



About

# Women without Borders



**17** YEARS

**30** COUNTRIES

**80** PROJECTS

**CHANGE THE WORLD**

Women without Borders (WwB), an international nonprofit organisation headquartered in Vienna, was founded by Edit Schlaffer in 2001. WwB focuses on Female Leadership, Capacity Building, Gender Based Violence, Intercultural Dialogue, and Preventing Violent Extremism. We commit and apply ourselves to:

- Working from the bottom up and empowering the female leaders of tomorrow at the individual, community, and global levels
- Supporting and inspiring women in the process of moving from victimhood towards agency
- Advocating for a future without fear, suppression, and violence against women
- Introducing and normalising the idea of mothers as the first line of defence against extremism in their homes and communities
- Bringing the voices of impactful local leaders to the attention of the world

## Focus Areas



Female Leadership



Gender Based Violence



Cultural Dialogue



Preventing Violent Extremism



Capacity Building

# Mission

Women without Borders puts research to practice by translating theory and grassroots fieldwork into community-based strategies



# Philosophy

Our governing philosophy is to support and inspire female leadership at the individual, community, and global levels.

In translating original research into action, WwB has been since its inception strengthening female talent pools, building resilience through whole-of-community approaches, and bringing impactful stories to the attention of the world.

WwB's pioneering peacebuilding strategies influence regional, national, and international policy every day.



# Specialised Foci | Women in Security

*Women without Borders has since its inception in 2001 focused on the glaring absence of women from the cast list of agents in communities affected by or vulnerable to various forms of violence. For over a decade, WwB has been sensitising this hitherto neglected group to their roles and responsibilities in building community resilience from the ground up. While addressing extremism is a priority among the range of distinct but interrelated WwB capacity building projects, this approach reflects our broader, longstanding governing philosophy: translating research into action and empowering women to move from victimhood towards agency.*

## SAVE network since 2008

Responding to the threat of radicalisation by sensitising women to their role in building community resilience, Women without Borders initiated the world's first female PVE platform in 2008: the Sisters Against Violent Extremism (SAVE) network. WwB's SAVE network has given rise to 17 country chapters and 22 cultural dialogue and capacity building initiatives.

## MotherSchools since 2013

WwB pioneered and continues to lead the effort of harnessing the potential of Mothers Preventing Violent Extremism (MPVE) through its 'MotherSchools: Parenting for Peace' Model. WwB has been advancing local and regional security through contextualised iterations of the programme, and to date has engaged over 2000 participants.



#MOTHERSPREVENTINGVIOLENTXTREMISM

# SAVE | Sisters Against Violent Extremism

Against the background of a growing frustration with male-dominated and hard-power-oriented security strategies, Women without Borders in 2008 launched its Sisters Against Violent Extremism (SAVE) network, the world's first female counter-extremism platform.

The initiative addresses the missing link between women at the local level where extremism takes root and decision-making levels where prevention and intervention strategies are developed. Since its inception, the SAVE network has given rise to seventeen country chapters and twenty-one cultural dialogue and capacity building initiatives.

Maintaining a focus on preventing violent extremism (PVE) and female leadership throughout, it has convened hundreds of courageous female actors who recognise the value of alternative female diplomacy, ranging from victims and survivors of terrorist attacks to family members of perpetrators, and from grassroots activists to global decision-makers. The platform rapidly developed into a global movement that reached policymakers at the highest political levels:

'Sisters Against Violent Extremism, a group of women in seventeen countries around the world who have risked their lives to tell terrorists that they are not welcome in their communities', as US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton took note in 2011, 'have written newspaper articles in Yemen, held workshops for young people in Indonesia, brought Indian and Pakistani women together to show a united front. These women know they will not stop extremism everywhere, but they refuse to sit on the sidelines'.

The global community that came to fruition through WwB's SAVE network of projects and grassroots activists has helped to normalise the notion of women as important security allies—to invest in and unite a smart network of alternative messengers, peacebuilders, and peacekeepers.



# MotherSchools | Parenting for Peace

Mothers present a missing link in preventing the spread of violent extremism. Their unparalleled physical and emotional proximity make them witnesses of every stage in their child's development. While mothers have the potential to intervene in the initial stages of the radicalisation process, often they lack the essential knowledge and self-confidence to recognise and address the warning signs in their sons and daughters.

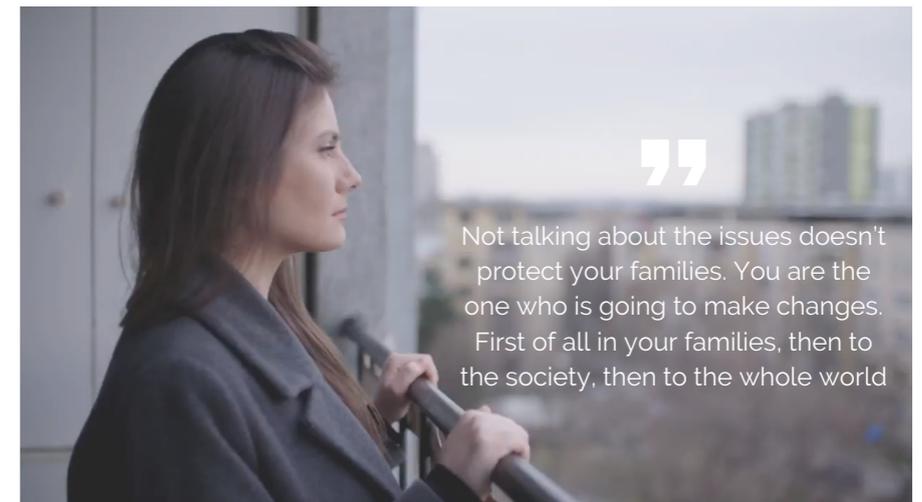
Women without Borders began introducing the notion of Mothers Preventing Violent Extremism (MPVE) in the context of its SAVE network of projects and initiatives from 2008. Responding to its research study findings from surveys and interviews with 1023 mothers across five countries, WwB developed and designed the pioneering 'MotherSchools: Parenting for Peace' Model.

When put into practice, this bottom-up prevention approach positions concerned and affected mothers as the first line of defence in at-risk communities. The curriculum strengthens the participant's individual capacity, capability, and emotional literacy, and heightens her awareness of radical influences.

WwB has been advancing local and regional security through contextualised iterations of the programme, and to date has engaged over two thousand mothers in twelve countries across Western and Eastern Europe; Central, South, and Southeast Asia; the Middle East; and Sub-Saharan Africa.

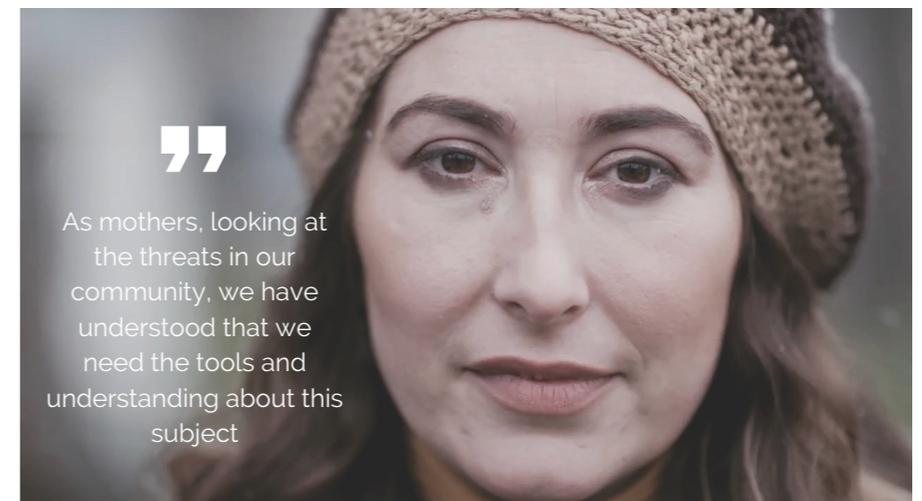
MotherSchools also upgrade existing social services and local capacity by providing civil society stakeholders in at-risk regions with the essential structures, tools, and skills to address and counteract extremist ideologies.

Owing to its proven track record, WwB's MotherSchools Model has emerged as a recognised good practice and contributed to rethinking and reshaping countering and preventing violent extremism (P/CVE) policy worldwide.



Not talking about the issues doesn't protect your families. You are the one who is going to make changes. First of all in your families, then to the society, then to the whole world

**MOTHERSCHOOLS PARTICIPANT**



As mothers, looking at the threats in our community, we have understood that we need the tools and understanding about this subject

**MOTHERSCHOOLS TEACHER**



We are the frontline when it comes to combatting radicalisation and extremism; we are the voice as women and as mothers who will finally make a change

**MOTHERSCHOOLS AMBASSADOR**

# MotherCircles | Leadership for Peace

Graduates of 'MotherSchools: Parenting for Peace' programmes, now equipped with the necessary competence and confidence to challenge extremism at the grassroots level, go on to disseminate their knowledge and share their experiences with other concerned and affected mothers and community members. MotherSchools' transformative impact in at-risk areas where the programme has been realised proved not only to resonate with the broad spectrum of stakeholders; it also led to a central question: How can this global movement of Mothers Preventing Violent Extremism (MPVE) be sustained and extended?

Women without Borders has been since 2016 addressing this question through its follow-up programme: 'MotherCircles: Leadership for Peace'. MotherCircles convene former teachers and participants to bring their acquired 'Parenting for Peace' philosophy, knowledge, and experience deeper into their respective communities. During weekly sessions with mothers, each 'Leader' (former Teacher) works with and mentors two 'Buddies' (typically former Participants). Buddies in turn become Leaders, mobilise new mothers and Buddies, and the cycle of exponential growth recommences. Deepening the experience in communities where MPVE efforts already are having a visible impact is imperative to unrooting extremism.

The MotherCircles Model has the distinct quality of bringing key elements of WwB's MotherSchools curriculum to particularly isolated women, who may have faced barriers to joining the original programme. By contrast, WwB's MotherCircles curriculum promotes greater contextualisation by encouraging Leaders to rely more on their range of academic and practical expertise. As graduation ceremonies have demonstrated, the MotherCircles Model strengthens the 'Parenting for Peace' foundation through its 'Leadership for Peace' dimension.



# FatherSchools | #MenIncluded in Parenting for Peace

The success and rapid expansion of the global MotherSchools movement highlights that mothers indeed are effective security allies in their homes and communities. Yet Women without Borders has found in both its research and work on the ground that fathers can be an obstacle to mothers' efforts. A high number of participants cite their husbands' relationship to them and their children as a chief contributing factor to tension and unrest at home. Many fathers present challenges to family cohesion due to, inter alia, poor communication skills, physical and mental absence, and a propensity for domestic violence. Having long recognised these issues, the MotherSchools Curriculum already includes a module entitled 'Involving Fathers'.

FatherSchools promise to be more than just a mitigating measure: fathers can become unlikely male role models in traditional communities where notions of masculinity often are linked to violence and parenting tends to remain a female affair. Fathers thus can be viewed as a missing puzzle piece in a family-based and whole-of-community security architecture. Parents, as a united front, have the strongest intervention potential in protecting adolescent and young adult children from being attracted to radical messages and recruiters. Ultimately, sensitising fathers to their 'Parenting for Peace' responsibility and engaging them through WwB's FatherSchools programme is a significant step in supplementing and building on the impact of MotherSchools.

As no other organisation has brought fathers into the PVE fold in this manner, WwB decided to embark on an exploratory endeavour by developing and delivering its rudimentary FatherSchools Curriculum. In 2017, we piloted FatherSchools in Austria. Owing to the men's enthusiasm and based on insights gained, WwB pursued this angle through an in-depth East African fieldwork study.

With a view to translating evidence-based research into action, as with its 'Can Mothers Challenge Extremism?' research for the MotherSchools, WwB recently completed its study 'Understanding Fathers' Prevention Potential: Safeguarding Children from Radicalisation'. Based on WwB surveys with fathers in at-risk communities across Uganda and Zanzibar, the research examines fathers': perceptions of their responsibility in safeguarding their children; experiences with radicalisation and/or P/CVE efforts in their own families; and perceived barriers to realising their prevention potential. The study findings have been applied to develop the 'FatherSchools: Men Included in Parenting for Peace' Model. WwB aspires to roll out future MotherSchools and FatherSchools in parallel to strengthen the family unit from all sides.



# Women without Borders

## Team Members



## Dr. Edit Schlaffer

Edit Schlaffer, an internationally-recognised social scientist and trained psychoanalyst, founded WwB in 2001 with a view to building up the competence and confidence of women to effect positive social change in marginalised and neglected communities across the world. Schlaffer focuses on gender-based peacebuilding strategies that harness the strength of civil society in building a new security architecture from the bottom up.

WwB's founding principles and successes reflect Dr. Schlaffer's achievements as a thought leader and changemaker in all of her careers to date: as an academic at the University of Vienna she published Austria's first study on domestic violence, became a leading authority on female empowerment in her time as the head of an influential Austrian thinktank, and published numerous bestsellers based on in-depth sociological studies. Responding to the growing threat of violent extremism, Dr. Schlaffer in 2008 launched the Sisters Against Violent Extremism (SAVE) network, the world's first female counter-extremism platform. In developing and implementing the 'MotherSchools: Parenting for Peace' Model, Dr. Schlaffer's PVE research introduced and has since normalised the concept of mothers as the first line of defence against extremism.

In recognition of her innovative work and ability to translate vision into tangible results, Schlaffer is Ashoka Fellow, Advisory Council member at Omega Women's Leadership Center in New York, and the recipient of numerous prestigious awards, including Reader's Digest 'European of the Year' (2018), Foreign Policy's '100 Global Thinkers' (2016), the Grand Decoration of Honour in Gold for Services to the Republic of Austria (2016), Soroptimist International of Europe Peace Prize (2015), Aenne Burda Award for Creative Leadership (2015), Newsweek's '150 Movers and Shakers' (2011), and Women's eNews 21 Leaders of the 21st Century (2010).





## Laura Kropiunigg

Laura Kropiunigg has been directing strategic planning and programming at Women without Borders since early 2016. She earned a BSc in Physics from the University of Warwick and an MSc in Environmental Technology from Imperial College London. After devoting her early professional years to research, she embarked on a career in management consulting at Booz&Company, where she took on projects in the private sector.

Kropiunigg joined WwB to head strategic, logistical, and programmatic coordination. She has been drawing on her research background and organisational skills to contextualise, refine, and streamline the MotherSchools Model's mechanisms. Kropiunigg has an extensive track record of implementing MotherSchools-related projects on the ground in communities across Austria, Belgium, Germany, Jordan, Macedonia, Tanzania, Uganda, and the United Kingdom.

Kropiunigg has deep expertise in: identifying and framing strategic options to build financial, institutional, and programmatic sustainability; planning and leading communication initiatives with multiple stakeholders, ranging from government representatives to local partners on the ground; and analysing risks, particularly with respect to P/CVE-related engagements in and across various regions, as evidenced in her 2018 publication on radicalisation, prevention work, and family dynamics in the German language



## Elisabeth Kasbauer

Kasbauer has been at Women without Borders since its inception in 2001. She holds an MA in Communication Science and Spanish from the University in Vienna, and an associate's degree in Interdisciplinary Latin American Studies from the Institute for Latin American Studies (LAI) Vienna. In 2016, she completed the certified programme on 'Neosalafist Islamism: Fundamentals, Analysis, and Prevention' at the Danube University Krems, Austria. In her role as senior programme manager at WwB, Kasbauer has been responsible for setting up the organisation's programmes and initiatives, including the Sisters Against Violent Extremism (SAVE) network. Kasbauer has contributed to the conceptualisation and implementation of various research projects on the topic of radicalisation, migration, and integration, with a focus on changing family dynamics, and on the role that mothers and fathers can play in safeguarding their children from extremist influences. Kasbauer has been responsible for coordinating the implementation of various community training programmes in Pakistan, India/Kashmir, Indonesia, Zanzibar, Nigeria, and Tajikistan. She has been leading the Austrian and German 'MotherSchools: Parenting for Peace' programme implementation efforts for a number of years. While she continues to oversee new and refined iterations of the MotherSchools in these countries, she has more recently also been conducting and analysing the first 'FatherSchools: Parenting for Peace' pilot programme in the western part of Austria. Kasbauer's extensive project and research record and deep understanding of both global and local-level complexities are reflected through her professional commitment to and engagement with the fields of preventing violent extremism (PVE) and female empowerment. She has decades of experience in strategic programme management, advanced research and analysis skills on gender and security issues. Kasbauer has contributed extensively to related research fields as a co-author with WwB's Executive and Research directors.



## Prof. Dr. Ulrich Kropiunigg

Ulrich Kropiunigg, Professor of Psychology at the Centre for Public Health in the Medical University of Vienna, has devoted his career to practicing psychotherapy and applying a psychological lens to social and political phenomena. He is the author of numerous academic books that have advanced our understanding of taboo topics, Alzheimer's, and the link between the psyche and immune system. In his capacity as Research Director at Women without Borders (WwB), he focuses on the importance of the psychological dimension in advancing our understanding of radicalisation and prevention processes.

Professor Kropiunigg has been instrumental in conceptualising new WwB workshops and grassroots security strategies. He co-lead the effort, for instance, of designing WwB's 'MotherSchools: Parenting for Peace' Model and its programme for implementation, curricula, and M&E components. He currently is heading a multi-country WwB research project that has been probing and seeks to identify the possible potential of fathers in preventing violent extremism.

Professor Kropiunigg is a member of the Austrian Society for Psychotherapy, Austrian Society for Medical Psychology, Individual Psychology Society, and Client-Centred Psychotherapy Society. His work has been published widely in academic and public policy-oriented publications, including in the Journal of Individual Psychology, Annals of Medicine, Medical Journal of Australia, Medical Teacher, Medical Education, Psychotherapie Forum, Psychotherapie Psychosomatik medizinische Psychologie, Zeitschrift für Individualpsychologie, Wiener klinische Wochenschrift, Forum for International Research in Education (FIRE), The Global Center on Cooperative Security, Journal of European Security and Defense, and Center for Strategic & International Studies.



## Yvonne Reif

Yvonne Reif joined the Women without Borders team in 2018. She holds an MBA from the University of Vienna and earned an MSc in Business Education from the Vienna University of Economics and Business Administration. Reif previously worked as a marketing and project manager at Heller Consult Tax and Business Solutions before joining the Austrian Integration Fund where she oversaw the strategic management of all projects relating to integration and migration.

At the Integration Fund, Reif led the effort of developing and managing an online educational platform and directed all pedagogical trainings. These efforts focused on the role of school environments, aimed to reduce the risk of social marginalisation, and promoted group cohesion and resilience. This experience deepened her understanding of psychological and social patterns impacting on marginalisation and self-isolation processes.

Reif's academic and professional expertise in areas closely related to the work of WwB enables her to navigate complex issues; she produces strategic and informed concepts that take a wide range of stakeholder interests into account. Reif applies interdisciplinary approaches to her work, brings project management experience to MotherSchools programming in Austria and German, and oversees and coordinates legal administrative matters.



## Dr. Rafael Kropiunigg

Dr. Rafael Kropiunigg holds a PhD in History from the University of Cambridge and an MSt in Modern European History from the University of Oxford. As part of his BA in Politics and Modern History, he studied at the universities of London and California. Dr. Kropiunigg joined Women without Borders in 2017. While he has been overseeing a number of projects like the 'MotherCircles: Leadership for Peace' sustainability programme in Skopje, he also has monitored and evaluated MotherSchools-related projects in Jordan and Tanzania.

Dr. Kropiunigg devoted his academic career to the study of the Holocaust and its aftermath, and he has developed an expertise in contemporary radicalisation, deradicalisation, and rehabilitation dynamics. He is the author of the monograph 'Eine österreichische Affäre: Der Fall Borodajkewycz' (Vienna, 2015), which is an extended version of his Oxford thesis and published article 'The Rehabilitated Austrians'.

Prior to joining WwB, Dr. Kropiunigg was J. B. and Maurice C. Shapiro Fellow at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., where he conducted research for his book project on the context and cultural legacies of two National Socialist forced labour sites connected to the Mauthausen concentration camp complex. Dr. Kropiunigg's interest in grassroots-level work and P/CVE developed at an early age through his time at the OSCE's Action against Terrorism Unit (ATU) and efforts as an Israeli-Palestinian peace camp coordinator.



## Georgina Nitzsche

Georgina Nitzsche functions as Senior Training Manager at Women without Borders (WwB) on a regular basis. She specialises on professional communication in the fields of development and security. She holds an MSc in Sustainable Development from De Montfort University and an Honours Diploma in Freelance Journalism from the London School of Journalism.

Nitzsche focuses on communication and behavioural changes in fields like applied parenting, security, and intercultural dialogue. As an experienced trainer, and with a view to achieving greater impact, she has honed her training delivery techniques to recognise and adapt to different adult audiences. Her broader experiences include advocacy and community engagement activities in Europe, Western Asia, and the Middle East, mostly for civil society, government, and international organisations like the OSCE in Bosnia and Herzegovina, UNDP, and UNICEF in Iran.

The bulk of Nitzsche's projects have centred on awareness raising, capacity building, and research contributing to the improvement of good practice models. While Nitzsche has led country-wide intercultural dialogue trainings for UK police, intelligence, and counterterrorism authorities, she also has promoted female security diplomacy to NATO CIMIC civil liaison officers who were deployed to Afghanistan.



## Ursula Schafler

Ursula Schafler, Head of Accounting and Finance at Women without Borders (WwB) since 2008, received her education and training at WIFI Vienna between 1990 and 1993. Prior to working at WwB, she served as the Head of Accounting at Wolfgang Kabatek, and as an accountant at the Scheck WT Union Firm.

Schafler, who regularly completes training courses, applies her advanced expertise and experience in the field to her WwB-related work on budgeting and financial decision-making.



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வாழ்விதழ்வுகள்  
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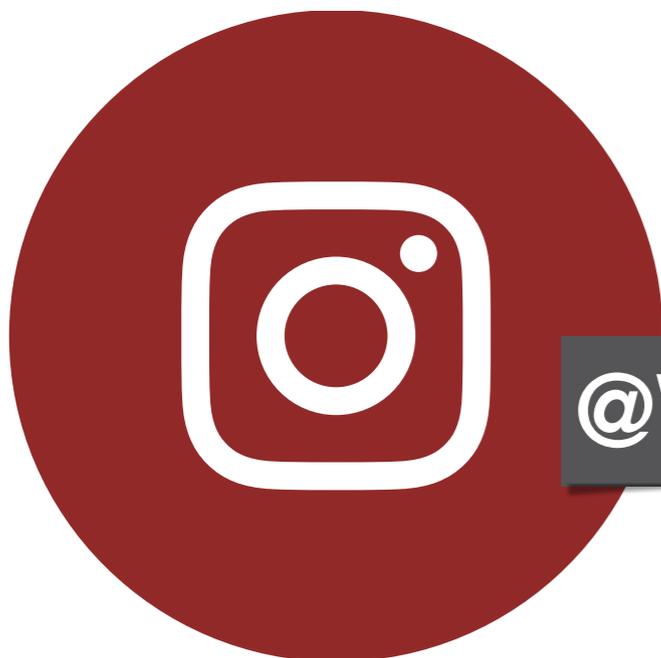
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**WOMEN WITHOUT BORDERS**  
CHANGE THE WORLD  
SINCE 2001



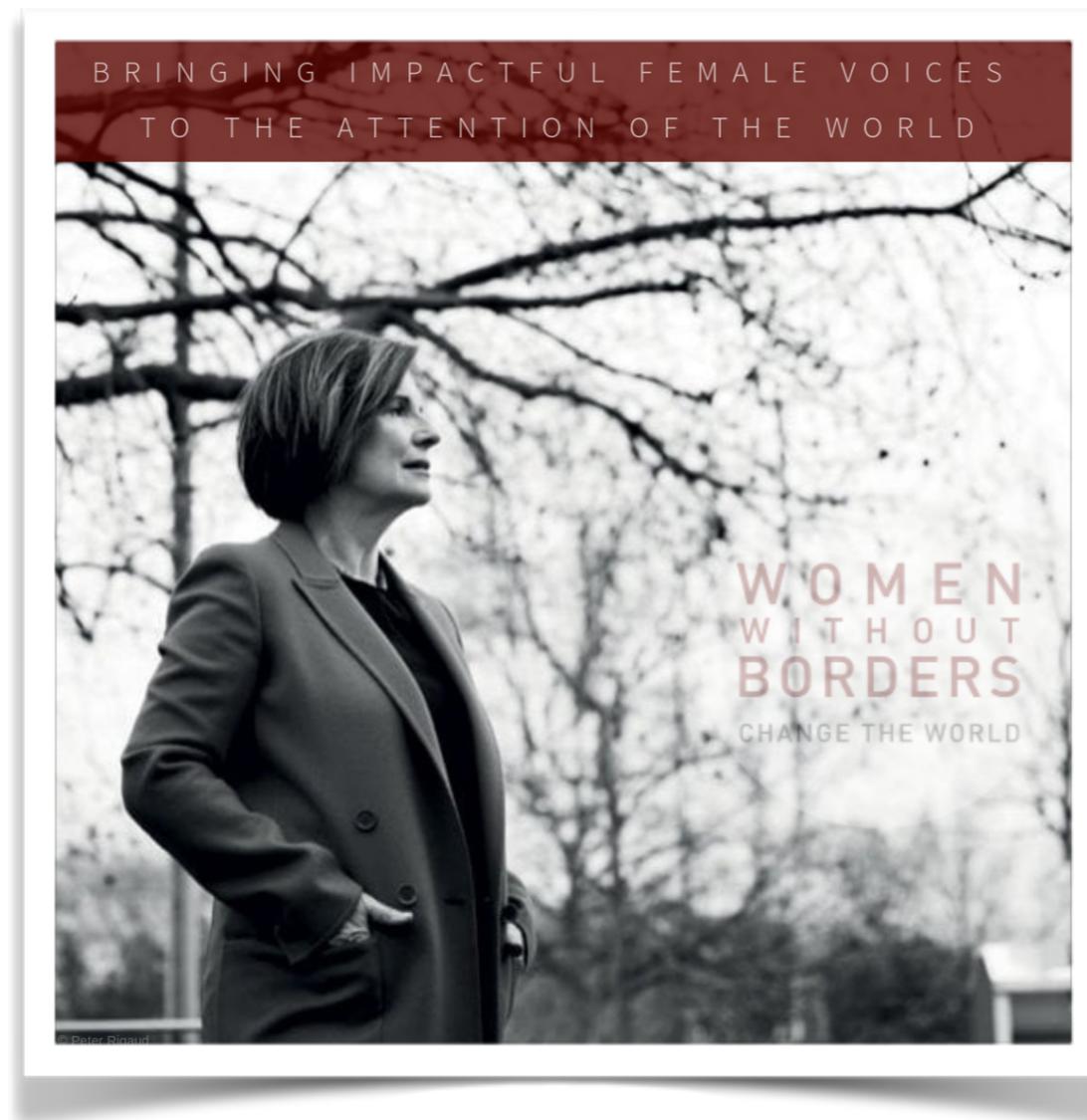
**#TheStoryOfWomenWithoutBorders**





**Our Logo**  
for official use

**W O M E N**  
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