At Women for Women International we often say that whilst one woman can change anything, many women can change everything. We work with women survivors of war in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Kosovo, Nigeria, Rwanda, and South Sudan. We help them transition from crisis and poverty to stability and economic well-being via a year-long training programme. We do this by bringing women out of isolation in a safe space with other women, by providing them with skills to earn and save money so they can put food on the table and send their children to school, by providing them with access and knowledge of how to look after their and their families’ health, by providing women with the knowledge and skills so that they can make and influence decisions in their homes and community. Women are not victims of conflict, they are survivors and agents of change who can achieve the transformation they want for themselves and their families and communities with the right support.

Communities are not, of course, made up of just women and because the whole community benefits when everyone in the community is involved, we work hard at Women for Women International to engage men in our work. Men are powerful advocates for women’s empowerment, breaking down prejudices and practices which prevent women from reaching their potential.

Seeing what our programme participants achieve when they come together inspires me in the same way as seeing what the women who form part of our Leadership Circle achieve when they get together.

When we first started in the UK in 2006, it was a small group of incredibly passionate individuals who wanted to champion the voices of the women in the Women for Women International programme to a whole new audience across the UK and Europe. This has resulted in us raising over £10 million, promoting Women for Women International as a leader in the global ‘Women, Peace and Security’ movement and changing the lives of thousands of women in conflict-affected countries around the world. These wonderful women, who have also become dear friends, have played a part in changing the world.

 Appropriately, the name ‘Leadership Circle’ came from the women in our programme. Once enrolled in the training programme, women learn together in groups of 25, whilst sitting in a circle with their trainer, representing the equality of every single woman, no matter their circumstances. The social networks built up through these groups are invaluable to the women for years to come after graduation, and change not only themselves, but their families, their communities and their entire nations. Similarly, the women in the Leadership Circle are a group of leaders from a variety of backgrounds, but who are all equal and collectively serve as key partners in Women for Women International’s mission. The Circle provides a forum for informed, active engagement in our organisation and life-changing work.

With incredible energy and commitment, members do so much to enable women survivors of war to change their lives through our programmes around the world. At the same time, I know their own lives are being transformed and inspired through the experience. You can read some of their inspirational stories in this guide.

It is an honour to work with every single Leadership Circle member, and I would like to thank you on behalf of all my colleagues and, most importantly, our programme participants and graduates.

MOST OF THE WOMEN IN OUR PROGRAMME HAVE SPONSORS. BY MAKING A GIFT OF £22 EACH MONTH, SPONSORS GIVE WOMEN, THEIR “SISTERS”, THE OPPORTUNITY TO ENROL IN THE PROGRAMME.
As Co-Chairs of the Women for Women International Leadership Circle in the UK, we feel proud to be part of an incredible group of individuals, all accomplished and talented in their own right, who come together and combine talents, resources and opportunities in order to support the work of this organisation and the women they serve.

In the drawing together of this Leadership Circle review, we reflected on why we are involved with Women for Women International, and what it means to us - we felt this was the perfect place to share this:

“In life, we sometimes embark on a journey and we are not entirely sure why we chose that track, we just go with our gut.

Some years ago, I had dinner with the women in the programme whilst we were on a trip to Bosnia & Herzegovina. They ran up and hugged me with tears in their eyes and love in their hearts, they were so incredibly grateful that anyone even cared about them and I suddenly understood why my gut told me to support Women for Women International.

Words cannot convey how much I gained from that trip, how moved I was, and how lucky I felt to be able to be a part of this incredible organisation. These women will affect countless generations, and it is this powerful catalyst that makes me want to be a part of the Leadership Circle. I will always remember the overwhelming love I received on that day in Bosnia & Herzegovina.” Lauren Prakke

“It is truly amazing to hear the stories of the women in the programme, and to see the impact Women for Women International really makes. Seeing the outcomes and looking at the effectiveness of the organisation makes a big difference for me.

I have been involved with Women for Women International for many years, I find it more invigorating every year to be leading this group of supporters, and seeing first-hand what people can achieve. It is truly an honour.” Marije Serrano-Visser

Women for Women International is unlike any other organisation we know, it truly lives and breathes its mantra: changing the world one woman at a time. It provides women with an opportunity to rebuild their lives following the horrors of war. The combination of personal stories of lives and communities changed and the evidence base of long term impact is extremely powerful.

As a member of the Leadership Circle, you will meet like-minded people who believe in the potential and power of supporting women with the knowledge, skills and means, to build stronger, peaceful, more productive communities and nations - women who want to change the world one woman at a time. In 2014, Women for Women International aims to support 55,784 women through their life-skills programme in the eight countries they currently work in. We look forward to working with you towards this vision, and to changing the world together, one woman at a time.

Together for the women we serve.

WOMEN FOR WOMEN INTERNATIONAL WAS FOUNDED IN 1993 DURING THE WAR IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA, WHERE UNSPEAKABLE ATROCITIES WERE COMMITTED AGAINST WOMEN. WE WANTED TO MAKE SURE THAT WOMEN KNEW THAT THE WORLD HAD NOT FORGOTTEN ABOUT THEM.
ZARGHUNA, 40, AFGHANISTAN

When I was six years old, my family forced me to marry my nine-year-old cousin to settle a dispute between our families. My uncle treated me very badly and I was never allowed out of the house. As we grew up, I came to love my husband, and we had a baby girl when I was sixteen.

Our happiness was cut short when my family killed my husband to try to get me back. I could not forgive them for what they had done, and refused to return to them. I remained in my uncle’s home. I tried to commit suicide twice, but my mother-in-law saved me. After my uncle died, I survived by making and selling hats in the streets, but life was very hard for my family.

I had been feeling very depressed, and went to the hospital to seek treatment. The doctor advised me to connect with other women, so that I could discuss with them my challenges and hear about the similar obstacles they were dealing with. A friend of mine told me about Women for Women International, and I decided to join. Among my class of 25 women, I realised that I wasn’t alone in my suffering. We could share our pain and hardships, which was amazing to me.

My time with Women for Women International helped me build friendships. It taught me basic business skills, gave me hope and for the first time I was able to find a job in embroidery and handicraft. I later decided to open my own business, which is where I work today. I also learned about women’s rights in my country and how to take better care of my and my daughter’s health and well-being.

I now run my own embroidery business in Kabul, which employs over 120 women and men. Many of my employees are women who work from their homes, which gives them the opportunity to contribute to their family’s well-being. I started my business with a $500 loan from a family member, which enabled me to begin selling my products and grow my business. I was recently able to invest in $18,000 worth of machinery, and have over $30,000 in the bank.

I want to continue to grow my business. I know that one day I will have a huge business in Afghanistan. My daughter is finishing high school and I dream that she will be able to attend a university. After decades of conflict, I want to see peace in my country.

“Among my class of 25 women, I realised that I wasn’t alone in my suffering. We could share our pain and hardships, which was amazing to me.”
YOUR IMPACT

Thanks to your support our programmes accomplish:

**ECONOMIC SELF-SUFFICIENCY**
On average, our graduates report an average daily income of £0.18 at enrolment, £0.87 at graduation, and £1.05 two years after graduation.

- **£0.18** at enrolment
- **£0.87** at graduation
- **£1.05** two years after graduation

**INVESTING IN COMMUNITIES**
89% of our graduates report saving a portion of their income (only 27% did before the programme). Many join savings groups to invest in small businesses and in their children’s education.

- **89%**
- **&**
- **INVEST IN THEIR BUSINESS OR THEIR CHILD’S EDUCATION**

**WOMEN AND CHILDREN’S HEALTH**
On average, 29% of women report practicing family planning at enrolment, compared to 57% at graduation and 73% two years after graduation.

- **&**
- **LEARN ABOUT NUTRITION**
- **SEEK HEALTHCARE FOR THEMSELVES & CHILDREN**

**POLITICAL PARTICIPATION**
93% of our graduates report knowing about their rights, compared to 16% at enrolment. 60% of our graduates report educating another woman about her rights, compared to 7% at enrolment.

- **93%**
- **&**
- **KNOW THEIR RIGHTS (UP FROM 16%)**
- **&**
- **EDUCATE OTHERS (UP FROM 7%)**
COLLEEN ABUHAIDAR

My husband and I often run marathons, triathlons, and are quite active, so after contemplating how I could do more for Women for Women International, the idea of 12 challenges in 12 months came to mind rather quickly. We recruited friends for some adventures, some were just my husband and me, and I had one fantastic challenge with my youngest sister. As I had recently done a big round of fundraising for Women for Women International I did not feel I could send out another email asking for more money. Instead, for birthdays and holidays I asked people to donate to Women for Women International in lieu of gifts.

The most interesting aspect for me was, when we travelled, our story spread to the people around us. From the UK for the 3 peaks challenge, Panama for our 1/2 ironman, through Portugal, and then to Myanmar, I have had follow up emails from people I met along the way telling me that they sponsored a sister. I could see the website traffic on my blog increase from those countries while I was there.

I am not a professional athlete, but I got out there and did my best. My hope was to show people that whether it is through a 5k run, or a 10k walk, there are always ways to make a difference and fundraise for an organisation in which you believe.

“Producing this perfume is an act of hope and faith that one day we can all live in peace.”

Without the help of many incredible people, I could not have achieved the success of IN PEACE, and it is hard to express just how grateful I am for the friendship and support that I received in return. I know this is only the beginning.
DIANA SAGHI KAWKABANI

The idea of raising awareness of Women for Women International through the launch of a Leadership Circle in Geneva was actually in my head when I arrived here three years ago—and I have to say that the process has been effortless—I think that because the message is such an inspiring one, women of all backgrounds and nationalities here have been wonderfully supportive and enthusiastic.

From an initial luncheon at my home, where Brita came to speak and was a huge hit, to a screening of ‘Pray the Devil Back to Hell’ coupled with a lunch, that Brita generously attended again—now having a VIP Fashion Show being held in Women for Women International’s honour in Lausanne—all these events have been literally through word of mouth, with the women here telling their friends, who then offer to host events, or raise/donate funds.

This, to me, is the real secret and power of The Leadership Circle, not only does it raise awareness and funds to help the women enrolled in our programme, but just as importantly...

“It brings women in western cities together in a form of ‘sisterhood’, where we form bonds that supersede our everyday lives.”

As the result of just the events mentioned above, we now have women who are very interested in starting Leadership Circles in Zurich, Basel, and Monaco, and I can foresee even more spreading through Europe. It is a very simple, yet powerful way to bring people together!

LAURI PASTRONE, TRACY CRAIGHEAD, BETTE ANNE BERG, RUTH TYSON AND ALISON OAKERVEE

Like so many good things, our idea started at a kitchen table. A conversation of the experiences we had shared as ‘sisters’ to women enrolled in the Women for Women International programme led us to discover a strong affinity around life’s most basic theme—the understanding that something special was shared when people gathered around a kitchen table. And so, the cookbook ‘Share’ was born.

Over the next three years, we secured recipe contributions from people who, in some way or other, have made a life-long commitment to creating a better world. When the book was released in May 2013, it included a foreword by Meryl Streep, and recipes from Annie Lennox, Emma Thompson, Nelson Mandela, Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall, Aung San Suu Kyi and many more.

This book has been released around the world, and the publisher, Kyle Books, agreed to donate all profits to Women for Women International.

The book has inspired many new sponsors and as members of the Leadership Circle...

“It was an honour to create a book that embodies the hope and sense of community that Women for Women International generates for both the women in the programme and each of their supporters.”

SINCE 2008, MORE THAN 2,200 MALE COMMUNITY LEADERS HAVE COMPLETED THE MEN’S ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMME IN AFGHANISTAN, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO AND NIGERIA.
NADJA ROMAIN

Women for Women International has been a major inspiration in my life. I’ve done a few projects to raise funds for the organisation, which showed me that to be part of the change it can be as simple as using your skills, your knowledge, and your expertise. Art is my passion as much as it is my profession.

In 2011 I asked my dear friend Jenny Saville to co-host with me “Artists for Women for Women International”, an exhibition at Gagosian Gallery followed by an auction at Christie’s as part of their contemporary art sales. The purpose was both to raise funds and awareness about the mission of the organisation. We secured a lot of media coverage and developed a great buzz through a few events during the exhibition.

It’s strongly empowering to feel that you can contribute even at a tiny level to the solution to make this world a better place to live in. It’s a collective mission. Everyone can bring their stone. It’s about connecting the dots: what are your interests? Who do you know who could help? What are your professional skills that could benefit a project in support of Women for Women International?

“Along the line you’ll make amazing new friends with whom you share a profound connection. And that has been for me the best of all.”

AVIS CHARLES

My journey started with a trip to Rwanda, where I met some of the women in the Women for Women International programme. After everything they had been through, they had such a positive focus and outlook on life and that was because of what they learned with Women for Women International.

When I came home, I wanted to use my experience in the fashion industry to create a luxury brand that could involve women in every region that Women for Women International works in. I wanted to create something beautiful involving these incredible women.

This realisation changed my life. After 40 years of working in one of the most exciting industries in the world, Kivu Style is the thing that gets me up every morning and makes me smile. It has given me back my energy and a new lease of life.

I am so honoured to be a part of the Leadership Circle, it is unlike any other women’s network group I know. All the women are leaders in their own right, and there is a real sense of community. There is not one person you cannot build a bond with. People see what we do, and they want to be a part of it.

“There is an immense collective energy to make a difference.”

IN 2014, WOMEN FOR WOMEN INTERNATIONAL HOPES TO SUPPORT 55,784 WOMEN.
“Conviction in your beliefs, coupled with sheer hard work, will take you a long, long way. And what initially may seem like madness can come to life and culminate in something utterly sublime.”

LAUREN PRAKKE AND MICHELLE YUE

Madness.

To even think that the two of us, with zero theatre production experience, would be able to put on a major West End performance, rope in some marquee names, and fill 900+ seats... all in three months’ time with a massive budget of £0.00 (no, that’s not a typo!).

Our shared passion for fundraising creatively and creating social impact gave us no option but to shoot for the stars and make it a success. We are incredibly lucky in that our enthusiasm bubbled over and captured the imagination of others. By reaching out to everyone in our address books (and many who were not!), we were able to create a community spirit that made this project so much greater than simply the sum of its parts.

It all started with coffee one morning when the both of us casually discussed Eve Ensler’s book of short stories entitled *A Memory, A Monologue, A Rant and A Prayer*. We innocently thought that by turning the stories into a neighborhood play and inviting our friends, we could raise a few hundred pounds for charity. Whether it was due to our dogged determination or our unconcealed gusto, Eve Ensler somehow caught wind of our little project and became the first to agree to perform. Next thing we knew, we had signed on actors including Thandie Newton, Rosario Dawson, Trudie Styler, Neneh Cherry, Meera Syal and MyAnna Buring, all of whom, with the biggest of hearts, volunteered their time.

To increase our financial impact, we reached out to charitable foundations and were thrilled to have Goldman Sachs Gives and The Millby Foundation, who, in a tough economic environment and with so many organisations in need, generously agreed to support our endeavours by matching ticket sales. It was a precariously difficult project to pull off but, in the end, we raised over £170,000 and created awareness of a hard-hitting subject matter - the many guises of violence against women.

On the back of our hugely rewarding experience with this project, we formed Restless Buddha Productions and have positioned ourselves as innovative cultural producers that raise social awareness of key issues. We are committed to ground-breaking projects that support vitally important causes - and worthwhile entities like Women for Women International - so that we, as a community, can make a difference.

What have we learned? That conviction in your beliefs, coupled with sheer hard work, will take you a long, long way. And what initially may seem like madness can come to life and culminate in something utterly sublime.
LEADERSHIP CIRCLE MEMBER BENEFITS

The Leadership Circle is a senior level networking group. A sense of community and strong communication across the group are at the heart of its success and its power to change the world.

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP

Invitations to four meetings per year with the UK Executive Director and Senior Leadership Team to be a part of organisational strategy and developments. The meetings are an open forum, all ideas and views are highly valued and creative ideas for ensuring that we deliver our organisational objectives are highly encouraged. Occasionally these meetings are joined by a Women for Women International Country Director, giving you the opportunity to meet one of our leaders in the field, and gain a deeper understanding of our work and the issues faced by the women in our programme.

VISITING OUR WORK

Leadership Circle members have the unique opportunity to visit our work in the field, meet the women in our programme and our in-country staff teams. Recent trips have included Bosnia & Herzegovina, Rwanda and Kosovo.

EXCLUSIVE SPECIAL EVENTS

Receive invitations to a range of exclusive special events throughout the year. Recent and future events include a cocktail evening at a London gallery with the artist present and talking about their work, private lunch at the House of Lords, dinner invitations with high profile guests and Leadership Circle breakfasts.

Membership is by invitation only from the Executive Director and the Leadership Circle Co-Chairs.
LEADERSHIP CIRCLE MEMBERS COMMITMENT

FUNDRAISING
Advancing the work of Women for Women International in the UK and Europe through making a minimum donation of £5,000 a year. The donation can either be given directly, through your charitable trust, or by helping raise the money through your networks, contacts and your own inspiration.

SPONSOR A WOMAN
Sponsor a woman in the Women for Women International programme. When you become a sponsor, you and your sister embark on a life-changing journey together.

SPREAD THE WORD
The Leadership Circle is a network and our members are champions of the women in our programme and the organisation. As such we ask you to share what you now know with your friends and networks and endeavour to recruit 10 friends or colleagues to sponsor a woman in the Women for Women International programme. We always have more women waiting to enter our programme than we have funding to enrol them.

ADVOCATE
Advocate for Women for Women International - as a representative of the organisation you will be provided with the materials to enable you to speak of our work, and tell friends and colleagues of its impact on women in countries affected by war and conflict.

The money raised through the Leadership Circle will help more women go through the programme. As well as increase our awareness raising and policy work, and strengthen our presence in the UK and across Europe.
ABOUT WOMEN FOR WOMEN INTERNATIONAL

At Women for Women International we work with women survivors of war in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Kosovo, Nigeria, Rwanda, and South Sudan. We help them transition from crisis and poverty to stability and economic well-being via a year-long training programme. We do this by bringing women out of isolation in a safe space with other women, by providing them with skills to earn and save money so they can put food on the table and send their children to school, by providing them with access and knowledge of how to look after their and their families’ health, by providing women with the knowledge and skills so that they can make and influence decisions in their homes and community. Women are not victims of conflict, they are survivors and agents of change who can achieve the transformation they want for themselves and their families and communities with the right support.

Communities are not, of course, made up of just women and because the whole community benefits when everyone in the community is involved, we work hard at Women for Women International to engage men in our work. Men are powerful advocates for women’s empowerment, breaking down prejudices and practices which prevent women from reaching their potential.

So far, in over 20 years Women for Women International have helped over 400,000 women survivors of war and created a change in the lives of over 2 million community members as a result.

SPONSOR A WOMAN THROUGH THE ONE-YEAR PROGRAMME FOR £22 PER MONTH AND HELP US CHANGE THE WORLD ONE WOMAN AT A TIME.

For more information, go to:
womenforwomen.org.uk
www.facebook.com/WomenforWomenUK
www.youtube.com/user/womenforwomenuk
or follow us on @womenforwomenUK