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25 FOR 25 SERIES

OLFAT MAHMOUD

25 for 25 is an original content series by Gucci and CHIME FOR CHANGE to mark the historic milestone of Beijing +25 in March, as well as Women's History Month. The series will highlight activists, CHIME Advisory Board members, partners and supporters who represent the progress made on gender equality over the past 25 years, and the emerging next generation continuing this critical work.



CHIME is honored to present Women Deliver Humanitarian Advocate Dr. Olfat Mahmoud, the founder and director of the Palestinian Women's Humanitarian Organization. Explore her reflections on being an activist for Palestinian and women's rights, working to increase the opportunity to health, education and economic empowerment for women and girls and championing the vision of a gender-equal future for all.

What are your hopes and expectations for gender equality in the next 25 years?

In the next 25 years, I hope for a world where we eliminate all harmful practices and oppression. One that ensures equal access to education, provides sustained physical and mental health support, secures economic independence, and enjoys equal political representation and leadership opportunities for all women and girls, including refugees. True gender equality means that everyone is able to invest in him or herself.

What does gender equality mean to you?

As a refugee woman, gender equality means seeing that girls and women in my community are able to access the same rights as everyone else. It means to put our needs and demands in all global gender equality agendas. We need to uphold our access to health, our rights and leadership as a priority.

What keeps you energized and committed as a leader for gender equality?

I firmly believe in the possibility of making positive and long-term change in my community. By working directly with refugee communities every day, my team witnesses how improving the health and rights of women and girls also improves the wellbeing of their families and communities. The power of gender equality is real – and I can't stop now.

What advice would you give younger generations on how to advocate for gender equality as they get older?

I would tell young people today to work with communities to set clear and concrete advocacy goals for improving gender equality. For example, the Palestinian Women's Humanitarian Organization worked with refugee women and girls in Lebanon to identify three key needs – health, education, and women's leadership – and designed our programs to fill those gaps.

Who do you look to as an example/role model in the fight for gender equality?

I have two role models who contributed to enhancing gender equality in their communities and around the world. Globally, I look up to Mother Teresa because of her lifelong dedication to the betterment of poor communities, and ensuring their voices are included in the push for gender equality. I also admire Hanan Ashrawi, a Palestinian activist who was committed to justice for Palestinian people and refugees, particularly girls and women.

