



● **COMPENDIUM OF GOOD PRACTICES**
**Addressing Gender Based
Discriminatory
Social Beliefs and Practices**



A publication of:
The Center of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR)
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Views and opinions expressed in this compendium do not necessarily
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When CAWTAR submitted an application to the Ford Foundation to fund its project on discriminatory practices, it was aware of the difficulty of the proposed subject, and the difficulty of agreeing on the suggested methodology and addressing the concerns of the project’s target populations, such as institutions, organizations and individuals. In addition, the Centre’s objectives require addressing both original and prospective programmes as the basis of future work. Hence, the comprehensive project ‘Dynamics of Beliefs, Discriminatory Social Practices and Gender Equity in the MENA Region: Lessons Learned During the Last Twenty Years’ was initiated.

This project produced a practical guide for treating discriminatory practices and beliefs, and a compendium of good practices, including 16 practices for addressing discrimination that violates the human rights of women and children, such as the right to own and use one’s body, security, dignity, health, reproductive health, education, communication, information access, and economic and political participation. In order to share this information, the project has produced a specialized website and a paper intended for decision-makers.

Since this publication deals with the lessons learned from initiatives, programmes, activities and research that treated or intend to treat discriminatory practices, the project preparation process has enabled us, as an active party in combating discrimination against women, to recognize the following concerns:

- The need for standardising the definitions relating to best practices/good practices, establishing a consensus on them, and appropriately training the various participants.
- The need for the documentation of experiences and adopting this technique as one of the monitoring/evaluation mechanisms, which requires laying the foundations of documentation and related training.
- The absence of attention to institutional memory, which can represent, at the experience level, a knowledge reference on the adopted approaches and the mechanisms for overcoming challenges and evaluation/monitoring.

The initiatives included in this publication emphasize:

- The importance of socio-cultural contexts in designing any type of initiative or field intervention. For such a reason, what may appear a simple action in these experiences is an achievement in the fullest sense of the word in a given socio-cultural context.
- The importance of innovative approaches in designing strategies. Albeit important in their time, ‘hackneyed’ approaches are not productive today.
- The importance of the participatory approach to ensure initiative sustainability.
- The importance of raising the awareness of donors about the need to support time-consuming initiatives and provide more funds to address discriminatory practices, instead of allocating insufficient budgets for limited periods of time.

CAWTAR hopes that the project has laid the foundations of subsequent initiatives in addressing discriminatory social practices in the Arab region, and that the learned lessons will enable initiative implementers to avoid replicating previous shortcomings and errors. CAWTAR extends its thanks to all those who contributed to implementing the project, especially Dr. Houda Badran, Project Scientific Coordinator, Ms. Shahira Ahmad, who prepared the Scientific Guide and the Compendium of Good Practices, and Dr. Adila Abou Sharaf, Project Coordinator. CAWTAR also extends its thanks to the Ford Foundation for its support and cooperation.

**Dr. Soukeina Bouraoui,
Executive Director**

Introduction

Nine out of the sixteen initiatives, presented within the project on addressing discriminatory beliefs and social practices, focus on the discriminatory practices that violate women's and children's rights. The remaining initiatives deal with economic and political discrimination, information access and exchange, and voicing opinions and ideas.

Six initiatives deal with the right of a woman to own and use her body. The aim is to address the discriminatory practices anchored in Arab traditions, which consider that family honour is entirely based on the woman's body and any woman considered guilty of non-observance of this honour code is faced with violence and even death in the name of the family's honour. This is one of the worst forms of violence against women, and is addressed by the Jordanian initiative on "Taking the Honour out of "Crimes of Honour". The initiative seeks to change the Jordanian mindset by separating the concept of honour from women's bodies and behaviour, and linking honour crimes to poverty and the family's economic condition.

The two initiatives from Egypt and Sudan deal with two additional types of violence against women. The first one deals with female genital mutilation (FGM) performed in order to kill women's sexual desires and prevent women from lapsing into illegitimate relations. This is the situation that the FGM initiative has sought to change in Al Minya in Egypt. It has succeeded in making different parties support the campaign and take the view that the practice is harmful. The second type of violence is rape, used as a weapon during wars to tarnish the enemy's honour. The Darfur gender violence initiative has succeeded in breaking the wall of silence on the issue and establishing a social and psychological counselling centre especially dedicated to violence victims.

The three remaining initiatives on women's rights to use their bodies deal with an important set of reproductive rights such as the right to safe abortion, pregnancy spacing, and the right of male and female youth to protection from sexually transmitted diseases. The sub-regional initiatives in Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco on abortion rights and practice deal with the causes that prevent women from enjoying the right to safe abortion as part of standard reproductive health services. The initiative of the Jordanian Association for Family Planning and Protection focuses on building awareness about the importance of the exercise of women's right to choose when to have children and the number of desired pregnancies. It has succeeded in reducing the rates of child birth, neonatal mortality and fertility. Tunisia's initiative on reproductive health among adolescents and youths focuses on the right of this group to access information in the area of reproductive health through programmes of education, awareness raising and counselling. The aim is capacity building for decision-making in this area and protection from sexually transmitted diseases.

By treating discriminatory practices on the basis of a legal approach adopting the concept of the 'healthy family', the three initiatives on reproductive health have highlighted that the violation of women's rights in this area is a result of the power relations inside paternalistic societies, thus negatively impacting women's health, children and family relations, including husband-wife relations. The initiatives also underscore the positive correlation between exercising rights and consolidating legislation, on the one hand, and protection from costly consequences to society, on the other.

The Arab Street Children Initiative deals with a number of basic human rights for children, as stipulated in the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, such as the right to dignity, security, health, physical integrity and education.

The initiative covering Egypt, Sudan, Morocco, Yemen and Lebanon considers that street children, i.e. those who are without a family or those who leave their family to seek refuge in the street, are victims of exclusion, marginalization, exploitation and are often early school dropouts.

The two initiatives in Libya and Yemen address another basic human right, the right to education, and consider the discriminatory practices that threaten this right while shedding light on the strong correlation between education and both the reported improvement in the area of fertility, specifically neonatal mortality reduction, and additionally the possibility of making important, real social changes.

The initiative on higher education and study-abroad scholarships for female students in Libya considers the discriminatory practices that hamper women in reaching higher education. It shows that the gap between the sexes in higher education emanates from different sources, including religious misinterpretations, customs and traditions, socio-political environments and institutional measures and mechanisms.

The initiative on illiteracy eradication through poetry in Yemen tackles illiteracy among rural women and highlights its impact on health care benefits and family health in general, participation in decision-making and economic empowerment. The main advantages of the initiative lie in integrating the oral cultural heritage into illiteracy eradication efforts, and in considering rural women's conditions and needs, and the nature of their farming work.

Starting from the premise that the right to employment and participation in economic life is guaranteed by international agreements and conventions as well as national constitutions and legislation, and the means for empowering women exist at more than one level, three initiatives have dealt with the issue of women's economic participation by considering micro-credits and their role in empowering women in Saudi Arabia, Kordofan State – Sudan (Cooperative Credit Project) and Morocco (Salary Discrimination Between the Sexes).

These initiatives largely deal with the hurdles that prevent women from obtaining loans and limit their role in consolidating their economic situation. They also deal with the different quotas for women and men, which impede the balanced distribution of resources among them. The initiative implementers believe that the methodologies are new, innovative and adequate for women's conditions and requirements, as well as being appropriate to treating the causes of discrimination, employment infringements, and other negative treatments by referring to the reality of the job market.

The initiative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia addresses the obstacles that prevent women from obtaining loans and limit their role in improving their economic situation. The initiative, implemented by the King Abdulaziz Women's Charity Organisation in Al Kasim, has endeavoured to overcome these hurdles by facilitating measures, allocating interest-free loans and dealing as directly as possible with the women themselves or through male relatives.

The Sudanese initiative focuses on the quota discrepancy between men and women in the EN Nahud Cooperative Credit Project in Kordofan State. It is based on the idea that the unjust distribution of property and resources favoring men has a negative impact on the family because women usually devote their income and resources to the benefit of their families. The initiative aims at addressing the obstacles that prevent a balanced resource distribution between men and women through a new work methodology that includes allocating credit, providing integrated social and training services for women, and ensuring income generating activities near their homes.

By using national surveys, the Moroccan initiative deals with salary discrimination between women and men of equal qualifications. It treats the causes of such discrimination and sheds light on the reported hiring violations by referring to the reality of the job market.

On the basis of the international conventions that ensure women's right to political participation, a single Palestinian study focuses on women's weak political participation. The initiative calls for establishing the quota system as a legislative strategy to ensure equity for women, bolster their participation in national and local councils, and make them more effective in decision-making and policy design. The initiative is based on a number of references calling for changing electoral codes and introducing positive discrimination to the advantage of women.

With the increased reliance on information and communication technologies, the right to information access and exchange and to freedom of expression has gained new dimensions. Networks now play a fundamental role in building women's voices and consolidating their citizenship rights. These issues are tackled by three initiatives in Mauritania, Lebanon and the Arab Gulf.

The Mauritanian initiative focuses on women's access to information and communication technologies by creating a website to enable Mauritanian women to use new information channels that give them an opportunity to voice their views without any discrimination and to obtain and exchange information. The aim is to raise their awareness about their rights without any discrimination and to develop their level of competence and interaction with others.

The sub-regional initiative in the Arab Gulf deals with the opportunity offered by networks in establishing a constructive dialogue on women's citizenship rights through a dynamic relationship between international women's networks and national non-governmental organisations, and the interactive relationship between universal and local discourses on the issues of social justice and equality.

The initiative on Lebanese novels analyses a selection of literary writings by using a gender-based approach with the aim of depicting a realistic picture of Lebanese women's position and rights at the local and national levels according to the laws and the social, cultural and economic contexts. The study focuses on the right of women to free expression by discussing a set of topics such as love, domination and violence.

Although the investigated discriminatory beliefs and social practices vary from one study to another, most studies concur that the problems of gender discrimination flow from different sources and are instituted by those who practice discrimination throughout society as a whole. The studies show that discriminatory practices are legalised by states or are given legal weight by religious misinterpretation. In addition, some social customs and traditions are among the important sources of discriminatory practices.

The influence of the traditional patriarchal family, the cornerstone of prevailing male society, contributes to reinforcing discrimination and inequality between the sexes. What is worrisome is that patriarchal power is becoming more rooted in the Arab world in reaction to globalisation. This unconscious fear of change has become the main cause for more tightly holding on to the existing status quo and maintaining and even increasing inequality and discriminatory practices, thus negatively impacting not only women, but the family and society as a whole.

I COMBATING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Confronting the Problem of Female Genital Mutilation in the Al Minya Region in Egypt

Theme / Themes:

- Gender-Based Violence

Project type:

- Awareness Raising / Advocacy

Duration:

- Since 2004

Executing / Proposed organisations:

- Better Life Association for Comprehensive Development (BLACD)

Author of the study:

- Maher Boshra, Director of BLACD

Cost (Funding value and source): 2004-2006

- UNICEF: 625,774 EGP
- Diakonia, Sweden: 621,817 EGP

Human resources:

- Full-time staff: 8
- Part-time staff: 58
- Volunteers: 300

Partners:

- **Local:** Four non-governmental organizations and nine churches
- **Governmental:** Eight clinics and public health centres
- **Civil society:** 60 activists
- **International:** UNICEF, Diakonia (Sweden)

Initiative Overview : The Better Life Association for Comprehensive Development (BLACD) in Minya started working in the Nile eastern suburbs in 1995. Through its various activities, BLACD noticed widespread Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and decided to prevent it. First, it decided to continue working on consolidating cooperation and trust with the local community, and then started combating FGM. This approach succeeded. In parallel, BLACD held meetings and discussions with women and men in the local community to identify the best possible means to confront the problem and adopt a campaign to end FGM.

Social Discriminatory Practices Targeted: Female Genital Mutilation is widespread in the Middle East and some African countries. Some discriminatory social and cultural factors contribute to its dissemination, requiring a comprehensive approach essentially based on promoting women's rights so that women can effectively confront this issue.

Socio-Cultural Context: Statistics show that women represent 22% of the Egyptian workforce. They represent 26% in national councils and only 1.8% in local councils. The project surveyed 1,600 Minya inhabitants and found that 96% of the surveyed women would like to work but could not find a job or were not sufficiently encouraged to secure one. Jobs are available in farming (21%), working with husbands (15%), and selling fresh products such as cheese, butter and fish (11%), indicating that most working women (70%) do not receive a salary and do not have the right to own land, which is mostly owned by male family members: fathers (6.3%), brothers (1.8%), husbands (46%), and mothers (6%). 60% of the surveyed women do not have identity cards.

In regards to health, 60% of the surveyed women declared they were anaemic and 42% of them suffered from bone fragility. Interviews of local physicians reveal that the causes of such health problems are usually due to the absence of family planning and the deteriorating economic situation, meaning that girls usually suffer from more malnutrition than boys.

The results of the study indicate that 90% of the surveyed women married at the age of 15. 75% of them recognized that they experienced domestic violence. 50% of them reported a physical handicap such as a broken rib, or other permanent physical handicaps. 75% of them are subjected to daily verbal abuse and 72% are coerced into having sex with their husbands.

67% of the surveyed women are illiterate. However, 16% of them managed to have primary education and 2% went through the first years of secondary education. The main cause for not going to school is being prevented from doing so by their relatives. 34% could not go to school because of work duties or economic reasons.

As is the case in many local Egyptian communities, Minya's religious leaders are highly influential. Their predominantly paternalistic views support and disseminate discrimination between the sexes.

In the last ten years, Minya has witnessed a widespread emergence of organizations and facilities dealing with women's issues. BLACD assisted in creating two non-governmental organizations and eight women's networks aimed at promoting women's rights.

Objectives and Goals

The project is primarily aimed at reducing the rate of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in Egypt and eradicating this practice in Minya in particular. The short-term objectives include breaking the silence in Minya in order to be able to discuss FGM, building the capacity of local non-governmental organizations to defend women's rights, building the capacity of the effective local figures in authority positions (religious leaders, physicians, government, and civil society leaders) to recognize and confront FGM, and finding alternative income-generating activities for 50 individuals living on FGM-generated incomes. Protecting girls from violence and ensuring an enabling environment for their positive role in changing the local community is part of the short-term central objectives of the project. Long-term objectives contribute to creating a more supportive environment to promote women's and children's rights, and reducing the number of circumcised girls.

Good Practices

Innovative Approach

Compared to the approaches adopted in dealing with similar issues, the Minya project approach is considered original for the following reasons:

- It focused on a marginalized geographical region by developing interventions based on the proposals of the local community (participatory approach).
- It determined various strategies to mobilize the local community and influence decision-makers.
- It established civil society groups to support women's rights in various local communities.
- It presented girls who had not been circumcised and the mothers who refused to allow their daughters to be circumcised as positive examples to support the project's efforts.

- An action plan was designed to cause a change in attitudes and decisions concerning FGM in a short period of time.
- The approach endeavoured to raise awareness by relying on local groups to break the silence on FGM.
- It focused on building the capacity of individuals and local organizations to ensure the sustainability of the efforts aimed at changing attitudes and behaviours.
- It developed strategies to draft petitions and seek support for the project.
- It designed a strategy to empower women and girls and support their decision to maintain their rights.
- It monitored and followed-up on families in order to maintain attitude change.
- It worked with governmental and non-governmental organisations to include the issue in their agendas.
- It used qualitative and quantitative data to assess the activities.

Participatory Approach

The organization continued working in the region by creating an environment of trust and cooperation with the local community. To start working on treating FGM, the organization held meetings with women and men in the local community to determine the best possible ways to prevent it and draft funding proposals. It obtained funding from UNICEF to work with eight groups in the region. The pre-design phase to develop the project idea included the following:

- Needs analysis
- Identifying the local organizations and regions that can be project partners
- Identifying target groups
- Determining best practices from other relevant projects
- Partner capacity building in preventing FGM. The training covered:
 - Four non-governmental organizations
 - Women's and girls' rights associations
 - Language teachers and school principals
 - Midwives
 - Muslim and Christian religious figures
 - Local leaders
 - Journalists
 - Project coordinators and volunteers



- Project activity design followed and included an action plan for each local community and its leaders. This was followed by a wide contact and media campaign in each local community through meetings, conferences and workshops organized by young female medical groups. Such awareness-raising activities continued throughout the project period.



Overcoming Challenges

- Various challenges were confronted, such as the complete absence of structures inside the local community which could support the project at the beginning, the wall of silence on the issue in the region, the resistance of religious leaders who believe that FGM is a religious duty, the resistance of those who earn a generous income from FGM, the lack of interest of policy makers who believe that the issue is not a priority, confusing media messages on the issue, the pressure encountered by anyone wishing to stop FGM in the local community, and acceptance of the conspiracy theory which views the project as a result of Western intervention.
- Various measures were taken to meet these challenges head-on: mobilizing the local organizations to lead trust-building efforts inside the local community; continuing awareness-raising to create a lasting space for change and support; urging policy-makers and decision-makers to ensure their continuous support; creating a committee chaired by a major local dignitary from the region and made up of members from the various ministries, which helped in facilitating the activities and confronting the challenges; establishing a loan 'scheme' to provide an alternative income for those who practice FGM as a profession; integrating FGM into other existing programmes and endeavours; documenting and sharing positive models and best practices; and establishing a strategy to assess all the project components.

Immediate Successes

- Organising four demonstrations calling for an end to FGM
- Adopting a wall poster campaign to illustrate women's rights and call for their consolidation
- Organising a campaign under the leadership of medical teams to highlight the medical hazards of this practice

Monitoring and Evaluation

- Prior to implementation
 - Pre-study of the concerned local communities
 - Lengthy interviews of the target groups
 - Establishing annual and quarterly plans
- During implementation
 - Partnership agreements with local organizations
 - Establishing target family lists
 - Monitoring target family agendas
 - Monthly, quarterly and annual reports
 - Minutes of the project team meetings
- After each phase
 - Organising intensive discussion groups
 - Undertaking in-depth individual discussions with the target groups
 - Visiting target families

The terms of reference of the officers in charge of monitoring and evaluation include:

- Monitoring the officers in charge of the activities in all partner organizations
- Monitoring the project team in each local community, made up of workers, volunteers, local leaders and families
- Monitoring project coordinators and directors of the executing organizations
- Preparing an external evaluation for the representatives of the funding organizations
- Establishing an advisory committee made up of the representatives of ministries and local governments

Ensuring Continuity

- The project activities are continued by groups committed to ending FGM. Such groups include families which stopped practicing it, clinics, schools, local leaders and some other local organisations.
- Media and local community members now own the issue and continue dealing with it in different ways.
- The presence of the project-executing organization in the local community for a long time ensures project continuity.
- Many indicators have been established to assess continuation efforts, i.e. the number of programmes developed by the organizations, and the number of the programmes that are being elaborated upon by the local organizations which have integrated combating FGM into their activities.

Input Indicators:

- Number of trainings for religious leaders and circumcisers
- Number of participants at trainings for religious leaders and circumcisers
- Number of activities for raising awareness (based on type)
- Number of participants in activities for raising awareness
- Number of individual visits to local leaders
- Number of visits to local organizations
- The type of messages chosen in awareness sessions
- Number of house visits to target families.

Output and Outcome Indicators:

- Number of strategies implemented by local organizations to address female circumcision
- Number of advocates working in raising awareness
- Number of families intending to circumcise their daughters
- The percentage of families taking part in activities
- Number of circumcisers that have stopped the practice

Impact Indicators:

- Number of families that have stopped the practice
- Ratio of the number of families that have stopped FGM to the total number of families targeted
- The number of girls that have been saved from circumcision

Contribution to Social Transformations

- 1,754 families (50%) out of 3,505 target families decided to stop practicing FGM after two years of project duration. 28 of those earning a living from FGM swore to stop practicing it. In addition, 5,489 girls have been protected since 2004. (These girls were monitored up to the age of 16 and it is believed that at such age the girls are permanently protected).

Lessons for Replication

- Many learned lessons can be replicated. They essentially include the determination of effective elements and their integration in all project phases as well as the gradual determination of objectives to ensure a continuous activity review. FGM must be integrated into the other existing programmes and the local community priorities.

In addition, efforts should include activities aimed at empowering women so that they can claim their rights, and adopting original tools such as theatre, films and songs, which the local community can easily accept. The tools must be inspired by the local values, culture and traditions so that the local community can respond to them and participate in creating them. In addition, different evaluation methods are needed to assess project innovations and measure progress with the correct methods.

Partnerships and cooperation with the local organisations should be established in the first project phase to create strong and lasting partnerships. Finally, the employed staff and volunteers have to be selected according to the extent of their belief in and support of the various project aims.



Confronting Gender-Based Violence in Darfur

Theme(s):

- Gender-Based Violence

Type of Program:

- Awareness Raising and Capacity Building

Country/Region:

- Sudan (Darfur region)

Submitting/Executing Organizations:

- Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa (SIHA)

Author:

- Manal Mohamed Abdel Halim, Coordinator of SIHA Program in Darfur

Project Cost [Amount and Source of Funds]:

- €133,000 Oxfam Holland/Germany: Supported programs of local organizations and groups and local administration
- \$26,000 Ford Foundation: Contributed to the book documenting women's experiences
- \$50,000 UNICEF: Counselling and social support
- \$78,000 Open Society Institute: Capacity building of local organizations at the Bailial camp

Human Resources:

- Project Manager (woman)
- Trainers (2 men and 3 women)
- Administrative Assistant (man)
- Volunteers
- Coordinator of Activities in Northern Darfur

Partners:

Oxfam-Holland; Oxfam-Germany; Ford Foundation; Open Society Institute; UNICEF

Initiative Overview: The Darfur region in Sudan has witnessed what the United Nations qualifies as one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world, resulting in the failure of human rights in general and women's rights in particular. This initiative covers the Sayha network project to combat gender violence in Darfur. Sayha is made up of a group of African organizations working together on gender violence. The network was created to carry out two types of intervention: direct services to female victims of violence (medical services, psychological and legal counselling) and indirect interventions to deal with the framework in which violence occurs (such as support and capacity building, awareness-raising about violence, and the amendment of laws and policies to confront violence).

Social Discriminatory Practices Targeted: The crisis in the region has made more than 4 million persons homeless according to UN estimates. Various forms of human rights violations were recorded by different sources, and are present in the uncontrolled crime of rape against women and girls and the deteriorating economic, social and political conditions of women living in the camps.

Socio-Cultural Context: In Darfur, women largely depend upon themselves to earn a living. In some areas, women represent at least 80% of the agricultural workforce. However, women are completely absent from decision-making structures and centres as social practices of religious and tribal origin limit their independence. For example, tradition prevents women from walking past a group of men, and women are expected to bow in respect when greeted by men. Women are not allowed to eat or drink in public places, even when they work in such places. Polygamy is widespread and enhances the social status of the polygamous husband.

Laws and Policies: The region's laws and policies are based on Sharia and influenced by traditions and customs. Women are subject to two systems: a traditional system managed by local councils and chaired by tribal leaders, and an official legal system. Both systems contain discriminatory laws against women such as the code of personal status, criminal law, nationality law, and property law. Neither system includes laws forbidding gender-based violence.

Objectives and Goals

Long-term objectives include empowering women to become economically independent and capable of protecting themselves, awareness-raising of gender-based issues among those working in the region (relief organizations, non-governmental organizations, and so on), and instituting partnerships with members of civil society. Short-term objectives include service provision to violence victims and capacity building for networks and social forces in order to change attitudes towards gender-based violence by using innovative means such as theatre, arts and music.

Good Practices

Innovative Approach

- SIHA implemented comprehensive and integrated activities:
 - Running a centre in Bilial Camp to provide medical, psychological and legal counselling and a service for the victims of gender-based violence
 - Capacity building for the various participants operating in Darfur to raise awareness about gender-based violence and teach how to deal with it in the various work areas, with training focused on the following areas:
 - Preparing strategies to address violence, providing services to victims of violence, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, coordinating efforts with partners, and advocacy
 - Establishing a network of local participants to share knowledge, consolidate capacity and create a ground for ensuring the sustainability of the centre's services
 - Consolidating local partner strategies and projects with resources and technical expertise to strengthen the capacity of civil society in addressing violence against women
 - Documenting women's experiences in the region for disseminating information, providing advocacy facts, and defending the rights of aggressed women

Women and Conflict in the Region:

The conflict in Darfur has brought to light the region's massive violations against women. Women and girls are experiencing rape and beatings by the militia inside their farms and villages. Women end up shouldering the burden of losing family members, displacement, fragmentation, identity crisis, and insecurity. Their access to food, shelter, resources, markets and income is becoming increasingly limited. Although the overall women's situation is devastating and their needs are overwhelming, they are the heads of their households and community keepers; they struggle to keep their families, communities and identities intact in order to survive despite the armed struggle.



Participatory Approach

- Prior to activity implementation, Sayha had gone through several initial preparation phases:
 - Discussing the project among the network board members to determine the added value of combating gender-based violence in Darfur
 - Organising a workshop to determine a strategy for confronting violence against women in Africa and Darfur in particular; one of the network's proposed strategies was the creation of a committee of the non-governmental organisations in the region to monitor and assess the efforts deployed by the government to face violence; the network also underscored the importance of granting different types of compensation (relating to inheritance and property rights) to the victims who contributed to support operations.
 - Adopting the principle of consultation in creating the community service centre in Darfur

Overcoming Challenges

- Several challenges were encountered: The absence of security in the region leading to the interruption of services in some centres, widespread suspicion and absence of trust among women living in the camp, shortcomings and gaps in the Sudanese law on gender-based violence that led women to avoid reporting cases of violence for fear of reprisal, harassment of victims and their families by the local authorities when they attempted to report cases, and failure to bring criminals to court because many of them held powerful positions.

- Several strategies were adopted to overcome some of these challenges:

- Assessing interventions
- Implementing activities through local partners, training camp leaders on the ways of documenting and reporting cases of violence
- Supporting contacts and activities through an extensive network of actors combating violence in the region

Immediate Successes

The initiative was widely welcomed by the target groups and the local community:

- 6,000 local community members received different forms of information (bulletins, posters, plays) on the negative meaning of violence and the importance of confronting it.
- 60 members from the local community and local authorities were trained on how to deal with reported cases of violence.
- The number of women benefiting from the training workshops increased by 55%.
- The initiative contributed to bridging the information gap by publishing a book in Arabic of women's stories with the title *Queens Without Crowns: Stories of Women Survivors in Darfur*.
- Alternative work solutions were created to limit the need for leaving the camp to search for wood, as wood collection was a generous source of income for some women.

Examples of Indicators for Monitoring and Evaluation:

Input:

- Number of people from community and NGOs to be trained on addressing gender-based violence
- Number of posters and information flyers distributed to community with information on the negative implications of violence
- Establishment of reporting structure supported by civil society

Output:

- Number of training workshops held
- Increase in the number of women attending workshops
- Increase in knowledge of the community on how to respond to violence
- Establishment of theatre group

Outcome:

- Creation of alternative forms of work for women that does not require leaving the camp
- Improvement in the documentation reports of the police
- Acknowledgement of community of the value of the Center
- Higher rate of men working in women's projects
- Decreased number of violence cases

Monitoring and Evaluation

Two types of monitoring and evaluation were carried out: Internal activities (by project leaders) and external activities (by UNICEF). Internal and external monitoring was carried out through regular reporting, field visits, and meetings with the initiative consultants. Evaluation included meetings with partners and target groups.

Ensuring Sustainability

- Entering into partnership with and supporting local networks and organisations contributed to building the capacity of the participants willing to continue efforts after project completion.
- The activity implementation space was transformed into a support tool for other serious issues in the local community.
- The participation of aggressed women ensured developing generous income-generating projects as a means for guaranteeing sustainability.

Contribution to Social Transformation

- The initiative exceeded expectations for its objective achievement by contributing to capacity building and reinforcing the capacity of the local community to confront violence. The importance of combating sexual violence, especially rape, has become a message conveyed by religious and local leaders in support of victims.
- The use of theatre represents a major element of success in breaking the silence about violence through participation and dialogue among the members of the local community, women and men alike.
- The centre has become a public space for participation and work within a women's network in the local community.
- A group of supporting men was created. They now participate in women's activities outside the camp and accept to work in women-led projects.



Lessons for Replication

- The interventions undertaken as part of the initiative present lessons about the importance of adopting innovative project implementation methods. In spite of the fact that confronting gender-based violence took place in the specific context of Darfur, it is possible to benefit from the initiative's success and implement its methods in other contexts:
- **Armed conflict:** By adopting a two-way approach that provides direct services during the conflict, and works on capacity building and providing the basic infrastructure that can be maintained after the conflict (exit strategy)
- **Local community:** Using essential contribution and participation methods for building trust, ensuring interventions, and meeting the needs of the local community.



Taking the Honour out of “Crimes of Honour”: A Project for Changing the Jordanian Mentality *

Theme(s):

- Gender-Based Violence

Type of Program:

- Raising Awareness

Country/Region:

- Jordan (National)

Submitting/Executing Organizations:

- Managing Partner EnConsult

Author:

- Yusuf Mansur, Director of EnConsult

Human Resources:

- Principal Researcher (Economist) to design the empirical model, draft the study and present and disseminate the findings
- Researcher (Psychologist/Sociologist) to supervise the questionnaire and data gathering process
- Volunteers (neighbourhood leaders, grass-roots activists, sociologists) to, along with the Researcher, interview the households of victims, gather and input data

Partners:

The Project Steering Committee, comprised of stakeholders including religious, academic, political, and cultural icons, will be involved in all phases of the project. CAWTAR is being asked to partner in Phase 1 activities; other initiatives and media experts are being asked to partner in Phase 2.

- **Initiative overview:** The initiative stems from the idea of taking out the element of ‘honour’ from ‘crimes of honour’ and replacing it with the slogan of ‘poverty’. The aim is to turn this crime into an economic one and strip it of its misguided moral connotation. This may necessitate changing the mentality of the people in Jordan and then changing the legal and institutional framework, which has failed in dissuading the perpetrators of such crimes.
- **Social discriminatory practices targeted:** The so-called ‘crimes of honour’ are accepted practices in several Arab societies, especially in rural poor areas, where they are considered necessary for maintaining traditions and commitment to family ‘honour’ to the point that women who are related to the victims, such as mothers and sisters, defend this crime in some cases and even assist in perpetrating it.
- **Socio-cultural context:** According to official figures, about 28 Jordanian women die of ‘crimes of honour’ every year. But independent groups affirm that the real figure is much higher. Some of these crimes are perpetrated in rural and Bedouin areas and the local authorities do not report them on purpose to avoid scandals. Ignorance, poverty and the patriarchal tribal system have led to extensive misinterpretation of Islamic creeds and women are made to carry the burden of mistaken mental structures. The practice of killing women, which goes back to the pre-Islamic period, was ‘legalised’ to purify honour as if it were religiously acceptable despite its complete contradiction with Islamic Sharia.
- **Laws and policies:** Crimes of ‘honour’ are legalised by virtue of Article 340 (No. 16, 1960) of the Jordanian Penal Code. The code stipulates that ‘he who discovers his wife or one of his female relatives committing adultery with another, and he kills, wounds or injures one or both of them, is exempt from any penalty.’

In case the killing is taken to court, it is still possible to invoke Article 98 of the Penal Code, which stipulates that ‘He who commits a crime in a state of great fury resulting from an unlawful and dangerous act on the part of the victim shall benefit from the extenuating excuse.’ The positive law reflects women’s inferiority, which is confirmed by the negative implications relating to women’s in-family physical protection and their right for compensation. To illustrate, a woman’s testimony before the court is worth half that of a man’s.

According to the Code of Personal Status, a woman accused of sexual non-abstinence is questioned and her virginity tested. Women do not benefit from any guaranteed protection for the children they have outside marriage. Such children are considered the outcome of a ‘crime’ and are sent to government centres until their parenthood is determined. A woman loses the right of custody for her legal children if she remarries a man who is not related to her children. A Jordanian man, married to a foreign woman, can give his Jordanian nationality to his children whereas a Jordanian woman, married to a foreign man, does not enjoy such a right.

In 1999, a grassroots campaign led by a women’s movement and independent non-governmental human rights organisations, was initiated in an attempt to repeal Article 340 of the Jordanian Penal Code. In spite of the absence of social and political support, the campaign succeeded in collecting 15,000 signatures. According to a survey by Jordan Times, 62% of Jordanians are against the amendment of Article 340 and a much lower rate is against its repeal. The official support for the campaign was almost non-existent.

Objectives and Goals

Most crimes of honour in Jordan are perpetrated in poor Bedouin areas. Domestic violence among the poor in Jordan becomes a ‘crime of honour’ and the term ‘honour’ is extended to any visible non-observance of social principles by women. This does not include deviation from moral standards only. In some local communities, it covers going out to study or work. The objective of the initiative is to change the mentalities of the Jordanian local communities, extirpate the belief that crimes against women emanate from ‘honour’, and address these beliefs from an economic perspective. The main objectives are:

1. Providing evidence and proof, through documented court cases, files and data, to establish the fact that honour crimes are basically economic and not religious or cultural.
2. Disseminating the study results among the target groups through the media and communication channels in order to create a social awareness aimed at combating crimes of honour.
3. Establishing a new mentality in dealing with these crimes.

Good practices

Innovative Approach

- The initiative will be undertaken in two phases. The first phase includes data collection, initiative design, and presenting documented results to local community leaders, specialised governmental institutions, non-governmental organisations and international structures. The second phase consists of launching a national media campaign to change the mentality of the Jordanian people, especially in rural and Bedouin areas. The first phase activities will stand by themselves and remain valid for the second phase.
- The initiative requires a multifaceted approach, combining academic accuracy and thoughtful, creative tools and techniques to achieve the set objectives.

- Messages and addresses based on proofs, evidences and results will be sent to and disseminated by the media to establish a new mentality opposed to crimes of honour. The study results will be presented to magistrates, police superintendents, and religious figures during meetings and conferences, who will be provided with supporting information that can be used as references in the future. This approach will be supported through television programmes targeting Bedouin and poor areas.
- Data will be simplified and presented in an easy-to-understand forms that take into account and respect Bedouin mindset and customs in order to help avert violent, negative or opposing reactions inside the local community. They will also enable the religious leaders and the community leaders to maintain credibility in conveying messages to target groups. The approach, models and analytical examples will be extended to cover other states after completing the initiative in Jordan.

Overcoming Challenges

- Potential challenges may be related to social resistance. Awareness-raising campaigns are expected to impact on tribal leaders and family members, and to generate an adequate environment in the local community for combating honour crimes.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Specific initiative data will be collected from court files, field interviews, questionnaires and other research models. Data will be integrated in a measurement model to determine the correlation between data and honour crime causes. The analysis will focus on the family since it is a strategic social unit to reach crime perpetrators and victims through the following data:

- **Family income:** correlation with crime perpetrators
- **Family wealth:** highlighting correlations between family wealth and low probability of honour crime perpetration in rich families as such families are not usually influenced by a smeared social reputation and continue supporting their children
- **Number of working family members:** correlation between the high number of working family members and low rate of smeared reputation as a result of 'honour loss'
- **Educational level of breadwinners and families:** This is one of the indicators that contributes to income level and family adoption of new ideas; education, training and skill development are indicators of a major social dynamism, especially in Bedouin societies where educational level and wealth are low.

- **Number of family members:** This figure has an impact on the main breadwinner as a higher number increases the burden of reputation smear from honour crimes on the breadwinner and the possibility of family members' punishment is greater as a result of 'honour loss'.
- **Punishment measures:** As extenuation and encouragement, non-severe punishment and laws make the punishment for purifying one's honour less costly for the crime perpetrator, and vice versa.
- **The victim's income-generating capacity:** In its relationship with income improvement, whenever the income-generating capacity increases, its impact on the family increases and the likelihood of punishing a woman in the name of honour decreases.
- **The victim's educational level:** This provides 'future promises'. The higher the victim's educational level, the greater will be the impact on the family income in the future.

Ensuring Sustainability

After completing this initiative, and depending on the available funding, it is expected to:

- Create a free hotline and a 24-hour call centre open 7 days a week, run by female and male specialist counsellors. The call centre will cooperate with local hospitals and authorities in providing assistance to the women most threatened by honour crimes and the men most likely to commit them.
- Create a shelter in cooperation with the concerned authorities. The shelter will be unique because it will work as a clinic made up of counsellors, researchers, physicians and pharmacists.
- Train women officers to work with police departments and the family protection unit.
- Consolidate the programme of the family protection unit. This will be interactively done to ensure speedy crime reporting so that the unit can carry out the necessary measures to assist the most vulnerable women by:
 - Discussing their issues with health specialists to meet their health needs.
 - Providing women with information on physical safety; ensuring their safety, if need be; and providing health and psychological counselling to them so that they can lead normal lives, in coordination with the other concerned services.
 - Providing legal counselling, especially to the most vulnerable women during court hearings.
 - Providing a qualified specialist medical team and an equipped health care space in line with victims' needs.
 - Creating a Jordanian police investigations unit specialising in these crimes that will train teams that will be integrated into police departments, the family protection unit and the shelter.

Contribution to Social Transformations

● Changing the Approach to Combating Crimes of Honour

Crimes of honour have been considered for a number of decades as a deep-rooted social problem at the traditional, cultural and religious levels. As a result, several studies have focussed on social standards and the religious dimension of the issue. But these investigations have not generally succeeded in combating the destructive phenomenon.

● Adding the Economic Dimension

The examined economic dimension has not directly focussed on treating crimes of honour. Rarely has there been an investigation that tackled the economic forces that reinforce the paternalistic practices and violence against women in spite of the established clear correlation between 'crimes of honour' and poverty and ignorance.

● Promoting Awareness and Support Campaigns

Studies by themselves are not sufficient to combat this type of behaviour against women. Experimental research results (economic and others) dealing with 'crimes of honour' can be effective if linked to a strategy to disseminate research results through an appropriate qualitative campaign that will make it abnormal to accept crimes of honour at the popular level and at the level of the supporting institutions. The issue of 'honour' in these crimes has not benefited from in-depth and extensive media coverage.

The Arab Project for the Protection of Street Children

Theme(s):

- Gender-Based Violence

Type of Program:

- Provision of Services/Advocacy

Country/Region:

- Arab region

Project Duration:

- Ongoing

Submitting/Executing Organizations:

- The Arab Council for Childhood

Author:

- Bassam Mustafa Aesha, consultant

Initiative overview: The idea behind the initiative is to attempt to find innovative interventions to provide better direct services to street children by governmental and non-governmental organisations. The Arab Council for Childhood and Development typically focusses on the protection of street children in different ways. It aims at confronting the problems of street children by coordinating regional, national and local efforts while also supporting assistance from international programmes. The Council adopted a strategy to raise awareness, build capacity, and work with societies and victims at the same time.

Social discriminatory practices targeted: Street children suffer from the social perception of inferiority and condemnation. Society disapproves of them and considers them as criminals. As a result, laws have been enacted to penalise them, repress them and limit their freedom instead of protecting them. In addition, the juvenile delinquency rehabilitation process is too strict, thus leading to higher crime rates among these children. The few previous projects for providing street children services did not deal with the children from a human rights perspective.

Socio-cultural context: The names given to street children vary from one country to another. Some call them 'children without families' whereas others call them 'homeless children', 'delinquents',



‘abandoned children’, ‘very dangerous children’, ‘marginalised children’, and so on. All these names reflect different approaches to these children’s problems as well the conditions in which these children live. Street children marginalisation does not mean that they live in isolation because they establish their own societies which are governed by social relations and several survival and consumption patterns. They even have their own art and music. When these children try to interact with the world outside their own societies, they are met with harsh police treatment and social disdain.

Many factors, such as poverty, armed conflicts, internal migration and unemployment levels, contribute to the dissemination of the street children phenomena. The Arab Declaration (issued by the 1986 Conference on Childhood and Development, held in Tunis) affirms that family living standards in the Arab region are the most important factor in assessing children’s economic conditions.

Many studies confirm that street children usually belong to families that generate income from informal economic activities. Some of these studies relate the phenomenon to school dropout rates resulting from limited governmental support for educational services or the absence of good education programmes. Others link the phenomenon to domestic violence and family break-ups.

In addition, precise data and statistics on street children in the Arab region are lacking. The available statistics indicate the presence of 277 street children in Syria and thousands of them in Lebanon (including foreign ones). There are 63,600 street children in Palestine, 7,000 in Yemen, 93,500 in Egypt, 85,000 in Sudan, and 234,000 in Morocco. In Jordan street children are almost non-existent. Because of gender discrimination, street girls suffer twice as much as the boys from social rejection. They are exploited in street children’s communities. They are particularly vulnerable to violence and sexual exploitation.

National laws and policies: In 1986, a number of conferences yielded concrete results. The Charter on the Rights of the Arab Child and the Education and Teaching Strategy were produced. There was Arab participation in two international conferences on children in 1992 and 2002. The Arab Council for Childhood and Development was established in 1987. These efforts resulted from the interest of governments in child protection and the number of health and social studies undertaken in several Arab countries in cooperation with the League of Arab States, UNICEF, and the Arab Council for Childhood and Development. Ministries and funds were created to this end.

Objectives and Goals

The Council adopted a participatory approach in planning, implementing and monitoring the initiative. It also adopted an approach based on child rights as a basis in all phases. The specific objectives of the initiative are as follows:

- Establish a database on the conditions of street children in the region.
- Start with regional studies to assess the existing programmes.
- Raise awareness about the issue in the various countries.
- Contribute to improving the services provided by the existing programmes and consolidating national coordination.
- Create innovative direct intervention methods.
- Coordinate the deployed efforts at the regional and national levels in order to enable experience sharing with similar programmes in different countries.
- Support the ongoing efforts through capacity building.
- Work closely with the involved governments to decide on laws and policies, and ratify intervention mechanisms.

Good Practices

Innovative Approach

- The initiative will coordinate efforts to benefit from ongoing programmes. It will endeavour to diversify partners and the adopted work mechanisms in the design and implementation phases in the various covered countries. The aim is to adopt various means to investigate the problem of social attitudes towards the family, the society and the children themselves, and their interaction with economic and educational positions.
- The initiative interventions include the following:
 - Interventions in the streets and at the level of the social institutions that provide direct services to children, and work on sensitising street children about available opportunities so that they can enjoy a better life
 - Social interventions for consolidating the spirit of cooperation and solidarity
 - Interventions at the level of institutions to urge dealing with the poverty problem and the issue of child rights protection in laws and policy plans
 - Adoption of a complementary approach of open dialogue and participation on these issues among the various stakeholders, service providers, non-governmental organisations, governmental organisations, families, and so on

Participatory Approach

- The initiative methodology is based on a comprehensive strategy aimed at ensuring the participation of all the involved parties, playing a direct or indirect role, in the implementation phases. The success of the initiative lies in ensuring street children's participation in all design and implementation phases – a fact that needs to be well considered.

Overcoming Challenges

The initiative faced a number of challenges including:

- **Funding:** This challenge was overcome by mobilising a larger partner network and focussing on those who own long-term basic resources. A fund-raising music concert was organised in Egypt. Similar concerts have been planned in other countries but are still awaiting implementation.
- **Determining criteria for selecting initiative partners (such as governmental and non-governmental organisations):** This challenge was overcome by adopting general criteria. For example, determining country selection criteria is based on whether the country has non-governmental organisations with expertise in dealing with street children. The selection criteria for non-governmental organisations are based on their expertise in this area, in addition to other criteria such as political party affiliation, tribal membership, intervention projects in major cities, and resource ownership, and are necessary in order to effectively participate in the initiative.

Independent, experienced and active non-governmental organisations in the covered countries were selected. In addition, the countries were supposed to present various models. For example, the rapid interaction with the government in Sudan facilitated the initiative implementation there. But in Egypt, Morocco, Lebanon and Yemen, no models have been presented yet.

Overcoming Challenges

- The initiative succeeded in mobilising public opinion through media campaigns organised by governments and non-governmental organisations, and meetings with local leaders. Exhibitions were organised. News bulletins and flyers were published. Advertisements, targeting large audiences, were disseminated.
- The initiative strategies caught the interest of decision-makers in the countries covered by the initiative.
- A large number of non-governmental organisations were mobilised and participated in different meetings.
- Several meetings were held with health, literacy and training centres.

- Several communication channels were prepared for the social service providers, including:
 - Opening welcome centres for street children
 - Opening educational centres for providing literacy and training programmes
 - Establishing new fieldwork methods to directly deal with street children, rather than using traditional methods from the past
- Precaution measures were established to limit the proliferation of the street children phenomenon, including:
 - Programmes for supporting the income of street children's families
 - Development programmes for poor and marginalised areas
 - Provision of a monthly allocation for families with school-age children
 - Call for amending national laws and policies on street children
- The initiative activities gave the opportunity to street children to express their needs and interests in order to prepare appropriate programmes, such as the Egyptian Friends Group, so that the children can help each other and choose to improve their behaviour and living conditions.
 - Communication was adopted as part of the programme of the advisory social committee to consolidate communication as a whole and assist in creating networks for consolidating the services provided to street children.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- Evaluation indicators were determined for the initiative phases of initial thinking and elaboration:

For non-governmental organisations, party to the initiative:

- Drafting regular reports on implementation progress
- Preparing annual budgets
- Preparing an annual report on activities and evaluating them by relying on a regional framework for all the partners
- Organising field visits by Arab Council representatives
- Undertaking a comprehensive evaluation every six months

For regional and international partners:

- Regular reports and inspection by the Arab Council
- Regular financial reports
- Regular meetings with the partners
- Quantitative and qualitative indicators to assess all the phases

Quantitative Indicators

- Integrate 5,000 children into the initiative activities by the end of 2009 in five countries.
- Establish legal standards based on international standards for the protection of street children from violence, provide legal support for the children, and urge decision makers to enforce such standards.
- Use the various media to present a different picture of street children by presenting role models, in addition to promoting sports programmes, cultural activities and stories that portray positive examples of street children.
- Establish a database on street children in the region and a network of non-governmental organisations, university institutions and social security networks in the local community to encourage the integration of the issue of child rights into government agendas.

Ensuring Continuity

- Review plans with the best available methods and establish monitoring and evaluation indicators to ensure communication within the participating organisations.

Contribution to Social Transformation

- Although the indicators of social transformation have not been assessed, the initiative encourages students and researchers in the various institutions to study their impact on social transformation.

Lessons for Replication

Several lessons have been learned and can be replicated:

- Adopting a comprehensive participatory framework in the phases of incentive design, implementation and development
- Encouraging the replication of best practices in other regions and building on the developed models
- Devoting time to analysing the intellectual and practical considerations of the intervention projects for the benefit of street children
- Encouraging students and researchers to integrate the issue into their agendas and study it
- Ensuring that there is a positive attitude towards all the activities to urge the partners to continue working and to disseminate hope among them

II Reproductive Health

Achieving Gender Equality: Abortion in Laws and Practices in Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia

Theme(s):

- Reproductive Health

Type of Program:

- Raising Awareness (research analysis)

Country/Region:

- Maghreb region

Author:

- Leila Hessini, IPAS

Initiative overview: The initiative starts from an existing problem. At least 60% of maternal deaths in the Arab Maghreb are the result of unsafe abortion. This issue has not received enough attention from politicians, women's organizations, or health specialists. Three Maghreb countries, Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia, were chosen because of their different specific approaches to reproductive rights and gender equality.

The objective was to answer the following questions through field visits and discussions with specialists:

- What is unsafe abortion? How is it related to gender discrimination?
- What is the reality of effective and official abortions in the Arab Maghreb?
- What are the social beliefs and practices which contribute to determining women's access to abortion services in the Arab Maghreb?
- What are the best practices that can be drawn from the experiences of the Arab Maghreb?
- What can be done to improve the reality?

Social discriminatory practices targeted: Women's access to sufficient information on sexual and reproductive health and the possibility of safe delivery or abortion is considered socially unacceptable, thus contributing to increasing levels of maternal deaths and unsafe abortions in the region.

Socio-cultural context: The Arab Human Development Report 2005 shows that gender inequality is one of the main obstacles to development in the Middle East and North Africa.

The statistics on reproductive health indicators demonstrate that at least 60% of maternal deaths result from unsafe abortions in the Arab Maghreb. Morocco records between 130,000 and 150,000 illegal and unsafe abortions every year, thus resulting in the highest number of maternal deaths. It also records 240 deaths among 100,000 women at the reproductive age, during pregnancy or delivery. At least 6% of them are due to unsafe abortion. In Algeria, 10% of admissions to maternities are linked to abortion and 5.5% of maternal deaths are due to unsafe abortion. The legal factor is very important in this area. Tunisia, which enacted abortion laws, records the lowest rate of maternal deaths due to unsafe abortion. In general, however, women in the Arab Maghreb still face many hazards because of the limited safe options accessible to them in the case of unwanted pregnancy. Legal consequences also add to the health hazards that accompany unsafe abortion, thus impacting on women's health and reproductive rights.

National laws and policies: In spite of the new amendments to the personal status laws and nationality laws, we still see a delay in women's enjoyment of their basic rights. Issues with a direct impact on gender equality, such as sexual and reproductive rights, have been ignored. Abortion laws reinforce women's inferior position to men by underscoring women's household and reproductive roles.

Objectives and Goals

The main objectives are:

1. Determine the discriminatory social practices and standards which have a negative impact on reproductive health and contribute to gender inequality.
2. Monitor women's access to social services and their ability to benefit from safe abortion as part of reproductive health services.
3. Highlight the practices that support challenging the misguided social standards, on the basis of a comparative approach.
4. Lay the foundations for future research, policy analysis and effective activities.

Good Practices

Note: Since this analytical study does not rely on any specific project, Tunisia's good practices can inspire the advocacy of improved and reinforced women's reproductive health rights.

Innovative Approach

The study is comparative because the three Arab Maghreb states have relied on different policies in the area of women's human and reproductive rights. Tunisia is known for its pioneering role in personal status laws, family planning and abortion laws. It is the only state in the region to adopt a methodology for putting women's reproductive rights within the general framework of basic rights. In 1956, Tunisia abolished polygamy and granted equal divorce rights to women and men.

It developed labour laws to more fully integrate women into the economic field. Tunisia is the first Arab and African country to issue a law authorizing willing women to abort in the first three months of pregnancy for various economic and social reasons without the husband's approval. This service is provided free of charge in state hospitals. Tunisia is at the forefront of establishing a governmental policy on youth sexual and reproductive health.

Immediate Successes

- Using research results as well as the country's and women's experiences to raise awareness of the negative implications of unsafe abortion and its close correlation with maternal mortality
- Using the comparative approach to highlight the progress made in a given country, when abortion services are as part of national health policies and programmes, and the reported delay in another country, when the issue is addressed from a moral viewpoint as a dishonour for state and society
- Highlighting the most important laws addressing this sensitive issue, as well as the positive implications on health policy and the degree of social awareness of the need for ensuring safe health conditions for women in abortion or delivery, noting that strict laws, however, jeopardize women's health and the comfort of all family members
- Highlighting the need that, by authorizing some health practices, the law does not lead to excessive resort to abortion and is not a burden to the existing health system

Contribution to social transformations

The study made it possible to identify some ways to contribute to social transformations by underlining good practices and lessons learned:

- Breaking the wall of silence on abortion and supporting women's access to services by creating spaces for discussing unsafe abortion and its impact on women's and family members' welfare.
- Advocating the amendment of gender discriminatory laws by having women's organizations adopt comprehensive, innovative sectoral strategies, if need be, to call for amendments, not only at the level of personal status laws, but at the level of labour laws and penal laws.
- Confronting gender-based violence by advocating the principles of partnership and cooperation between men and women in personal status laws to ensure the right to making vital decisions, including decisions regarding reproduction and abortion.
- A new reading of the religious text by informed women and religious authorities supporting women's rights, in light of universal values and contemporary socio-demographic conditions.

Lessons for Replication

- Build indicators based on the correlation between safe abortion and maternal mortality reduction.
- Demonstrate the correlation between successful reproductive health policies and socio-economic development.
- Build up the possibility of advocacy to obtain the support of decision makers and local leaders to change the strict laws in this area.
- Use the opportunity to argue how different experiences lead to contradictory results according to the adopted policies, laws and practices in each of the studied countries.
- Highlight the strong correlation between decision-making concerning women's reproductive health and the remaining decisions that can be made in the public and private spheres.
- Demonstrate the gender discrimination aspect of unsafe abortion in order to reduce it.



The Experience of the Jordanian Association for Family Planning and Protection (JAFPP) in the Area of Reproductive Health

Theme(s):

- Reproductive Health

Type of Program:

- Provision of Services (family planning services)

Country/Region:

- Jordan

Project Duration:

- Ongoing

Submitting/Executing Organizations:

- The Jordanian Reproductive Health Association

Author:

- Amal Kharouf, university professor

Initiative overview: This summary presents the experience of the Jordanian Association for Family Planning and Protection in the area of reproductive health since its creation in 1964 and its role in supporting women's social position. The association focused its efforts on raising youths' and men's awareness of women's sexual and reproductive health by supporting a human rights approach so that both men and women can enjoy these rights.

Social discriminatory practices targeted: Women in developed countries face several challenges relating to health and reproductive health in particular. This is due to the unjust social practices based on discrimination and the denial of individual freedoms and rights relating to women's control of their lives and bodies.

Project financial resources:

- External support (International Planned Parenthood Federation, Johnson Organization, UNFPA and USAID, others)
- Service fees, gifts, donations, membership and training fees, and banking interests

Human Resources:

- Staff: 23 officers and 110 health workers
- Volunteers: 200 (11 steering committee members)

Partners:

- Government, NGOs, family planning centers, health providers, universities and different donor agencies

National laws and policies: Demographic issues are most important in governmental policies for combating poverty, unemployment and illiteracy. In 1973, the Higher Population Council was created. It was subsequently restructured in order to achieve representation of different social groups. In 1995, the government developed a national structure to include 21 institutions and non-governmental organizations operating in the area of demographic development and become a planning and programming reference. The period between 1993 and 1996 witnessed the launching and implementation of the national strategy of women's and children's health taking into account Sharia laws and the prevailing social standards and traditions. In parallel, tremendous efforts were deployed at the level of educational curricula and the media to highlight the importance of family planning.

Objectives and Goals

- Highlight the importance of participatory policies in raising awareness of women's sexual and reproductive health.
- Adopt the human rights approach to ensure access to health services for men and women.

Good Practices

Innovative Approach

1. The initiative adopted a comprehensive participatory approach. The association cooperated with the non-governmental organizations and governmental structures such as the Higher Population Council and the Ministry for Public Health.

2. The initiative considered women's specific needs. The association endeavoured to provide various contraceptives despite the limited number of women physicians to care for them. It adopted nominal prices for health services and contraceptives to encourage the target groups to use the association's health services, a very important strategy given that 40% of Jordanians do not benefit from health coverage.

- The association adopted a five-year strategy to protect the family and promote family planning, and to immediately meet the needs of service seekers. For example, the following priorities are part of the 2001-2006 strategy:
 - a. Meet women's and men's needs in the area of sexual and reproductive health.
 - b. Ensure service quality.
 - c. Raise awareness among men, youths, and women and enhance benefits from the association's services.
 - d. Build capacity in these areas.
 - e. Ensure the sustainability of the association's resources and services.

Overcoming Challenges

- i. Religious leaders hesitated in accepting the association's activities because they believed that family planning was contrary to Islamic Sharia. Although the political will contributed to legitimizing the association's activities and interventions, the association consolidated such legitimacy with social awareness programmes.
- ii. Major competition from the public and private sectors in 2001 led to resource reduction and the resignation of some physicians. Thus, the association reviewed its objectives and work methods and developed a new strategy that was included in a funding application submitted to the U.S. Agency for International Development.

Overcoming Challenges

- Increase in the number of clinics from 9 to 12
- Increase in the number of women beneficiaries from 12,662 to 45,500
- Reduction of side-effect reports since the creation of clinics
- Assurance of additional resources to the association
- Diversification of the services provided to women and men

Monitoring and Evaluation

- The association undertakes an evaluation every quarter and every year to:
 - Monitor activity impact through interviews and discussions with association service beneficiaries;
 - Monitor the capacity of service providers through the provided services;
 - Measure the impact of association activities through field visits; and
 - Hold frequent meetings between service providers and beneficiaries to identify challenges and overcome them.
- The association evaluation reports are based on quantitative and qualitative indicators:
 - Number of completed studies to create clinics and number of established clinics
 - Number of beneficiaries
 - Frequency of visits to the clinics and establishing data and statistics

Ensuring Sustainability

- Maintain the added value of the initiative compared to other major projects.
- Maintain and expand the partner network to establish methods for cooperating, sharing expenses, and devising strategies to mobilize financial resources.
- Diversify activities and services to cover a greater number of beneficiaries.
- Ensure additional resources to the association by selling some products at nominal prices without jeopardizing the quality of the provided services.

- Establish a database and a documentation system, and update them on a regular basis.
- Set standards and principles to ensure a specific activity and service quality.
- Establish an evaluation system for administration, service and finance.

Contribution to Social Transformations

- Since 1999, the association has trained about 260 religious leaders to raise awareness about reproductive rights and confront related gender discrimination, thus largely contributing to providing services to 14,000 individuals.
- The association targeted and sensitized men about the issue through a programme known as 'Men's Participation'. The programme held 42 workshops on reproductive health and sexually transmitted diseases, with 8,733 participants.
- The association diversified the target men's groups by training 180 counsellors from the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Youths, and the Ministry of Social development in the areas of gender and sexual and reproductive health.

Lessons for Replication

Lessons for replication include:

- Establish objectives and aims in a clear and precise manner.
- Use tested and evaluated standards and mechanisms.
- Appoint highly skilled officers and specialist workers.
- Provide in-service training.
- Develop team spirit among the team and the volunteers.
- Provide comprehensive services to customers to meet their needs.
- Ensure the participation of the target local communities in monitoring and evaluating services.

Adolescent Reproductive Health: Project of Tunisian Scouts

Theme(s):

- Reproductive Health

Type of Program:

- Raising Awareness

Country/Region:

- Tunisia (national)

Project Duration: ?

Submitting/Executing Organizations:

- Tunisian Scouts Organization

Author:

- Ezzeddine Derbel
- Abdelaziz Zouari, Medical Doctor and Member of Scouts organization

Initiative overview: The initiative was established in Tunisia to enable youths to obtain information and services relating to sexual and reproductive health. The aim is to achieve a synergy between three regional and national programmes. The initiative is part of a regional endeavour initiated by the United Nations Population Fund to integrate reproductive health in scouts programme in eight Arab countries, including Tunisia. The second project covers 10 Tunisian regions and targets 16,000 adolescent girls and boys. The third project covers 14 Tunisian regions and targets 28,000 adolescent girls and boys via educational programmes.

Donor:

- UNFPA

Human Resources:

- Team leaders
- Volunteers
- Scouts

Partners:

- National Office for Family and Population (ONFP) - a government institution
- The Young Doctors Without Borders association (JMSF) - provides health services

Social discriminatory practices targeted: In spite of the major progress made in Tunisia at the level of gender equality and the establishment of women's participation in public life, youths remain marginalized in relation to access to reproductive health services. Society still looks at youths as minors and not as individuals with independent needs and opinions, which limits this group's empowerment.

Socio-cultural context: Tunisia has witnessed important progress, resulting from the reforms which introduced gender equality in state policy regardless of the governing authority. As a result, women are present in the political and social spheres and have achieved more progress than men in some areas. The international community presents the Tunisian experience and achievement as a model for developing countries in combining economic development and social progress.

National laws and policies: The principle of gender equality is a principle explicitly recognized in the Tunisian constitutional and legislative texts. The Code of Personal Status (issued on 13 August 1956) prohibits polygamy, regulates divorce, sets the minimum marriage age at 17 for consenting girls, and grants the mother the right to minor children's custody in case the father defaults in his responsibility or passes away. Several measures have been taken to protect children's rights in various fields in Tunisia (reproductive health, education, national culture, health, and leisure) to ensure the appropriate conditions for healthy growth. At the legislative level, and following the ratification of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, Tunisia was in 1995 the first Arab and Muslim country and the first country in the world to have issued the Child Protection Code .

Objectives and Goals

The adopted general objective of the initiative is to capitalize on all the efforts to provide youngsters with information, education and counsel. But in the long-run, the objective is to raise awareness, inform about reproductive health, and introduce reproductive health and communication topics in large adolescent groups and within well-established frameworks such as scouts and educational institutions. The initiative also aims at building capacity for decision-making among youths aged 18 to 24 in the area of sexual and reproductive health and HIV-AIDS prevention.

Good Practices

Innovative Approach

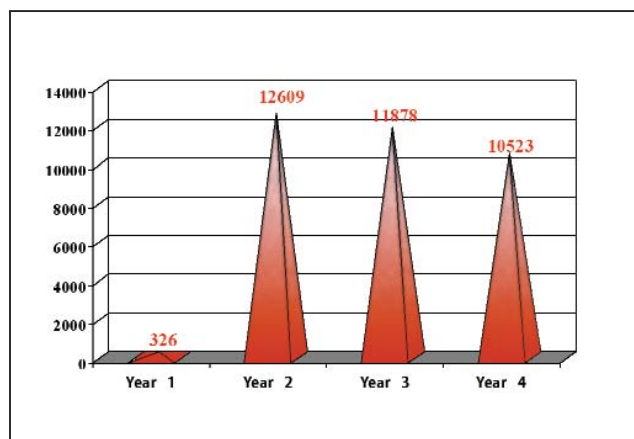
The initiative rehabilitated and trained youth peers aged 16 and above so that they can educate peers in large groups in unofficial educational contexts such as voluntary youth associations and youth clubs.

Participatory Approach

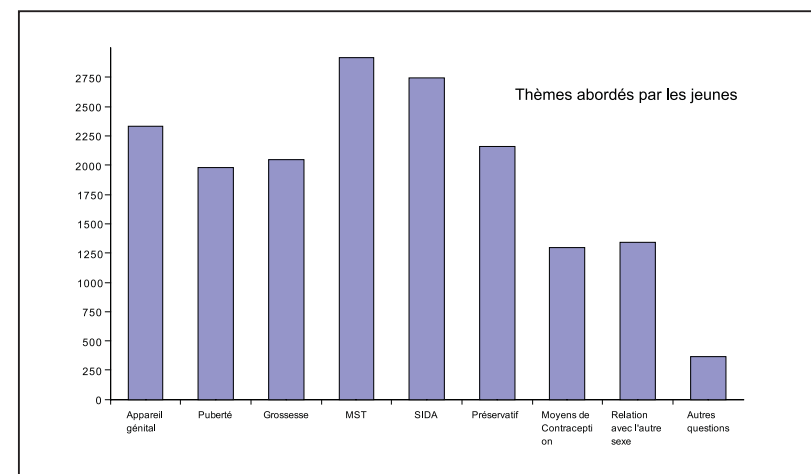
The subjects were chosen on the basis of youth needs and the formulated requests during training sessions and meetings.

Overcoming Challenges

In the design phase, the initiative faced the main challenge of selecting peer educators from scout leaders. The second main challenge was to maintain the quality of the scout leaders' performance in attracting youths. Such difficulties were overcome by monitoring activities and renewing the training tools in peer education.



Immediate successes: Results exceeded expectations. More than 35,000 youths had attended the educational sessions by the end of the five-year period.



Issues discussed at youth meetings:

- Sex organs
- Puberty
- Pregnancy
- Sexually transmitted diseases
- AIDS
- Condoms
- Contraceptives
- Relationships with the opposite sex
- Miscellaneous

Monitoring and Evaluation

Gender-sensitive indicators have been developed for the various initiative phases. The indicators include:

- Number of male and female beneficiaries
- Discussion topics
- Decision-making roles for males and females
- Most important topics according to gender and recurrent questions
- Support services according to gender

Ensuring Sustainability

Sustainability has been ensured by focusing on press interviews, specific groups, and surveys.

Contribution to Social Transformations

The meeting succeeded in:

- Consolidating youth awareness of sexual and reproductive health.
- Sensitizing institutions and stakeholders.
- Creating areas and mechanisms that should enable the target groups to express visions and participate in selected activities, initiatives, projects and programmes.

Lessons for Replication

Lessons for replication are mechanisms in the area of reproductive health, developed as attractive and entertaining formats for youths. In addition, youth-accessible language was used.

III Education and Literacy

Literacy Through Poetry in Yemen

Theme(s):

- Information, Education, and Communication

Type of Program:

- Provision of Services (education)

Country/Region:

- Yemen (Local)

Author:

- Najwa Adra: consultant

Submitting/Executing Organizations:

- The Social Fund for Development

Project Cost [Amount and Source of Funds]:

- 2001-2004: The World Bank: The Bank Netherlands Partnership Program (\$100,000.00)
- 2002-present: The Social Fund for Development, Sanaa (approx. \$50,000 + in-kind support)

Initiative overview: The initiative tackles the illiteracy increase among rural and urban women in comparison to men. It also confronts the current repression of women's traditional expression channels and voices, resulting from socio-economic changes and favourable cultural attitudes towards women's isolation. Among such changes, one can cite economic openness, which reduces rural women's economic participation, and adopting external and mistaken religious ideas detrimental to women's voices and mobility.

Human Resources:

- Project Initiator and Coordinator
- Project Manager
- Two Curriculum Developers and Teacher Trainers
- Three supervisors from the Ministry of Education
- 8 Teachers residing in pilot communities

Partners:

- The Social Fund for Development, Sanaa (funding and facilitation)
- IEAEO which provided the supervisors and three of the teachers in the pilot
- Royal Jordanian Airlines helped defray transportation costs of the New York-based consultants.

Social discriminatory practices targeted: In spite of equality between the sexes in laws and policies, traditions and mistaken religious 'interpretations' still prevail and negatively impact on equality between the sexes in education and the rights women had enjoyed before the unification of Yemen.

Socio-Cultural Context: In Yemen, women's roles vary by region, economic status and social class affiliation, and urban or rural location. Historically, high class urban women were more isolated than low class urban women who had freer access to income-generating activities but a lower social standing. Rural women effectively participated in income generation, enjoyed greater mobility, and made a significant social contribution albeit in an unofficial manner.

Song lyrics and poetry represent a major source of women's empowerment. In the past, they enabled women to use culturally acceptable means to express views on personal issues (the future husband) and politics. Socio-economic transformations have limited women's opportunities for creating poetry. New conservative ideas emerged and limited women's voices and social contributions. Statistics show that only 25% of rural girls at the schooling age go to school. Illiteracy among rural women is 78.2%, about twice as much as that for urban women (about 39.9%) and men (32.5% for rural men and 15.4% for urban men). The literacy rate among rural young women, aged 15 to 24, does not exceed 27%, as opposed to 82% among urban women.

Religious interpretations: Zaidi and Shafi are the most widespread creeds in Yemen and are not considered too strict on women's issues. Discrimination between the sexes is historically rare in rural communities, and most rural women did not wear the veil. By experiencing the Wahabite influence over the last thirty years, a new negative impact on women's mobility and expression styles was witnessed.

Such external religious conservative views targeted mixing between the sexes (which was a traditional norm in rural Yemen) as well as women's mobility, songs and traditional storytelling. A woman's voice is now considered 'awra' (a defect that must be hidden or covered). This was not the case twenty or thirty years ago. Women watching television generates fear from the idea that education and freedom will encourage Yemeni women to become more liberated.

Objectives and Goals

The initiative aims at teaching reading and writing to women past school-age and supporting the interest of the local community in preserving the endangered women's oral heritage (poetry). The initiative's long-term objectives are women's empowerment, consolidating respect for women's skills, and changing discriminatory social practices.

Good Practices

Innovative Approach

The initiative is unique in the sense that:

- Unlike other literacy programmes, it focused on rural women's needs for informal education, short learning periods and flexible schedules.
- It used women's traditional oral poetry and local traditions to facilitate the learning of reading and writing.
- It relied on the expertise of the beneficiaries to prepare specific texts for them.
- It adopted a participatory approach to create a sense of belonging to the literacy programmes.
- It relied on local texts appropriate to the new beneficiaries' traditional context. This was done by including the beneficiaries' poetry as a traditional means to voice opinions in the literacy programme.
- It ensured the sustainability of the literacy programme by building the capacity of the local trainers who acquired the basic skills of writing and reading in the first phase and implemented them in the second phase to train potential beneficiaries.
- It used a scientific approach based on evidence in project implementation and teaching methods. For example:
 - The initiative built teaching methods on the finding that adult learners in literacy programmes do not learn reading and writing from model lessons but from areas of interest.
 - The initiative focussed on the beneficiaries' potential and not their knowledge of the presented teaching materials.
 - The initiative enabled the new beneficiaries to benefit from the reading tools they had used in the training programmes and preserve their learning skills.

Overcoming Challenges

- **Men's opposition to the initiative:** In one of the districts, some men looted the classroom. Local leaders were contacted to explain the project objectives to these men and convince them of its benefit and importance. All forms of harassment stopped.

- **Young women's claim of poetic ignorance:** Some young women felt that traditional poetry was neither original nor innovative and claimed that they did not know anything about it or about popular proverbs. The teacher opened a discussion on the current problems in the local community and requested them to talk about them by using the proverbs listed on the board. As a second solution, young beneficiaries from the rural classes were invited to attend urban classes where they were welcomed with traditional poetry. To save face, the visitors replied with better and more varied poetry. This helped the rural women realise that poetry was in line with urban practices. The learners were not tied to traditional poetry types, but were free to use new types, as some of them did.
- **Differential learning outcomes:** In the second phase of the initiative, one of the classes was lagging behind in acquiring skills. To stimulate competition, a contest was held among the classes and the skills gap was overcome.
- **Literacy programme timing:** Timing is the major obstacle to adult literacy programmes in the Yemeni mountainous areas. Such programmes start in the harvest season, leading to high dropout rates, even among the school populations. The ideal solution is to start the course in December.

Immediate Successes

- **Limited dropout rates:** The dropout rate was 19% in the first phase and 26% in the second one. In the first phase, only two beneficiaries dropped out because they were not interested in the course. Others left for health reasons, change of residence, or because their husbands asked them to do so.
- **Requesting further courses:** All the beneficiaries requested an additional study year, using the same methods for adult learners, and formal education methods for the younger ones.
- **Acquired skills:** In the first three months of study, most beneficiaries learned how to read and pronounce words correctly and do easy dictation. 87% of the set objectives were reached in terms of the capacity for reading an unknown text, writing a small paragraph on an important issue, and identifying at least 50 words.
- **Significant indicators:** Among the 95 beneficiaries who completed nine months of study in the first phase, 72% of them were able to read and write good prose, 37% of them fluently, and 35% slowly. Note that 25% of the first phase beneficiaries had a prior literacy programme experience ranging between one and two months. Although the second phase lasted six months only, during which only beneficiaries with no experience of literacy programmes were admitted, 62.7% of them managed to read and write good prose⁽¹⁾.

1- The figures are approximate and may slightly vary depending on the exam supervisor who tested the beneficiaries.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- **Participatory monitoring and evaluation:** The initiative beneficiaries including teachers and students made comments, which led to amending implementation strategies and modifying teaching methods.
- **Evaluating teaching methods and curricula:** This was carried out by supervisors in three inspection visits.
- **Comparison with peer beneficiaries:** The reading and writings skills of the beneficiaries who completed the second phase (six months of teaching) were compared to the skills of their peers in the governmental literacy programme who had studied for one year and three months. The experimental group achieved higher than the government programme control group in all tests.
- **Inviting the beneficiaries to express transformations:** The teachers noticed a change in the beneficiaries' behaviour, including a greater capacity for asking questions and debating. The beneficiaries reported the changes as occurring in their lives and resulting from participation in the experimental programme.
- **Intensive discussion groups and interviews for evaluating the empowerment level:** Discussions were held with the teachers, the supervisors and the beneficiaries in every local community. Men from the two model groups were interviewed. The support of the local community was evaluated through intensive discussion groups and interviews of some model local groups.

Ensuring Sustainability

- **Participatory approach:** Local trainers trained the teachers for the second phase of the experimental group. There was no need for the assistance of foreign consultants in expanding the initiative activities.
- **Reducing cost:** The cost of a single beneficiary amounted to US\$ 45,000 in the first phase and to US\$ 33,000 in the second one.

Qualitative Indicators :

- Skills acquisition: alphabet and word recognition, the ability to sound out words, take dictation, read and write new text.
- Increased interest in life-long learning and women's education.
- Empowerment indicators included: learner and teacher self-confidence, improvements in family attitudes towards learners, initiation of community health projects.

- Encouraging continuation: The beneficiaries received copies of the 'books' they created in class. Each one of them was given additional book gifts to encourage them to continue reading.

Contribution to Social Transformations

- Men and women participated in the management of the spaces opened within the framework of the initiative, thus reducing the gender gap.
- The participation of opinion leaders such as religious figures and dignitaries in the debate on discriminatory practices contributed to diffusing the social tension about the literacy programme.
- The beneficiaries expressed their satisfaction with the programme and requested an additional study year. They showed a new interest in the education of their daughters, guided by what they learned in the lessons on the importance of girls' education.
- The beneficiaries acquired the skills for asking questions and debating important issues.
- In the experimental local communities, men started to call for women's education in their families when they recognized the positive results at the adult education level.
- All beneficiaries reported that their families started to show them more respect.

Lessons for Replication

The possibility of lessons for replication is very high in the Arab region provided there is an awareness that the high rate of illiteracy among women dangerously impacts on development, especially in light of the emergence of increasingly conservative movements seeking to isolate and disempower women. The whole region has distinctive oral traditions that can be used to reverse such tendencies, empower women, and develop their mental and critical skills. The main lessons for replication are:

- Adopting a participatory approach;
- Identifying the real needs of the target group and their centres of interest;
- Local capacity building to lead the initiative activities after completion;
- Developing the initiative implementation operation so that the local resources and society adapt to the change that the project aims to achieve; and
- Adopting the appropriate methodologies for overcoming challenges.

Higher Education and Study-Abroad Scholarships for Female Students in Libya

Theme(s):

- Information, Education, and Communication

Type of Program:

- Provision of Services (Education)

Country/Region:

- The Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya

Submitting/Executing Organizations:

- The Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya

Author:

- Kathryn Spellman, Syracuse University and SOAS, London

Initiative overview: Historically, the absence of opportunities for women in the Libyan paternalistic society has had an impact on the educational system. The Libyan educational system has been one of the main tools used to bridge discrimination and reduce women's social dependence. Higher educational opportunities for women have been considered part of the strategy to modernise society. The case study focuses on higher education and the governmental programme which grants male and female students scholarships to obtain Masters and PhD degrees from abroad. The study tackles the way the programme addressed negative social practices related to women's educational opportunities.

Social discriminatory practices targeted: Many people believe that the governmental attempts to encourage women to enter public life is 'scandalous', as this is a country in which large numbers of women are the prisoners of the family framework and where honour and good family reputation largely depended on women's chastity and good behaviour. Behaviour-restricting traditions vary from one region to another and impact on women's options and roles in public life.

Socio-cultural context: Short stories and novels were, especially in the last twenty years, essential tools for Libyans to denounce political and social injustice and conflicts about identity. Ahmed Ibrahim Al Fakh, a famous author, tackled issues that were repeatedly raised by male and female Libyan students studying abroad, interviewed in this case study. His valuable writings focused on various issues, including the conflict between values and expectations in the Libyan conservative and paternalistic lifestyle as opposed to individualistic, consumption-based and superficially promising Western European lifestyles. The author has identified the emergence of a widening cultural gap that occurs when the student abroad is physically, mentally and culturally cut off from her or his country's habitual life style. Female students in Tripoli and London repeatedly referred to the conflict between their educational and professional ambitions and the opportunities these offered to them, on the one hand; and their roles and hopes as daughters, wives and housewives, on the other hand.

National laws and policies: The priority of public education is an essential component of the Libyan development plan. The Constitution stipulates that the government aims at implementing the citizen's right to education, health, and access to state facilities. In the 1970s, national education expenses grew rapidly and Libya adopted different policies to encourage women to benefit from free public education.

Good Practices

Innovative Approach

In 1991, the Libyan government issued Law No. 20 to consolidate gender equality in education and established parameters to overcome challenges and difficulties in the implementation phase. Efforts focused on the following:

- Ensuring free education at all levels
- Emphasizing mandatory basic education
- Ensuring the horizontal distribution of educational establishments in all Libyan regions and districts
- Diversifying education, classifying specialties and improving teaching methods and curricula so that each student can find his/her appropriate subject, in line with his/her nature and potential

Overcoming Challenges

The government has attempted to eradicate the obstacles to women's access to higher education. It has funded and supported programmes for women's education abroad and programmes addressing negative social practices.

Overcoming Challenges

- Higher education has succeeded in achieving a balance between men and women. Women represent 15% of higher education students in Libya. In 2007, 602 female PhD students and 141 female Masters students were sponsored in study abroad programmes. The success rate among them was over 50%.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- Governmental monitoring structures and international and African organisations evaluate the quality of education and women's integration in higher education. The government relies upon expert organisations such as UNDP to monitor educational policy implementation.
- Sociological studies have started to play a role in educational programme monitoring. There is an urgent need for interviewing women who have studied abroad and women who refused to study abroad.

Ensuring Sustainability

- The State policy has been to continue encouraging women to study in higher education. Governmental funding has enabled the achievement of this objective. In 2006, the Ministry for Vocational Training sponsored 200 male and female graduate students to study in the United Kingdom. They attended a one-year course in the area of modern administration techniques and educational management development in Libya.
- In the last ten years, agreements were signed with a number of new partners to improve, implement and generalise higher education programmes in Libya. According to the British Council, an agreement was signed by the end of 2003 to increase the number of Libyan students in the United Kingdom. The current number of Libyan students in British universities is estimated at 3,000. 90% of them are sponsored by the Libyan government.
- In the last ten years, an important change occurred to support the budget and diversify higher education programmes in Libya and abroad. Libyan decision-makers authorised the establishment of educational institutions, which are private higher education institutions known as educational cooperative associations. The Ministry of Higher Education and the Ministry of Vocational Training carried out an important study on developing partnerships between the public and private sectors to fund higher education. Since 1997 more than five private universities, faculties and higher institutes have been created. Such changes led to a series of discussions on the quality of private education and the extent to which it follows the state policy in addressing discriminatory practices.

The debate generated a set of recommendations to improve educational quality by:

- Adopting modern educational methods and techniques;
- Encouraging the scientific community to contribute to research on the local community;
- Urging the private sector to contribute to funding higher specialist education; and
- Developing distance learning and continuing support for educational systems.

Contribution to Social Transformations

- Libya has succeeded in creating a balance between the sexes through increasing the number of women who were able to continue higher education thanks to state policies. But observing the internal power relations shows widespread conflict at each social relation level. We need further evidence to assess the implication of such conflict on the reality of women in higher education.
- The mere presence of such policies extends the scope of opportunity for women so that they can play an important role in public life. Education and the possibility of expressing opinions outside the Libyan frontiers will contribute to allow for the addressing human rights, social justice, development and positive change.
- There is an urgent need for more research on women's communication methods and strategies to reconcile traditions and customs on the one hand, and state expectations and reality on the other.

Lessons for Replication

- The initiative can be replicated by the mere presence of political will, financial resources, and the support of the United Nations and other institutions.

The initiative provides the opportunity to benefit from the strategies adopted by the female beneficiaries themselves to overcome challenges. They actually called for greater transparency in granting scholarships and helped combat favouring those students who come from the political elite.



IV Economic Participation

Micro-Credits in Empowering Women in Al Kasim in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Theme(s):

- Economy

Type of Program:

- Provision of Services (micro-credit)

Country/Region:

- The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (local)

Submitting/Executing Organizations:

- King Abdulaziz Charitable Women Organization - Buraida

Author:

- AlJawhra Bint Mohamed Alwabli, director of an NGO

Human Resources:

- 8 Staff (3 micro-credit coordinators, 4 trainers, 1 project manager)

Initiative overview: The initiative offers micro-credits to women (housewives or limited income women) to improve their economic situation.

Social discriminatory practices targeted: Economic opportunities for women are considered limited because of the social view that limits the types of jobs women can do. Therefore, micro-credits are the starting point for providing women with an enabling environment that supports them and gives them the necessary tools to achieve economic independence.

Socio-cultural environment: In relation to the economic field, it is possible to argue that the socio-cultural context supports women in integrating economic activities through contribution to investment, but women still have to succeed and develop their technical skills and knowledge in the area of decision-making and planning.

Laws and policies: National policies support women's participation in various economic sectors, but such support remains limited because of the red tape involved in obtaining licences and registrations necessary to establish shops, engineering firms, legal counselling, tearooms, studios and the like. In addition, it is not possible for women to have a project that requires travelling abroad outside KSA without the guardian's authorization.

Objectives and Goals

The micro-credit project was launched in 2003 to respond to the need to ensure new revenue sources for the women who had lost them or for divorcees. In the first phase, the organisation allocated credits to 25 individual women (equivalent of 120 to 150 family members). The project is currently working on its second phase. The main objective is to improve women's living conditions and increase their income by creating employment opportunities.

Good Practices

Innovative Approach

In addition to credit provision, the project provides women beneficiaries with various services:

- Working with the local community to increase the credits allocated to women;
- Documenting women's experiences through video films to encourage other women to participate in the project;
- Consolidating women's links to other national and regional projects to help them expand their projects; and
- Providing incentives by rewarding successful projects;

Overcoming Challenges

The main challenge was basically the difficulty in mobilising the local community to support the project. This challenge has been overcome by disseminating positive examples that reflect the project's successes, and encouraging the participating women to talk about their positive experiences.

Immediate Successes

One of the important indicators of the initiative's direct success is number of women beneficiaries. Twenty-five women obtained micro-credits to help their families. The number of beneficiaries ranged between 120 and 150.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Many indicators were used to measure the initiative impact:

- Number of new established projects made possible through the micro-credits allocated by the organisation
- Number of projects requiring additional credits to expand their activities
- Number of job opportunities generated by the projects developed by women
- Women's capacity building in family decision-making
- Extent of women's contribution to the family budget
- Extent of women's influence over other women within the family framework.
- Women's savings from the project during the two year period

Ensuring Sustainability

Integrating economic concerns into other areas addressing women's issues in a more understanding manner made it possible to continue working within the initiative framework. For example, micro-credit allocation was tied to awareness-raising activities addressing gender-based violence.

Contribution to social transformations: The micro-credits clearly contributed to changing women's roles inside their families, thus impacting on their decision-making capacity in their families.

Lessons for Replication

The criteria adopted in allocating micro-credits to encourage women to manage income-generating projects are an easy lesson for replication in similar projects.

Naihoud Cooperative Credit Project in Kordofan State, Sudan

Theme(s):

- Economy

Type of Program:

- Provision of Services (agricultural/rural development)

Country/Region:

- Sudan (provincial)

Submitting/Executing Organizations:

- Women Initiative Group

Author:

- Afaf Ezzedine, consultant

Project Cost [Amount and Source of Funds]:

- \$9.5 million – IFAD
- \$2.5 million - Finland International Agency for Development
- \$1.0 million – Government of Sudan
- \$3.7 million - Sudan Agriculture Bank
- Contribution of farmers – 30% of loan

Human Resources:

- 150 government employees from different communities
- 97 partnering organizations
- 220 community cooperative networks/groups
- 3 volunteers from the community
- women are 30% of total workforce in the project

Partners:

- IFAD
- Ministry of Sudanese Agriculture
- Finland International Agency for Development
- Sudanese Agriculture Bank

Initiative overview: Following the famine witnessed by the country in 1986, the EN Nahud Cooperative Credit Project in Kordofan State (southwestern Sudan) was launched to develop agriculture in the region, improve the income of small farmers, and meet the needs of these isolated areas. Lately, the initiative integrated gender equality as part of its strategic objectives.

Social discriminatory practices targeted: In spite of the important role played by women in Sudan's agricultural development, success in meeting their needs for funding, job market integration and official measures remains limited. This is due to socio-cultural attitudes.

Socio-cultural context: The population number in the project region is about half a million. Women represent 70% of the farming workforce and participate in all farming phases, but they do not benefit from educational opportunities. This is due to a biased interpretation of the Koranic verses on gender equality. The local community lacks a necessary awareness of women's issues. Men's needs enjoy priority at the expense of women's needs in jobs, banking practices, and so on.

The last twenty years have witnessed positive changes, however, through the increase in the financial resources allocated by foreign funders, and through the appearance of women in civil society. In an unfortunate parallel, the region has suffered from famine and desertification, thus contributing to increasing poverty inside the local community.

Laws and policies: On the basis of the constitution and the customary and legislative laws, the national government enacted legislation stipulating gender equality in all fields, especially in economy and development.

Objectives and Goals

The short-term objectives of the initiative seek to increase awareness in the local community in order to give women the opportunity to participate in civil groups and projects and ensure their participation in the various project phases, and additionally to improve women's economic conditions and improve handicraft projects. The medium-term objectives are capacity building of rural men and women. The long-term objectives of the project are sustainable development by defining a new strategy for allocating credits for beneficiary men and women.

Good Practices

Innovative Approach

- Strategy: The full funding of cooperatives and staff capacity building made it possible to provide social services and women training programmes, and ensure income-generating activities such as nearby small farming projects.
- Initiative innovative tools (under study): Media, flyers, theatre, and films were all used.
- Initiative effective tools: Intensive discussion groups and local radio coverage of activities were also effective methods.

Overcoming Challenges

The measures aimed at overcoming the difficulties encountered by initiative implementation include meetings with opinion leaders in the local community to discuss and eradicate the obstacles relating to traditional practices; and coordination with the various technical units in charge of implementation at the level of the Agricultural Bank of Sudan, EN Nahud local farming groups, the local cooperative registration office, and the unit in charge of coordination between EN Nahud and Khartoum.

Direct Successes

- The initiative exceeded expectations by creating 227 cooperatives working for 23,686 beneficiary families, a 25% increase compared to the initially planned figure.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring the changes at the level of the existing practices in terms of:

- Increase in women's participation in agricultural production;
- Increase in the number of women beneficiaries in the training programmes created as part of the initiative;
- Increase in the number of cooperative female members;
- Creating women's cooperatives to market their products;
- Reinforcing women's capacity for making decisions on production and expanding the initiative activities in the region; and
- Cooperation between women, young women and men to preserve the farming environment and promote joint work in training, social awareness and small project environment in order to ensure sustainability.

Contribution to Social Transformations

- Increasing social awareness of the negative impact of discriminatory social practices
- Sensitisation of the authorities in charge
- Creation of open spaces to give opportunity to the target groups without any gender discrimination, opening cooperatives to men and women. attempting to reduce the discrimination gap which excluded women from the market
- Participation of local opinion leaders and religious leaders in treating discriminatory practices

Lessons for Replication

- This initiative shows using the economic sector as an introduction to social and cultural changes. The economic activities emanating from female and male beneficiaries contributed to increasing awareness of the economic benefits of equality in gender relations in the region and eradicating the obstacles to women's work being on equal footing with men's. This positive approach along with the initiative strategies and tools can be used in similar projects in local communities with similar farming activities.



Treating the Causes of Gender Salary Gap in the Moroccan Job Market

Theme(s):

- Economy

Type of Program:

- Raising Awareness (Research)

Country/Region:

- Morocco

Author:

- Sami Zouari, University Lecturer

Initiative overview: The initiative is based on determining gender salary discrimination in Morocco during the last twenty years by analysing two national surveys.

Discriminatory social practices targeted: In spite of the laws that codify gender equality, women's participation in the economic and political arenas is still limited. This is due to the domination of paternalism and the negative attitude towards women's capacity for making effective contributions in such areas, resulting in discriminatory employment practices.

Socio-cultural context: The general view of women is limited to their roles as wives and guardians of social values, which most Moroccans regard as eternal. Women are required to transmit such values through child rearing. Educational curricula and general discourse reinforce such views; in addition, there has been an emergence of strict religious movements endeavouring to instill in society an ideology based on women's inferiority in the private and public spheres.

Discrimination also has negatively impacted on women's contribution to the national economy. In the 1980s the economic crisis had a negative influence on women. Because of discrimination, some countries took measures to expel women from the job market by promoting early retirement.

The media discourse, capitalising on women's traditional role in preserving the social fabric, grew. However, the 1990s brought about new economic changes, making women's work a necessity to increase family income and prosperity. In 2000 Moroccan women's participation in the job market reached 44%, one of the highest rates in the Arab world, whereas unemployment among women reached 22%. The last figure shows that women are increasingly present in the job market and female job seekers hope to be hired under the same conditions, specifications and requirements as for men.

National laws and policies: The Moroccan constitution dictates gender equality in all fields. Women have succeeded in obtaining the right to vote, occupying high political positions and expressing opinions. Although support for women's leading roles was part of political propaganda, the actions of the civil society over the last few years generated important results in terms of more women participating in parliaments and political parties. However, women's participation in local councils remains limited.

Since independence, Moroccan women's conditions and roles have witnessed significant changes. Women have become effective partners in socio-economic development. To consecrate the principle of gender equality, Morocco ratified many international conventions such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (21 June 1993) and the Equal Remuneration Convention (Convention no. 100 – 29 June 1951). It also enforces pay equality between men and women for equal work on the basis of the principle of 'equal pay for equal work'.

Within the framework of the new labour law, the new Moroccan legislation protects workers' rights in the area of maternity (Articles 152 to 165 and Law 65-99). It also exempts women from hazardous and exhausting jobs such as working in mines and quarries (Articles 179 to 183, Law 65-99 and Order 2-04-682 issued on 29 December 2004). Women's night work is conditioned by the provision of appropriate conditions (Order no. 2-04-568 issued on 29 December 2004).

Objectives and Goals

The initiative is based on determining the causes of gender salary discrimination in Morocco during the last twenty years through national surveys. The study also deals with the reality of the job market in terms of gender salary discrimination in order to shed light on the reported employment violations.

Good Practices

Innovative Approach

The initiative presents a critical appraisal of the national household budget survey which was carried out in two periods from 1990 to 1991 and 1998 to 1999. The first survey covered a sample of 19,667 individuals, including 381 women, whereas the second survey covered 30,457 individuals, including 922 women.

- This is the first initiative to analyse gender salary discrimination in Morocco on the basis of a national survey. More importantly, the results of this national survey analysis will be used as a basis for the 2008 survey with a view to monitoring achieved progress and results.
- The results of the study can be used to formulate future strategies to overcome gender discrimination in the Moroccan job market and elsewhere.

Overcoming Challenges

- The analysis shows that women's employment is destabilised by maternity and marriage. In addition, the small number of female university graduates is a significant variable. Employers do not want to hire women aged 25 to 35.
- The Moroccan government made an important step forward in women's education, but rates differ up to the retirement age. Women's rate in this field is the highest.
- The study shows that salary differences by weeks between 1991 and 1999 were in favour of men, but such differences decreased thanks to the enacted legislation on equal pay for men and women. By comparing the private and public sectors, it has become clear that the gap in the public sector was 31.5% in 1991 and 21.8% in 1992. This percentage is much higher in the private sector. It was 37.5% in 1991 and went down to 33.5% in 1999. Following the data analysis aimed at determining the factors responsible for such differences, it has become obvious that hiring is gender-based. More than men, women seek to obtain lowly paid job opportunities and prefer to work in the public sector because of the lack of social benefits in the private sector.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- The study used national surveys and quantitative and qualitative data.
- The initiative relied on specialist statistical analysis software.

Ensuring Sustainability

- A booklet will be published for specialists and national economic research centres. It will focus on challenges and the variables and factors that must be adopted in studying gender salary differences in the Moroccan job market or in any other Arab country.

Contribution to Social Transformations

- Some recommendations will be incorporated in future strategies to advocate bridging the gender gap in the Moroccan job market or in any other Arab country.

Lessons for Replication

- The initiative laid the foundations for undertaking similar actions in similar Arab states. It hopes that other groups will use the same tools to analyse the rate of gender salary differentiation through national surveys.

V Political Participation

Quotas as a Legislative Strategy to Give Justice to Women in Palestine

Theme(s):

- Governance and Decision Making

Type of Program:

- Advocacy

Country/Region:

- Palestine

Submitting/Executing Organizations:

- Palestinian Women's Federation

Author:

- Khadeja Bargouthi, Expert

Initiative overview: This is a campaign initiated by the Palestinian feminist movement in 2002 to support allocating 20% of seats in the Palestinian parliament and local councils to women.

Social discriminatory practices targeted: The campaign deals with the traditional view of women's natural role in the private sphere and in upholding social moral values.

Socio-cultural context: Women fought side by side with men during the British occupation and subsequent Israeli occupation. The struggle took different forms, from voluntary work to leading political roles in the area of public mobilisation. As a result, women have been subjected to torture, imprisonment and other forms of discrimination in spite of the fact that Palestinian women have a high educational level, representing 12% of university teachers and 12% of the workforce. They represent 6.5% of Palestinian parliamentarians, 8% of the PLO National Council, 5% of the PLO Central Council and 30% of the Al Fida party.

National laws and policies: Egyptian and Jordanian laws deprived women of political participation and the right to vote. These laws were only amended in 1975 following the Israeli occupation of Palestine. The decision was aimed at encouraging women to support traditional leaders instead of joining progressive political parties. In 1996, women exercised for the first time their right to vote in parliamentary elections. In 2002, the Palestinian feminist movement launched a campaign to support the decision of allocating 20% of seats in the parliament and local councils to women.

Objectives and Goals

1. Adopt the quota system to enhance women's political participation at the national and local levels.
2. Create a national dynamic to apply pressure on decision-makers to adopt the quota system.

Good Practices

Innovative Approaches

To launch a campaign to achieve 20% of women's representation quotas, the organisers developed the following strategies:

- Creating a coordination unit to activate various women's organisations within the framework of a unified agenda to ensure communication among them
- Agreeing on common and clear visions and aims among these groups to achieve the set objective
- Designing an effective strategy to influence decision-makers by:
 - Holding meetings with members of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and other political parties;
 - Holding meetings with influential Palestinian members from the local community; and
 - Influencing the media through advocacy among groups and during events
 - Closely monitoring events and quickly responding to changes

Participatory Approach

- Diversifying roles inside the groups to ensure effective balance
- Avoiding internal conflicts between partners and adjusting any mechanism that is likely to create a competitive environment and thus impede the achievement of common aims and objectives

Overcoming Challenges

- The lack of resources to create mechanisms and activities to transform the quota system from a political issue to a social one was overcome by making strategic alliances to mobilise public opinion.
- The opposition of some political parties to the quota system was overcome by adopting successful examples from the Arab region and holding meetings with effective participants.
- The absence of empowered women to enter elections required supporting women candidates throughout the various campaign phases.

Immediate Successes

- The results were good for women. The rate of elected women reached 33% in spite of the fact that most of them were regularly elected. It is noteworthy that the rates increased and the rate of elected women increased from 55% to 89%.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- Inserting the campaign into the context of national and regional political ramifications through a constant monitoring of events and activities ensured a fast response and adaptation to changes.

Ensuring Sustainability

- A strategic plan was developed based on the views of women's associations and of elected female members in order to meet their needs and support them in national councils. The main features of the plan are:
 - Supporting the elected women;
 - Supporting the campaigns of women's associations to ensure sufficient resources, the lack of which usually represents a hurdle to women wishing to fulfil their positions; and
 - Documenting the campaign experiences to highlight the struggles and experiences of Palestinian women and using them to underscore the importance of female leadership.

Contribution to Social Transformations

- The movement worked at different levels and focussed on national priority issues as well as pushing their demands for legislative changes to ratify women's parliamentary representation quotas.
- The quota system was presented as a vital research issue for university students.

Lessons for Replication

- The determination to consolidate women's issues, coupled with a strategy in line with the political and economic context, is the key to fulfilling goals.
- Adopting complementary activities as a positive approach enables taking into account the views of different effective parties fighting to achieve the same objective.
- The effectiveness of allying with supportive political parties in order to overcome the challenges faced by the concerned parties.
- The movement clearly understood political dynamics and women's daily actions and was able to develop speedy reactions.
- Benefiting from past experience was essential to confronting current challenges.
- Consolidating the spirit of negotiations and common positions in relation to different political issues was vital.

IV Communication and Voice Building

A Website for Mauritanian Women: An ICT Acquisition Model

Theme(s):

- Information, Education, and Communication

Type of Program:

- Capacity Building, Raising Awareness

Country/Region:

- Mauritania (National)

Submitting/Executing Organizations:

- ICT and Citizenship

Author:

- Fatma Bint Alkory,
Executive Director of Program

Project Cost [Amount and Source of Funds]:

Regentic-Enda (Senegal)

- 2002: \$700
- 2003: \$700
- 2004: \$10,300

Human Resources:

- Project Coordinator
- Volunteers

Partners:

In Mauritania:

- Alternative Citizenship Forum
- Women, Solidarity and Development
- Cyberforum of Civil Society
- UNDP
- GTZ
- European Commission

Regional:

- Regentic-Enda (Senegal)
- RENAF-NTIC (Burkina Faso)

International:

- Rinoceros (France)
- Femnet (International)
- Apc-Women (Networking for Change and Empowerment)
- International Platform of Gender (Europe)
- International Platform of Gender and Water (France)
- AFAL (France)

Initiative overview: The initiative emerged from the realization that 55% of Mauritanian women did not have access to any type of media or communication (telephone, radio, Internet, etc). The idea was to create an interactive space that would enable them to access information technologies and express their views irrespective of ethnic, cultural, religious or political backgrounds.

Social discriminatory practices targeted: The last twenty years have witnessed positive legal and political transformations, but conservative social attitudes have limited women's capacity for improving their conditions in various fields, including education and political life.

Socio-cultural context: Statistics show that Mauritanian women represent 53% of the whole population (2,897,000), 53% of the urban population and 60% of the illiterate. 27.7% of Mauritanian women contribute to the economy. 29% of families are headed by women. The rate of maternal mortality is 747 per 100,000. 32% of women go to university whereas only 6% of them reach decision-making positions. It is noteworthy that the divorce rate has increased during the last few years to 47.6%.

In Mauritania, there are generally no strict positions or conservative religious attitudes against women's work. Although there is an appropriate legal framework for women's issues in important fields such as labour law and family planning, it still lacks effective monitoring by decision-makers. Socially, there is a tendency to make women responsible for their not benefiting from the opportunities offered to them. The gap between the legal framework and actual practice may be attributed to the lack of serious gender initiatives and the absence of qualified specialists in this area. The governmental institutions in charge of women's issues do not have enough power to impose multisectoral comprehensive approaches.

Objectives and Goals

The initiative aims at enabling Mauritanian women to access ICT so that they can express opinions irrespective of location and cultural, religious, ethnic and political backgrounds. The specific initiative objectives include establishing an information centre, developing capacity building projects to empower women through data collection, documentation, and the use of audio-visual aids; and designing training programmes to enable women to express their opinion in the media (radio, documentaries and public-oriented advertising).

The long-term objectives are:

- Facilitating women's access to a fixed information source;
- Capacity building to keep abreast of technological innovations; and
- Contributing to the national, regional and international efforts to reduce the ICT gender gap.

Good Practices

Innovative Approach

- The initiative was based on respecting the women beneficiaries' practical life. The centre's working hours have been adjusted to accommodate women's daily tasks and child rearing responsibilities.
- The principle of ownership and contribution was adopted through:
 - Creating transparency, which attracted members from various areas to participate in the information centre's activities.
 - Resisting the pressure to affiliate with political, ethnic and religious groups, thus creating trust among members.
- Using ICTs to facilitate information access, distance learning, and discussion forums in which women can exchange views and voice opinions, and men can express their thoughts on women's issues. The aim is to develop discussions on women's positions and support their participation.
- Using the radio to:
 - Raise awareness about women's rights and roles in all fields;
 - Support women's access to a widespread means of expression; and
 - Create and update a website.
- Urging women to contribute to the activities of the civil society through a variety of activities, including:
 - Creating and updating a website;
 - Organising workshops to raise awareness about the importance of using ICTs and communication between women and the civil society;
 - Organising ICT training sessions for women, girls and the disabled to make their participation and roles effective in the civil society;
 - Establishing electronic forums to discuss women's issues in development;
 - Supporting women activists in the civil society by developing web pages on their NGO activities and websites; and
 - Supporting women in their participation in regional and international workshops.

Overcoming Challenges

Challenges were basically political. It was difficult to obtain official recognition and national support. Governmental funding was limited. The adopted strategy for overcoming political obstacles was based on the determination of the initiative members and their refusal to adopt political/religious/ethnic agendas. The initiative largely relied on the members' efforts in building a strong and united team.

Such dynamics enabled the dissemination of the initiative's activities, the enhancement of influence and the creation of strategic alliances with regional organisations.

Immediate successes

Given the nature of the initiative, the quantitative success indicators may be measured as follows:

- 178 visitors visit the website daily. Six messages are received every day on seeking information or finding out about how to support the website.
- There are 84 constant participants in the forum. 587 messages were exchanged in 2007.
- 401 women have been trained on how to use the internet and email.
- Eight training sessions and eleven awareness building seminars and meetings were held.
- The website participated in more than 90 consultancies and activities at the national, regional and international levels.

The qualitative success indicators are:

- The overcoming of social and ethnic differences by addressing common interest issues, and
- Men's commitment to exchanging views on women's conditions and rights.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- The lack of resources prevented a thorough website evaluation. The adopted monitoring and evaluation indicators enabled improving the provided service.
 - There was a periodic review of website visitors, number of electronic forum participants and number of electronic mails.
 - Constant monitoring of reactions to common priority issues was achieved by focussing on the number and nature of discussed issues and the new materials incorporated into the website.
 - Ensuring sustainable capacity building was achieved through monitoring the number of training programmes and participants.
 - Increasing the number of women acquiring Internet skills and participating in the initiative forum and activities was a monitored activity.

Ensuring Sustainability

- Flexibility in dealing with challenges in order to overcome them and take advantage of opportunities was an important characteristic of the initiative.

Contribution to Social Transformation

- The initiative enabled Mauritanian women to access ITCs.
- The website created a women's space for mobilisation and awareness building in various fields such health, education, economic independence, and legal rights.
- The website represented an important source of information on the dangers of some social practices and on women's role in development.

Lessons for Replication

- The initiative can and should be replicated in different fields and contexts given the importance of creating networks and providing women with a space to voice views and undertake activities in complex social contexts. It is also important in bridging the digital divide and eliminating discriminatory forms of access to information. Transparency and creating a sense of belonging are two important conditions to ensure the trust of target groups and the success of communication initiatives.



Role of Networks in Establishing a Constructive Dialogue on Women's Citizenship Rights in the Arab Gulf

Theme(s):

- Governance and Decision Making

Type of Program:

- Networking to Raise Awareness (research analysis)

Country/Region:

- Arab Gulf Countries

Author:

- Leila DeVriese, Zayed University

Initiative overview: Using the United Arab Emirates as an example, the study investigates the interactive relations between women's international networks and local non-governmental organisations. It also studies the scope of harmonisation between universal and local discourses on social justice and gender equity.

Social discriminatory practices targeted: As is the case in many Gulf countries, political parties in the United Arab Emirates are prohibited. Women's associations have to be part of the women's union authorised by the State and which is chaired by the spouse of the late president and the founding father of UAE. To date, there is no human rights organisation.

Socio-cultural context: In the last two decades, a significant development took place in the number of international social movements mobilised for the achievement of social justice throughout the world. The parallel development of the civil society locally increased in a number of developing countries. Although most non-governmental organisations are working to achieve justice and equity, one of their most important activities deals with women's empowerment and gender equality. In fact, the international movements supporting human rights and women's rights can be considered a driving force for gradual social development.

Since the 1990s, ITC development, which is linked to opportunities for change and international meetings, has increased the number of international networks and examples of inter-organisational cooperation. These increases were achieved with the emergence of international women's organisations which use women's rights as a collective platform to influence social and legal frameworks.

Pressing for the professional nature of activist work emanating from the need for funding, financial support and working in wide geographic areas – led to an increase in the number of non-governmental organisations whose work is based on social justice and equality. Women’s organisations play an important role in reformulating the discourse on legally granted rights, especially in the area of citizenship. Internationally, women’s networks and non-governmental organisations contributed to redefining social justice, human rights and equity-related issues. Domestically, women’s organisations were inspired by international standards and adapted them to their own agendas.

Objectives and Goals

The study investigates the dynamics of relations between international women’s networks and local non-governmental organisations in terms of discourse, harmony between international discourse and local discourse, and practices in the area of social justice and gender equality. The aim is to evaluate the capacity of such networks for creating a common culture and adapting its strategies to different local contexts. Therefore, it is important to identify the alternative strategies agreed upon by women’s international organisations and local non-governmental organisations to design work plans and formulate a discourse and messages on women’s empowerment and rights. As a case study, the United Arab Emirates, like other transitional societies, is a clear example of the interaction between forces of change and the opposing attempts to maintain traditional ideas of women’s citizenship rights.

Good Practices

Note: The summary does not provide lessons for replication to develop the activities of local non-governmental organisations.

Innovative Approach

The study highlights a number of ideas to mobilise forces in relation to women’s issues in the Gulf such as:

- Studying and documenting social issues through investment in higher education and academic research, which is still in its first phases, and orienting this investment to become a space for thinking about women’s issues and rights in the Arab Gulf.
- Understanding context and obtaining changes. The preliminary analyses of the written media and the internet highlight that, since 2002, the public sphere in countries such as the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Oman and Bahrain has become more responsive to the international discourse on equality and women’s empowerment. There is still a need for more efforts to understand the scope of attitudinal change and the manner of supporting the working forces to sustain women’s rights.

- Exploiting the new political policies for change so that voluntary work becomes a wide social movement, in light of the fact that the social and political changes witnessed by transitional societies provide opportunities for political change. There are social activists who do not belong to grassroots non-governmental organisations and therefore do not benefit from resources that could help them overcome political obstacles in their societies. It is advantageous to take advantage of these new political opportunities and get organised inside the usual ‘deconstruction reference’.
- Instead of bringing in or preparing new frames of reference, social activists are inspired by existing references and prepare agendas according to existing values and ideas. Snow, Rochford, Worden, and Benford (1986) suggest that social movements should bear their political interpretation of events or use the existing frames of collective awareness. When social movements link their visions to recognised values, they provide themselves with a better chance for success. In the Middle East for example, women movements’ renunciation of the secular discourse on human rights and adoption of a developed Islamic discourse are considered a strategy that reconciles the general vision with pre-existing national frames.
- Building a climate of trust and legitimacy, especially with conservative opponents and existing social networks such as charity organisations, voluntary organisations and social groups is important in order to obtain social support. What matters in the process of legitimising effective social parties is the interaction with the local context in a manner that includes the language and the symbols rooted in the national cultural frame. Such an approach enables social activists to rise above their marginalised status and establish a sustained dialogue with opponents. Thus, they become recognised as legitimate activists in the public domain (Tarro, 1992).
- Using state authorised institutions as change tools is a proven effective strategy. Because of the commitment of Gulf States to education and investment in this sector, it seems that introducing gender studies into the research and pedagogy of academic institutions in the United Arab Emirates may be a real means to supporting women’s position. Given the absence of balance between the local population and foreigners, the reason for the state support of women’s education is really based on economic development. Statistics show that spending on women’s education by Gulf governments exceed that of Middle Eastern countries, and is likely to achieve social change.

Towards Anchoring the Concept of the Vitality of Socio-cultural Beliefs and Practices: Example of Lebanese Novels

Theme(s):

- Information, Education, and Communication

Type of Program:

- Raising Awareness (research)

Country/Region:

- Lebanon (national)

Author:

- Noha BAYOUMI, University of Lebanon

Human Resources:

- Researcher

Initiative overview: The study deals with the manner in which contemporary literature by male and female writers is influenced by and influences gender in Lebanon. The study focuses on the social transformations that took place during the civil war between 1975 and 1990, especially during the last 20 years. This period was characterised by terrible political conflict, thus imposing a specific social reality and unbalanced power relations between men and women. One can argue that, on the whole, change to achieve equity for women in Lebanon occurred in two fields, primarily in legislation and politics, and to a lesser extent in society.

Social discriminatory practices targeted: Hidden discriminatory practices such as men's control of women's movement usually lead to unbalanced power relations that are tense and change-resistant. Women have been repressed emotionally and sexually through a conservative culture and traditional views against individual freedoms and expression at the level of affective relations. (There is no difference between the concepts of love and marriage, and body and affection.)

Socio-cultural context: In Lebanon, there are different social discriminatory practices. At the personal level, discriminatory forms clearly emerge in women's rights in relation to marriage, nationality rights for their children, abortion and protection from gender-based physical violence.

At the public level, discriminatory forms are reflected in decreasing private sector salaries, practices barring women from leading administrative positions and educational inequity.

There are no diverse economic activities for women and no mechanisms to monitor the implementation of policies, constitutions and legislation that support equality. The budgets lack special funds for women's empowerment programmes, thus allowing for the development of double standards in implementing and interpreting laws. The last twenty years have brought about many changes. An increase in the number of women's associations interested in women's citizenship rights was recorded. Many men, especially in urban areas, have adopted gender equality attitudes, particularly in social relations, and have voiced their openness.

Good Practices

Innovative Approach

- Comparing and analysing the relations between the sexes in contemporary Lebanese literature, which describes what takes place in society in different forms, is considered an important means to analyse the most neglected factors in this area.
- This is an innovative approach since it determines and shows what has been achieved in actual fact and compares theory to practice.

Overcoming Challenges

- The most important challenge was to balance out two different types of analyses: analysing the cultural/social/political discourse and laws, and literary views about the same issues.
- Another challenge was how to link discussions of gender issues, social relations and the factors impacting on equality between the sexes in literature.

Overcoming Challenges

- The study has clarified the existing models of social relations for men and women in contemporary literature in an attempt to define the sources of various discriminatory forms of gender relations.
- The study results can be used in monitoring and planning interventions to address discriminatory social practices.
- The study dealt in-depth with some existing practices and put them in context in order to carry out more scientific and proof-based analyses.

Lessons for Replication

- The study can be easily replicated in other contexts. It shows how the area of comparative and descriptive gender studies can be expanded.
- The study highlights the importance of using the extracted data both to put gender issues in the appropriate context and understanding, and to prepare the basic information necessary to intervene and treat gender discrimination.
- Literature can be used as an innovative means of measuring the degree of awareness of gender equity issues among researchers, decision makers and the local community.

