

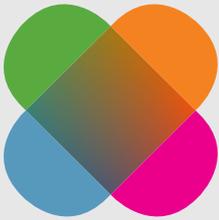


INTERNATIONAL AWARD
UCLG - MEXICO CITY - CULTURE 21

WINNER

3 EDITION

BASMA EL HUSSEINY



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Basma El Husseiny is a cultural manager, an activist for social change and a UNESCO expert in cultural governance. For the past 30 years she has been involved in supporting independent cultural projects and organizations in the Arab region and many parts of North Africa, bringing together her passion for civil society and community's welfare with her expertise. The two main projects developed under her umbrella, **Al Mawred Al Thaqafy** and **Action for Hope**, are proof of her commitment to culture and artistic creation as tools that enable people's empowerment and socio-economic improvement, and allow social change in the medium and long term.

In 2004, after being the Arts Manager of the British Council in Egypt (1988-1998) and the Media, Arts & Culture Program Officer for the Ford Foundation in the Middle East and North Africa (1999-2003), among other occupations, she founded **Al Mawred Al Thaqafy (Culture Resource)**, the first non-governmental regional cultural organization in the Arab region. A clear reference for the Arab cultural sector, this organisation has pioneered remarkable projects throughout the years, including the first cultural management training program in Arabic and the first cultural policy research and development program in the Arab region, working across music, literature,

theatre and plastic and audio-visual arts. In this role, she initiated and co-founded the Arab Fund for Arts and Culture (AFAC), the region's first independent cultural foundation. With a strong social emphasis, the objective has been to build wider support for the cultural sector and promote meaningful exchanges between local artists and the private and public sectors.

Basma El Husseiny is currently leading the organisation **Action for Hope**, based in Beirut. This platform, which was a pilot initiative supported by Al Mawred Al Thaqafy until 2014, is a personal project that became reality after she felt impelled to contribute to the relief of the consequences of the conflict in Syria, in 2012. It was established with the objective of covering "*the cultural, social and psychological needs of distressed and displaced communities*". Action for Hope has pioneered cultural relief programs and designed new and alternative models in arts education and production for refugee and marginalized communities.

The role of Basma El Husseiny goes beyond her capacity of leadership and provision of experience. Her long commitment to supporting the non-profit cultural sector has contributed to acquiring



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great resourcefulness and flexibility, as well as determination and consistency, and her vision is deeply linked to her extended and detailed knowledge of the Arab region and the specific characteristics of different communities and countries and their social interactions, but her understanding of culture as a tool for change is keenly entangled with a unique social and cultural sensibility. The resilience of the communities that she works with, often in such a complex situation, is improved by working through their own cultural references, traditions and roots.