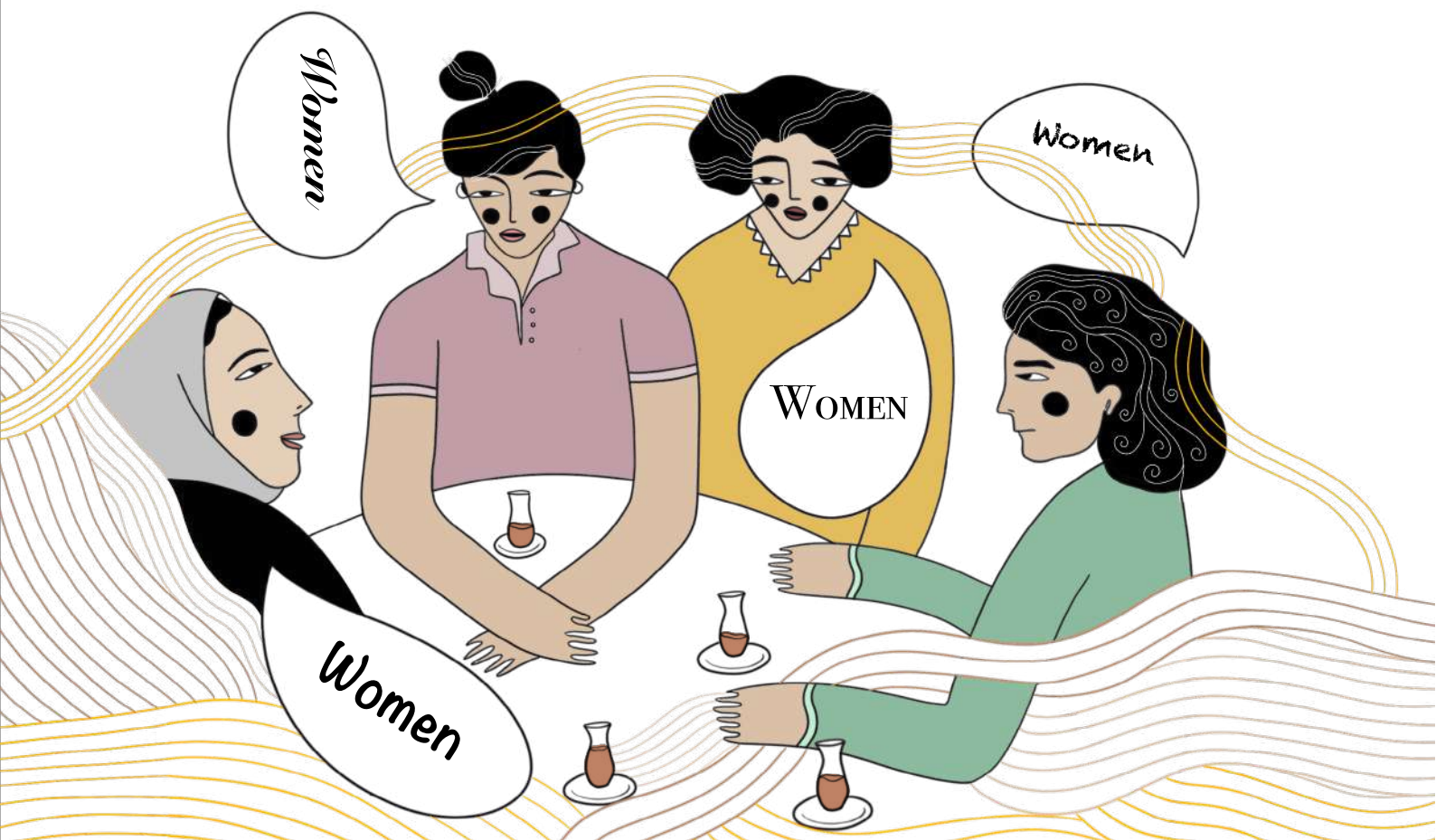


Throughout the process, we knew that our greatest assets were the knowledge and resources in the migrant community that would allow for a targeted response, and that we had more chances of coming up with creative solutions and resources if we used an inclusive multi-sectoral approach. It was amazing to see the community coming together across cultural, national, religious, age and socio-economic lines, to respond to the developing crisis effectively and humanely. By the end of the lockdown period, 24 volunteers had provided sustained aid to over 27,000 people for almost five months, working in concert with around 25 representatives within the coalition coordinating with each of their networks. Best of all, now all of these people know one another and continue to collaborate to support vulnerable migrant workers through their direct aid and advocacy.




4. Enhancing gender equality through coalition-building

Manara was a turning point for en.v, providing us with powerful learning opportunities and pushing us to do deeper work throughout all of our programs. Manara's objective was to mobilize civil society organizations to collaboratively shed light on and address women's rights issues in Kuwait through coalition-building and advocacy campaigning. We engaged a diverse group of dynamic women leaders from across the civic sector as well as creatives, professors, activists, artists, doctors and other public and private sector professionals. What these women had in common was that they had all worked on initiatives promoting the well-being and advancement of women in Kuwait. As they coalesced around a shared goal, they decided to focus their work on promoting women's safety and security. However, as we moved into creating strategies to collaborate and maximize impact, it became apparent that there was no general agreement on which "women" we were talking about. Many in the room had assumed that we were talking about Kuwaiti women only. This was the outcome of unconscious bias on the part of the coalition, but it made us step back and begin to ask questions about equity, inclusion, and intersectionality. Were non-nationals - and particularly domestic workers, the most at risk for violence and abuse - going to be excluded from our mapping and campaigning? How could we create a coalition on women's safety and security that was exclusive in practice and mindset? We decided to spend some time defining terms and values, and it was a learning process for everyone, ourselves included.




In our drive to promote a more inclusive and participatory approach, we developed data collection mechanisms that would provide us with input from women of diverse backgrounds, and organized a series of events aimed at creating safe spaces for different partners to share their lived experiences, beginning to promote shared understanding and solidarity in the process. In our first large scale community meet-up, we engaged over 300 attendees in a series of fishbowl discussions addressing challenges to women's safety and security from a legal, health and educational perspective, with all our coalition partners working together as speakers, facilitators, note-takers - but most importantly, listening to the voices of the women who had joined us. A second event we organized was a panel and community discussion on inclusion and diversity in the workplace, for which we brought together private sector leaders and executives, small businesses, social entrepreneurs and women advocates to explore the true meaning of these terms, and assess the potential and drawbacks of current initiatives being developed within the corporate sector. While Manara has continued to operate independently, collaborating with other women's groups in the push to open shelters and improve legal protections for women in Kuwait, we at en.v found our true calling - to promote more inclusive and equitable narratives and interventions across our programming.





I can't express how grateful I am for all the infinite support, for all the wonderful people I've met and amazing experiences I've had. My heart is exploding! I have so much to process. Thank you from the bottom of my heart, for welcoming me with such open arms and really listening to me and believing in my ideas. I'll never forget this!



Having felt a lot of frustration over the past few months and local incidents affecting migrant workers especially due to covid-19, this was a great space to brainstorm and throw out all possible ideas and also have the opportunity to help those teams that will take it forward. Hope to make some impact however small or big, thanks to you all!

5. Planning for impact

"How can we help civil society organizations increase their impact in the wider community?", this was the question that the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) asked us, and the question that informed our research process as we set out to assess the needs, challenges and opportunities facing their grantees - local non-profit organizations working in a variety of fields related to sustainable development. In collaboration with Dr. Melissa Langworthy and Abdullah Al Khoneini, we developed a framework that would help us gather both qualitative and quantitative data on these organizations' governance, project management, and M&E processes and experiences (amongst other things), while also identifying the structural challenges that are threatening the sector's potential of becoming a driver for long-term social change.



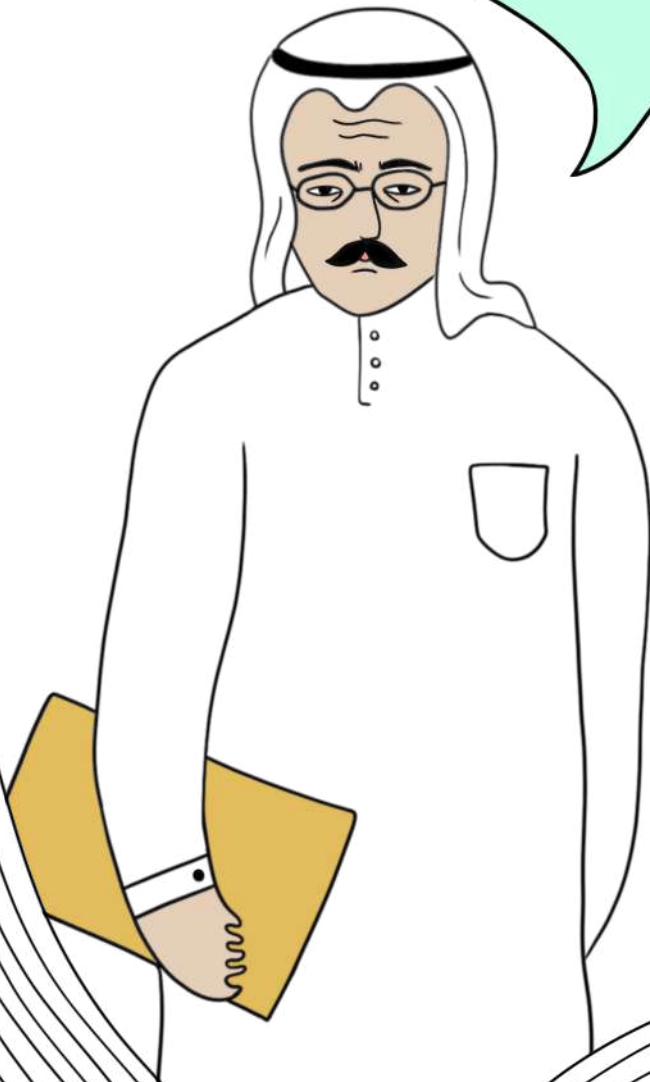
Many of the organizations we engaged in the various interviews, surveys and focus groups we conducted through the project, expressed how important it was for them to be able to voice their opinions and frustrations in a safe space, and how rare it was to have such an opportunity.



In addition to lack of capacity in specific technical areas, restrictive legislation, high turn-over of government stakeholders, the lack of investment in the sector and the importance of waste were all mentioned as issues which would need to be addressed in order for these organizations to do their work better. KFAS was also identified as a powerful ally which could lead long-term reform for the sector, particularly because of its strong relationship with both public and private stakeholders. The final report provided KFAS with a solid foundation to begin to strategize how we can help CSOs become more collaborative, effective and accountable, and fulfil their potential of becoming a bridge between the people and institutions.

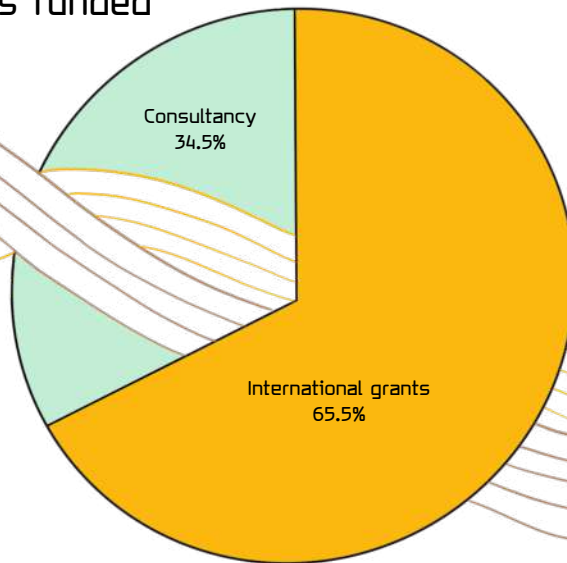
The collaborative ethos that underlay the entire process was sorely needed and beautifully subversive. I'm sure many found it a challenge to think outside the frame of the usual, highly competitive ideation but it was energizing to see that the team actively tried to foster an open, mutually helpful and community-focused space.

I for one found the absence of competitive pressure liberating to think about new ideas and really focus on the change we could help create.

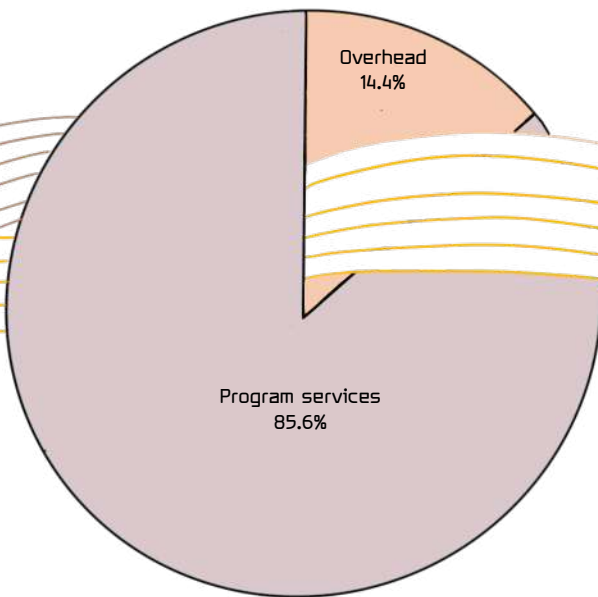


Show Me the Money

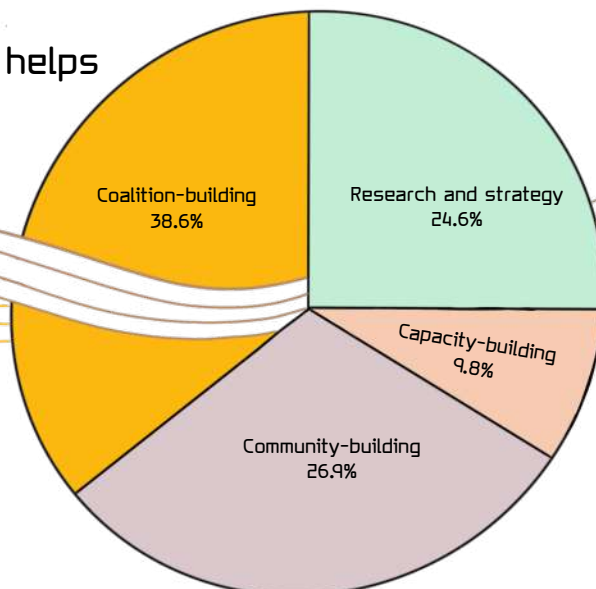
How our work is funded



Where the funding goes



How the funding helps



Our Dream Team

"What was your most powerful/profound moment working at en.v in the last two years?"

2020 has been a memorable year for all of us, for good and for bad. So much has happened within our community, and we have seen so many inspiring examples of mutual support and resilience, that it is hard for me to pinpoint one single moment. But perhaps the most rewarding experience was seeing how our BUILD Ideathon resonated with our participants. We spent so many hours with our partners at the Grey Area Collective planning every minute of the eight-day process, trying our best to create a space that felt accessible and inclusive to all; a space in which migrant workers' own voices and experiences would be placed at the heart of a truly collaborative ideation process.

Seeing it come to life was electrifying and emotional. Every day, our zoom room would become crowded with over 80 participants of 20 different nationalities joining us across 12 different time zones, feeding off of each other's energy and collective knowledge, and coming up with the most creative ideas. To me, it was a reaffirmation of my belief in the power of collective action – a reminder, amongst all the doom and gloom, that I am not crazy to be an optimist.

Elisa Franceschinis



Each time I try to think of the most profound moment, my mind goes straight to one of the many and very rich collaborations I have had the fortune of being a part of during my time at en.v. I think for me personally, I find the process of co-creation, the fusion of ideas, insights and lived experiences to be such a fertile ground for genuine and transformative impact.

I was able to experience that time and time again through AWAKEN (and beyond), with every partner, storyteller, narrator, facilitator and artist we connected with-- in the alignment of our values, the richness of our conversations and what we were able to create together. So much more becomes possible when we create something at that level—from a mutual and intentional standpoint, and from a place of trust and also vulnerability. That process for me, is always exciting to explore and is definitely profound.



Layan Al Dabt

Surprisingly it wasn't that hard for me to pinpoint my most memorable moment in the past two years. It was when I got the opportunity to take part in an oral history project not just organizing and coordinating but conducting interviews for the Neighborhood Tales project. I would have never thought myself capable of handling such a nuanced role.

My science background has over the years dictated the direction of my work which is mostly technical/analytical in nature, so having to hold space for open conversations with vulnerable migrant workers was a huge step out of my comfort zone. Being able to build trust and see them bare their inner thoughts and voice their deepest concerns and fears humbled me and made me hyper-aware of my privileges and responsibilities.

Khadija Rangwala



I am often in a room with people, asking them to be vulnerable and to think about their bias, their privilege, their sense of belonging, exclusion, what home and community and courage mean to them. I think that it is when we hit the layer where a person or a group suddenly has that “aha” moment, when they SEE the social construct that is limiting them or defining them that I get excited, or when I suddenly get a window into the mindset of the group I am working with. This idea of mindsets has come to the forefront of our work on compassion and community-building with youth. For example, in one workshop I ask students to look at a video of a charity truck delivering food as it is being mobbed by hungry laborers, and ask them to create a more safe delivery system.

Eleanor
Burton
Al Issa

They frequently “solve” the problem by bringing in many police to control the laborers seeking food, and they essentially replicate the top-down fear-based solutions that the charities and government implemented. It usually isn’t in their mindset to imagine interacting with the community in need of food, to share information, to collaborate. The students have been raised within social norms which limit the possibility of a more innovative or compassionate response which includes the affected community as co-creators and partners to solve the situation. These kinds of social constructs are what we need to address, make visible and deconstruct to start to break down divisions, create connections and collectively envision solutions that are inclusive and thoughtful, and this work feels profound and challenging to me. It’s also not the work of other people, but also my own work to continually enter that uncomfortable space where I am checking my own assumptions to recognize when I, too, am being limited by my own biases and privilege





Promoting a more united, compassionate and resilient society – within our home of Kuwait and beyond.

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