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**'WOMEN ON A MISSION' BECOMES FIRST ALL-FEMALE TEAM TO CROSS IRAN'S LUT DESERT
AND RAISES \$100,000 SGD FOR WOMEN SURVIVORS OF WAR IN THE PROCESS**

"There is a global epidemic of violence against women – both within conflict zones and within societies at peace – and it is still treated as a lesser crime and lower priority." - Angelina Jolie, Special Envoy to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees

Singapore, December 2016 - An independent, self-funded, team of 12 women from Singapore, Hong Kong, Paris, Dubai, London and Bangkok under the banner of **Women on a Mission (WOAM)**, a non-profit organisation headquartered in Singapore, which supports and empowers abused women and survivors of war, has successfully crossed the Lut Desert of Iran in November 2016. The Lut, which was recently named a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2016, means 'emptiness' in Persian, and is home to the hottest temperature ever recorded on the Earth's surface. Global satellite weather measurements once registered ground temperatures of 70.7 degrees Celsius there. In 1271, Marco Polo travelled through the Lut desert, as did British explorer, Wilfred Thesiger, in 1964 — but both used camels. The WOAM team crossed the 200km expanse of unforgiving desert terrain on foot in seven days and has become the first all-female team in history to do so.



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As of today, through its fundraising, the WOAM Iran team has successfully raised \$100,000 SGD for Women for Women International (WfWI) – an independent humanitarian organisation, which provides women survivors of war, civil strife and other conflicts, with the tools and resources to move from crisis and poverty to stability and self-sufficiency.

Brita Fernandez Schmidt, Executive Director of WfWI in the UK stated, *“The women we work with live in some of the world’s most dangerous places – it can be hard for us to imagine their daily challenges. I find it so inspiring that WOAM push themselves far outside their comfort zone in order to raise money and awareness for women survivors of war. Each trek they take on is just as challenging as the last, and WOAM members truly go the extra mile to leverage their networks and raise incredible sums of money, which make a real difference to the women we serve.”*

WOAM, now in its fourth year of operation, has managed to raise a total of 700,000 Singapore dollars to date, in support of organisations that advance the position of women and girls around the world. In addition to WfWI, the team also champions and raises funds for the following Singapore-based charities: AWARE - Singapore’s leading gender equality advocacy group; UN Women; Aidha - a Singapore NGO empowering domestic workers; and Pertapis Home for Women and Girls.



Supported by an amazing Iranian logistics team, the women's voyage began in the Iranian capital of Tehran, where they explored the beautiful monuments, buzzing bazaars and learnt about life in Iran today. The following day, the team took a short flight to Birjand, a town south east of Tehran, before being dropped off at the trailhead then let loose on the desert.

From there, the women began their pioneering crossing of the Lut Desert, passing a multitude of ever-changing landscapes of imposing sand dunes - amongst some of the highest in the world - with many shaped like stars, due to the strong shifting winds that cause them to radiate out across the desert plains. During their journey, they explored salt plains cracked from the fierce sun, passed meteorite craters and finally tackled the 'moon on earth', miles of Kalut rock formations that stand like enormous sand castles and which serve as stark reminders of just how harsh this desert environment can be. The Lut desert hosts a varied display of wonderful desert-related structural phenomena and experiences deadly high temperatures in the summer months with very little precipitation annually (under 5cm per year) – absolutely nothing grows there.

After completing this epic crossing, the team arrived in Keshit, a small oasis village and then drove to Kerman, one of Iran's oldest cities and also a UNESCO world heritage site with traditional caves used by its inhabitants dating back 3,000 years.

By trekking in such challenging conditions, WOAM hopes to bring international attention to the need for societies, governments and corporations to get involved and help end violence against women. The team feels passionately that this reality can no longer be tolerated, in any form, in any context, and by anyone around the globe.

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Ultimately, WOAM's objective is to inspire women to want to leave their comfort zone, their families and homes for a certain period of time, while pushing their limits in an effort to rally support for a worthy cause. At the core of their culture is a passion for adventure and a deep respect and love of nature. They seek to travel and explore the world, and as a result make new discoveries, flourish as individuals, and most importantly, to contribute to society by championing the cause of abused women around the world.



FIND OUT MORE

About WOAM

WOAM is a non-profit organisation headquartered in Singapore, which combines challenging, self funded, expeditions and trek to remote and majestic locations around the world, with inspirational fundraising events and workshops in Singapore and abroad, as a means to raise awareness and funds for women survivors of war and to support and empower women who have been subjected to violence and abuse. WOAM's strategy is to organise and promote a yearly campaign and a challenging expedition - self-funded by each participant - to increase visibility, and to raise money for their chosen charities. WOAM partners with existing established non-profit institutions that already have well run programmes and structures in place dedicated to serving the underprivileged with a particular focus on women's issues. <http://www.womenmission.com>

About Women for Women International (WfWI)

Since 1993, WfWI has worked with more than 447,000 women in post conflict countries including South Sudan, Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of Congo and, this year, they launched a new pioneering programme assisting





Syrian and Yezidi women refugees and internally displaced Iraqi women in northern Iraq by partnering with local organisations on the ground.

WfWI envisions a world where no one is abused, poor, illiterate or marginalised; where members of communities have full and equal participation in the processes that ensure their health, well-being and economic independence; and where everyone has the freedom to define the scope of their life, their future and strive to achieve their full potential.

That is why WfWI works with the most marginalised women survivors of war, in a carefully designed and tested one-year core programme, to provide support and safety networks. The women in their programme can choose a vocational skill to learn and receive business training, so they can earn a living; they are educated on their legal rights and how to fight of those rights in their homes, their communities and their nations. Programme graduates report that strengthened self-confidence and solidarity with women and others in their communities help to sustain changes and build a peaceful, sustainable future. <http://www.womenforwomen.org.uk>

About the team's preparation

The team was trained by CrossFit Tanjong Pagar, one of Singapore's leading sports gyms, who customised an intense training regimen for the women heading to Iran, pushing stamina, core strength and endurance to the max. Additionally, the team was also sponsored by Simply Active Pure Sports Nutrition - Singapore, experts in sports nutrition, who provided a wide range of healthy nutritional and energy-boosting alternatives for the women to take with them.

Team Profiles

The expedition team of this 'Women on a Mission' Trek to Iran 2016 is formed by 12 intrepid women of diverse nationalities and backgrounds. While they are all incredibly well accomplished in their careers, they are equally passionate about supporting charitable causes and helping the less privileged. To find out more about the WOAM Iran 2016 trekking team please click [here](#).

The press release is issued by Skyy Creative Consultant Pte Ltd

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To see pictures of the team's journey, 'LIKE' their Facebook page, follow them on Twitter and Instagram:

<https://www.facebook.com/WOAMSingapore>

<https://twitter.com/WOAMSingapore>

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To support the team please donate via their Just Giving page: <https://www.justgiving.com/teams/woamiran2016>



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