

# PRACTICES

from the field

Advocating for Women in the  
Euro-Mediterranean Region

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European Institute of the Mediterranean



مؤسسة نساء الأورو-متوسط  
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- Advancing in the common fight for equal rights of women and men to participate in political, economic, civil and social life;
- Eradicating all forms of violence and discrimination against women and girls;
- Encouraging a change in attitude and behaviour for gender equality.

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**European Institute of the Mediterranean**

C/ Girona, 20  
08010 Barcelona, Spain  
www.iemed.org

**Euro-Mediterranean Women's Foundation**

Headquarters: European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed)  
C/ Girona, 20 · 08010 Barcelona, Spain  
www.euromedwomen.foundation

**PRACTICES FROM THE FIELD. Advocating for Women in the Euro-Mediterranean Region**

Text: Afaf Jabiri  
Coordination: Josep Ferré; Emilie Vidal  
Proofreading: Federica Giardina  
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## Advocating for Women in the Euro-Mediterranean region



- ADEW: Family Status Laws Campaign: custody and visitations  
ANFEC: Women's Voices Radio Website  
AVFM: Strengthening the capacity of South Associations Activists  
CIDDEF: Establishment of a coalition and advocacy for the introduction of the quota system in Algeria  
CWSP: Project "Equality for local development: gender mainstreaming in municipalities"  
EAVN: Gender Equality Awareness Raising against Intimate Partner Violence (GEAR against IPV)  
ECWR: Sexual Harassment Campaign: Making Egypt's Streets Safer for Everyone  
EWL: Transnational Campaigning - European Women's Lobby 5050 campaign across Europe  
GAF: Women's Human Rights Protection  
JCW: Palestinian Women Through the Eyes of Their Youth  
JOHUD: Rights to Inheritance and Economic Empowerment of Women  
MARCH: 'I am unbeatable' Campaign

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## ACRONYMS

Association for the Development and Enhancement of Women	ADEW
Association nationale femmes en communication	ANFEC
Association voix de femmes marocaines	AVFM
Center for Women's Studies and Policies	CWSP
Centre d'information et de documentation sur les droits de l'enfant et de la femme	CIDDEF
Civil Society Organisations	CSOs
Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women	CEDAW
Egyptian Center for Women's Rights	ECWR
European Anti-Violence Network	EAVN
European Union	EU
European Women's Lobby	EWL
Gender Alternative Foundation	GAF
Gender Equality Awareness Raising against Intimate Partner Violence	GEAR against IPV
Gender-based violence	GBV
Jerusalem Center for Women	JCW
Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development	JOHUD
Jordanian National Commission for Women	JNCW
Jordanian Personal Status Law	JPSL
March Lebanon Association	MARCH
Non-governmental organisations	NGOs
Violence against women	VAW

# INTRODUCTION

This report presents 12 successful practices from the Southern Mediterranean region. It has been developed with an understanding that the implementation of an advocacy initiative involves a strategic vision of the change that the advocacy aims to achieve. The vision should be a response and a reflection to the needs on the ground and a representation of stakeholders' interests and rights. Most importantly, the advocacy should not be an isolated event but rather presents an accumulation of past and current actions by building on previous experiences and taking into consideration lessons learned of the activities that have been done before. Thus, this analysis report presupposes that any successful practice would not be a result of one organisation's action *per se*. Rather, a successful practice accounts for change through and aims to continue the struggle of other organisations in a manner which respects and appreciates all the efforts that made it possible for an advocacy practice to be developed and implemented in a particular context.

Relatedly, advocacy on gender equality is only successful when it relates its objectives to the current reality of men and women within the socio-political and economic context. However, without referring this reality to the historical roots of gender discrimination, gender stereotypes and the structural systematic normative views of men's and women's roles, values, traits, responsibilities and duties, the change will continue to be partial. Tackling such issues that are generally perceived by conservatives in some context to be essential for society's harmony and a reflection of the deemed cultural authenticity, would not be without difficulties and contestations. A major mission of advocacy on gender equality, as it will be shortly shown in the analysis, involves dealing with major forces of resistance, societal attitudes and perceptions, states' policies and decision makers' mind-set as well as men and women's perceptions of themselves.

Nonetheless, a change in relation to gender inequality would not often take a form of immediate transformation to gender norms and policies. Rather it commonly would pave the way for more initiatives to take place, introduce new ways of tackling the issue, challenge different realities of men and women, contribute in enhancing specific qualities of women's lives and make it possible for women to access and obtain rights that they were denied earlier.

With this understanding of what change means in relation to the advocacy and policy dialogue on gender equality, successful practices are those aimed at: impacting policy-making processes, offering new ground in non-traditional areas for women, demonstrating an innovative and replicable approaches and sustaining gender equality within the framework of different institutions. Consequently, and based on the understanding of what constitutes a successful practice, this reports analyses 12 successful practices of the CSOs in the Southern Mediterranean region that were selected by the CSO WINS project implementers.

This report examines the 12 practices' approaches to advocacy, scrutinises their context and explores the ways in which the practices dealt with resistance through their strategies, and lastly generates lessons learned from each practice. Before doing so, the report introduces the "CSO WINS project" and provides a brief summary of the 12 successful practices' approaches. This analytical report of successful practices is hoped to be a resource for organisations that are committed to support gender equality and are interested in developing policy dialogue and advocacy actions and learning from the experiences of others.

## THE CSO WINS PROJECT

The CSO WINS project aims to strengthen the capacity of the CSOs of the Southern Mediterranean to fully participate in the policy dialogue on gender equality and achieve transformation at the spheres of politics, law, economic and culture and so forth. The project is implemented by the European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed, Spain) in partnership with the Association of Victims of Terrorism Djazairouna (Algeria), the Center of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR, Tunisia), the Federation of the Democratic League of Women's Rights (FLDDF, Morocco), the Forum Femmes Méditerranée (FFM, France), the Palestinian Businesswomen's Association Asala (Palestine) and the Euro-Mediterranean Academic and Scientific Network on Women and Gender (RUSEMEG, France).

The goal of the project is to build the skills of the CSOs in conducting effective advocacy actions that seek the realisation of gender equality and to mobilize policy makers and public opinion in favour of women's rights. It aims to do so through offering the CSOs acting for equality the opportunities to interact with each other, to learn from different experiences that some organisations have developed, in order to play an active role in the monitoring of policies concerning women and to get inspired from existing advocacy actions at national and Euro-Mediterranean level.

In order to achieve its goals, the project encourages the transfer of lessons learned in advocacy, exchanges and networking between organisations of the Euro-Mediterranean region, the production of resources, the implementation of advocacy campaigns, especially outside the capitals and major cities and the dialogue with policy makers. In the first phase of the project, 12 practices of the CSOs were selected and evaluated successful in advocacy and political dialogue in the field of the promotion of the role of women in society. The step after is to put the identified 12 advocacy and policy dialogue practices in contact with other organisations in the region, in a form of peer exchange, in order for other organisations to exchange experience and develop new capacities in addressing issues related to gender equality<sup>1</sup>.

The selection of the practices started by a call for proposal for the CSOs, who have implemented an advocacy and policy dialogues initiatives, to submit an application form that

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on the CSO WINS project, please visit: [http://www.iemed.org/dossiers-en/dossiers-iemed/cultures-mediterranies/dones-a-la-mediterrania/les-actions-de-2019iemed-en-faveur-de-2019egalite-entre-les-sexes-dans-la-region-euro-mediterraneenne?set\\_language=en](http://www.iemed.org/dossiers-en/dossiers-iemed/cultures-mediterranies/dones-a-la-mediterrania/les-actions-de-2019iemed-en-faveur-de-2019egalite-entre-les-sexes-dans-la-region-euro-mediterraneenne?set_language=en) and <https://www.euromedwomen.foundation/pg/actus/actusagenda/en/1>

includes one advocacy practice they consider to be successful. The project received a number of 82 eligible practices. The assessment of the practices was first guided by the goals that the CSOs aimed to achieve, which included: assessment of policies and programmes and holding states accountable; increase awareness among public authorities and the general public of the challenges of equality between women and men and of the role of women in society; create dialogue between public authorities and organisations on the production, implementation and assessment of public policies concerning the role of women in society; enhance the commitments of public authorities to measures or reforms to put into practice the commitments made by a country in the field of the promotion of the role of women in society; modify the decision-making processes to ensure that the organisations working in the field of the promotion of the role of women in society can participate and influence the political agendas.

A second step on the assessment included developing criteria for the successful practices. The first vital set of criteria are related to the organisations' profile in relation to the experience they have in advocacy and policy dialogue and that the practices that organisations implemented are mainly concerned of advocating for the promotion of women's role in the society. The second set of criteria are related to the effectiveness of the practice and that it has produced clear, concrete and lasting results, which effects continue in time and its actions are incorporated into the overall programming of the organisation and the broader work on gender equality rather than an isolated event. The innovation of the practice is another significant criterion for the assessment. In this regard, practices are evaluated based on what they have offered, as an added value, to the work on gender equality and presented an innovative character within the context in which these were implemented. The duplicability of the practice is also crucial to its assessment, whether can be replicated in the same country or in another. The other central element of the assessment is partnership and coordination with other the CSOs whether at the national, regional or international level. In addition, the project took into consideration the need for a geographical balance and representation of diversity within the Euro-Mediterranean region. It is worth noting that the geographical balance was considered without compromising the quality of the work or the criteria set for the identification of successful practices.

## OVERVIEW OF THE SUCCESSFUL PRACTICES

The 12 practices on advocacy and policy dialogue pertaining to gender equality that were selected, encompassed themes which ranged from advocating for equality and women's empowerment in public, civil and political life; eliminating different types of gender based discrimination and gender based violence; ensuring that women have access to justice; women's economic participation and boosting of women's access to new technologies and media. The practices used different advocacy approaches and mechanisms that constituted of a combination of: coalition building, awareness raising, training, research, lobbying and resource mobilisation, monitoring of government performance, using international human rights treaty bodies to hold government accountable and creating new spaces for dialogue and expression of rights.

### Advocacy Approaches and Tools

In every practice, there was no sole approach to advocating for law reform and policy dialogue, but rather a combination of advocacy tools depending on the context and transformation required to be realised. Consequently, the advocacy practices included several options from which suitable syntheses were chosen. The specific advocacy combination and emphasis was different for each practice, thematic area and geographical area and some of the approaches have an overlapping approach in terms of tools and themes. The range of approaches included the following:

*Research, evidence-based reporting and dissemination:* Several practices used credible and vigorous research to raise the profile of the issue and explain the impact of a policy or a particular condition on women, communities, on a country or at the regional level. For example, in order for the Egyptian Center for Women's Rights (ECWR) to fight the widespread sexual harassment against women in the streets, it has undertaken a survey on the prevalence and consequences of sexual violence on women and the community at large. The survey's results used for advocating for law reform, raise women's awareness about the issue and challenge negative attitudes related women's dress or behaviour. On the other hand, the Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human development (JOHUD) used research to advocate for women's inheritance rights from within the framework of *Sharia*. JOHUD's research on women's inheritance rights in Islam has provided religious interpretations and reading of Quran that prohibit denying women their rights of inheritance. Comparative research further aided the Centre d'information et de documentation sur les droits de l'enfant et de la femme (Information and Documentation Centre on children and women's rights,

CIDDEF) to analyse the political representation of women in Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria. The results of the study were used to sensitise public towards the importance of women's political participation – and the potential impact of quota system – by showing how systems worked in other countries and the ways in which the quota system could enhance women's political participation, particularly in parliament.

*Raising awareness and educational programmes:* All practices, by virtue, have used tools aimed at galvanising public awareness about the nature and extent of the advocacy issue of concern. Public awareness tools ranged from establishing communications campaigns, media, speeches to influential audiences, holding awareness days. However, some practices resorted to unconventional tools to educate the public and influence policy makers. MARCH Lebanon Association (MARCH) managed to raise the general public awareness through a stunt film, where a scene of a man abusing his wife in public and the reactions of people passing by were filmed and distributed widely. The European Anti-Violence Network (EAVN) developed educational materials for gender equality awareness raising against intimate partner violence (GEAR against IPV) in schools. The aim, herein, was to promote the development of healthy and equal relationships between sexes and to achieve zero tolerance towards violence. The materials were developed with flexible and adaptable approach in order to allow other organisations make use of them. Similarly, the Jerusalem Center for Women (JCW) developed training materials that specifically targeted youth in the universities. By training students and engaging them in the fight against the Gender-based Violence (GBV), the JCW has managed to turn youth to be active agents in engendering change and awareness around the issue of the GBV.

*Grassroots mobilisation:* Many organisations have generated broad-based public support for specific law reform or policy change by mobilising other NGOs, coalitions and affected groups of the required change, in order to improve public awareness of an issue and ensure the support of the public to the policy change demanded. The Association for Development of Egyptian Women (ADEW) realised that to counter the rising demands from conservative groups that intended to repeal the family laws related to custody and visitation rights, it had first to work at the grassroots level, with women who will be affected by the change to custody rights, ensure that coalitions and organisations were supporting its goal and mobilise influential policy makers and community leaders to counter state's proposal of repealing women's custody rights.

*Building capacity:* To systematically scrutinise gender-mainstreaming discrepancies in Bulgarian municipalities, the Center for Women's Studies and Policies (CWSP) supported

the development of municipalities' staff knowledge and built their capacities on issues related to gender-mainstreaming and equality. By providing an essential support over an extended period of time for the staff, the CWSP built the capacity of the municipalities to use gender analysis methodologies and by this, it managed in fostering sustainable change in local communities. Other organisations, like Association nationale femmes en communication (National Association of Women in Communication, ANFEC) in Algeria, established an internet radio to reach a wide range of public and raise their awareness on the issue of gender inequality, patriarchal norms and violence against women. To maximise the effectiveness of its practice, ANFEC trained journalists and students of journalism as well as other organisations in communicating messages on the violence against women (VAW) through radio and built their theoretical and practical capacities in relation to the VAW and social norms that maintain it.

*Policy development:* Several practices worked with governments to draft legislative proposals and to implement specific schemes of change, this encompassed approaches of the practices of the EWL, JOHUD, the ECWR, the CWSP and CIDDEF. These practices have provided governments and legislative bodies with specific policy suggestion for change as well as provided stakeholders with a goal to assemble around. Accordingly, developing policy solutions have aided change by providing advocates, legislators and others with credible ideas and proposals for realising it.

*Lobbying:* Lobbying decision-makers, Parliamentarians and other key players is one of the very effective tools to engage in policy dialogue. The 5050 campaign is one of the coordinated actions of the EWL. It has targeted different audiences including high-level personalities, who were chosen and asked to become ambassadors for the 5050 campaign, which has given the campaign a greater visibility. By such an engagement, the EWL enhanced the political dialogue between stakeholders and decision-makers. This led to the support of decision-makers to women's rights across Europe.

*International Human Rights mechanisms and litigation:* in the fight against the GBV, Gender Alternatives Foundation (GAF) in Bulgaria used shadow reports to Human Rights Treaties Bodies, as an advocacy tool, in order to pressure the Bulgarian government to comply with its national, regional and international legal mechanisms regarding gender equality and of violence against women. At the national level, in Bulgaria GAF also used these mechanisms in taking legal action to achieve desired changes or fight undesired policies and practices. Litigation was linked to its advocacy on the GBV to ensure that court decisions are implemented robustly.

*Community organising:* through its practice that aimed at strengthening the capacity of southern activist associations in Morocco, the Association voix de femmes marocaines (Voice of Moroccan Women, AVFM) supported women's activists at the local level to organise, give voice to their concerns and promote their own interests. By reaching out charitable organisations and shifting their goals from charitable to human rights and gender equality based approaches, the AVFM managed to advocate for women's adequate representation within these organisations. This has been done by empowering women in the first place and enhancing their capacities to take leadership positions in these organisations.

## **METHODOLOGY OF THE ANALYSIS**

The methods of analysing the practices are comprised of literature review, developing guidelines for the analysis of the 12 practices and interviews with key representatives of organisations.

### **Development of Guidelines for analysis**

A first step to conduct the analysis involved a revision of the practices approaches, methods, conceptual framework, target groups and action-strategic plans of implementation. At this phase, the revision aimed to develop a holistic methodological framework for the analysis. A guideline of the analysis was then developed, which included a set of questions in relation to the approaches, methods, strategies, challenges, opportunities and lessons learned from the practice.

### **Desk/Literature review**

The literature review included a review of documents related to the 12 practices' reports, materials and application forms submitted to the CSO WINS project. Furthermore, the review looked in depth at the 12 practices' materials, websites and literature to examine the scope of each practice; approaches and mechanisms used; terminology and conceptual issues raised; effects of the practice on the political, social or economic environments; outcomes and results of the initiatives; conditions that contributed to the success of the practices' mechanisms; and finally the resources mobilised.

In addition, the review also involved an analysis of the context of each practice in terms of the socio-political and economic spheres in order to contextualise each of them. The analysis of the political and socioeconomic context assisted in highlighting the ways in which the advocacy strategies adopted have taken into consideration contextual issues, and whether this context have imposed any particular challenges or limitations on the organisations as well as available opportunities. By this, the analysis of the context addressed the contemporary discriminatory structures and their root causes from the theoretical review in order to understand how the practices have tackled different systematic and institutional causes of gender inequalities.

### **Interviews and Communications with Key representatives**

A number of interviews with the organisations' representatives were conducted, via Skype. Interviews were convened only when there was missing information or more details of the practice were required, this in addition to email communications with several organisations.



## A NOTE ON THE TERMINOLOGY

Defining different terms used in the practices related to advocacy on women's rights and gender equality is essential to this analysis. Setting the framework for definition does not only influence the understanding of the issue, but it has also implications on the policy level and directly affects policymaking within the organisation and beyond. In the practices' literature, the organisations have used different terms, concepts and definitions that represented their conceptual understanding of women's rights and gender equality and the type of change the practices meant to realise. The analysis of each practice uses the same terminology of the practices in order to maintain the integrity of the practice.

The VAW is the common term used to refer to any act resulting in physical, emotional, or psychological harm of women. The discussion of different types of violence such as the Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), control over mobility, early marriage, forced marriage, traditional ceremony, battering, marital rape, polygamy and, finally, rape and sexual harassment, were all addressed under this term. Most organisations have adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women which defines the VAW (1992) as:

“Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivations of liberty whether occurring in public or private life”(Art.1)<sup>2</sup>.

The GBV is another term that is used and defined in other practices. The term violence is defined as an act that entails the intention of physically hurting the other. By adding the term 'gender' to 'violence', the term encompasses the violence inflicted on women because they are women. The term 'gender' itself refers to:

“The social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, as well as the relations between women and those between men. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialization processes. They are context/ time-specific and changeable”<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> UN General Assembly, *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women*, available at: <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/48/a48r104.htm> (Last accessed 29th December 2015).

<sup>3</sup> UN Women, *Important Underlying Gender Mainstreaming*, available at: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/pdf/factsheet2.pdf> (Last accessed 29th December 2015).

The term GBV is a broad term, it is more used in practices where the focus is not limited to violence against women but extends to also include violence against children, adolescents as well as violence against men.

Another important term used is Gender Mainstreaming. The term is significant for practices that aim to influence the position of men and women at the institutional level and produce strategies of gender equality. Gender mainstreaming has been used globally as a strategy for promoting gender equality. It is defined and understood by the UN as:

“Mainstreaming is not an end in itself but a strategy, an approach, a means to achieve the goal of gender equality. Mainstreaming involves ensuring that gender perspectives and attention to the goal of gender equality are central to all activities - policy development, research, advocacy/dialogue, legislation, resource allocation, and planning, implementation and monitoring of programmes and projects”<sup>4</sup>.

Empowerment of women is understood as the processes through which women can gain power and control over their own lives. These processes encompass “awareness-raising, building self-confidence, expansion of choices, increased access to and control over resources and actions to transform the structures and institutions which reinforce and perpetuate gender discrimination and inequality”<sup>5</sup>. Empowerment in the practices was used as a tool but also as a goal in and by itself, in order to enable women to fully participate in the activities and ensure that the voice of women was present.

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4 Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women United Nation, *Supporting gender mainstreaming: the work of the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women*, 2001, available at: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/pdf/report.pdf> (Last accessed 29 December 2015).

5 *Ibid.*

## ORGANISING OF THE PRACTICES

The practices are organised in this report in relation to four thematic areas: legislation and law reform; combating violence against women and gender-based violence; women's empowerment and political participation and promotion of women's rights as human rights. The organisation of the practices in each thematic area was decided based on the main goal of the practice. However, as advocacy aims to realise change through a wide range of activities in a complex environment, this meant that influencing one area would not be possible unless tackling other issues surrounding it. For instance, in some cases, to address gender inequality in political process there was a need to interlink it with the GBV and women's lack of economic empowerment. Therefore, advocacy tactics and strategies in each of the practices have not merely used approaches and strategies related to one thematic area, rather, there was an overlapping of different themes in order for the practices to achieve their goals.

In the following sections, the analysis will offer an overview of the main components of the advocacy practices based on the developed framework of eight components: background and contextual analysis, scope of the practice and objectives, advocacy strategies: dealing with resistance, operations and activities, partnerships and stakeholders engagement, critical factors for success and challenges, impact and lessons learned. The analysis addresses all eight components; however, several additional issues will also be included to highlight approaches in specific contexts or practices. The length of the practices differs based on the practice timeframe and activities. This is because some practices were implemented over a longer period of time and used a range of activities. Whilst, others were implanted over a shorter period of time and used one approach with a lesser range of activities. The analysis ends by offering an overview of the general lessons learned from the practices and the effective approaches used in advocating for law reform and policy dialogue.



Advocating for political dialogue and changes in laws with a focus on violence towards women  
Jerusalem Center for Women

# I LEGISLATION AND LAW REFORMS

## PRACTICE 1: FAMILY STATUS LAWS CAMPAIGN: CUSTODY AND VISITATIONS

*Association for the Development & Enhancement of Women (ADEW), Egypt*

### **Summary of the Practice**

In 2011, there were serious attempts in Egypt to reverse women's rights in the country. Threat to quashing women's rights constitute of lowering the marriage age, repealing reform to women's custody over children and cancelling the right of women to initiate a divorce case, mainly the *khulu'* article (divorce initiated by women). The increase of marriage age to 18, granting women's rights to children's custody and *khulu'*, were part of reforms that were made to the Egyptian Family Law in the last few decades, which took great efforts from women's NGOs. Thus, the practice was launched to resist the setback of women's rights, particularly provisions pertaining to custody and visitation rights.

Consequently, the practice was part and parcel of women's rights groups' activism to protect Egyptian women's gains and rights. The advocacy on custody and visitation was first launched in 2001 and continued until 2006. The change made to the custody laws in 2005, which extended the age of children under the custody of mothers until the age of 15 for both females and males, was considered one of the successes of the campaign. The campaign was re-launched in 2011 after the Egyptian Parliament proposed to re-discuss these rights and objected the reforms made in 2005. The campaign main goal was to protect the outcomes of the 2005 Custody Law campaign and pressure decision makers not to change the current Custody Law. Whilst the campaign aimed to protecting the custody rights for women, it also introduced further changes it sought in relation to visitations rights as both were very much interlinked.

**The practice was to protect women's gains and rights that came under the threat after the revolution in Egypt**

## Background and Contextual Analysis

The Egyptian legal system is built on the combination of Islamic law (*Sharia*) and civil laws. All issues of women's rights and family are mainly sourced from *Sharia*, while trade, finance, penal and labour matters are largely drawn from the French and British legislation. Egypt is a party to most international human rights agreements. The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was ratified in 1981, with reservations made to four articles: Article 2 non-discrimination and equality between men and women; Article 16 regarding equal family rights; Article 29B regarding complaints and Article 9 regarding nationality. In 2008, the government of Egypt lifted its reservation to article 9 based on changes made to the Nationality Law. The reservation made to article 2 is one of the most significant as this article establishes the definition of non-discrimination in all areas of public and private life, which is one of CEDAW core principle. By reserving such a principle, Egypt continues to deny women's rights to substantive equality and a life free from discrimination. Reserving this article also contradicts ratification of CEDAW in principle since the treaty fundamentally aims eliminating discrimination against women.

*Sharia* law applies to Muslim family and personal rights. The *Hanafi* School is the dominant school in Egypt's family law, which is one of the four official Sunni Schools of thought that constitute *fiqh* (Jurisprudence). There have been several reforms made to family law during the last decade, one of which was the reform made to the Custody Law 25 of 1929 (amended by Law 4 of 2005). This grants women's right the custody of her children until the age of 15 for both female and male children, instead of 10 for a son and 12 for a daughter<sup>6</sup>.

The changes also give the child the option of deciding whether to remain with the custodian without maintenance until the boy reaches 18 year-old and the girl marries. Although there are some issues with the amendments related to the loss of financial maintenance and that girls only reach legal age when they marry, it ensured equality between female and male children as regards custody and increased the age for both to 15. Visitations hours were also increased to four hours instead of three hours per week. In Article 31 of 2005 Family Law, age of marriage was raised to 18 for both sexes instead of 18 for men and 16 for women.

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<sup>6</sup> The Network of Women's Human Rights Organizations in Egypt, *A Guide on Preparing a Justice Family Law*, 24 September 2010, available at: <http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CEDAW/C/JOR/5&Lang=en>

During the 33 year rule of former President Mubarak, martial laws were enforced for a long period, restricting freedom of speech and democracy. In 25 January 2011, a revolution started, demanding Mubarak to step down from the Presidency. The following month, Mubarak resigned under the pressure from the public pressure and the army. Within a year from the revolution, Islamic parties won around 40% of the Parliament seats and the presidential election<sup>7</sup>. The amended Constitution during the rule of the Islamic Justice and Freedom Party swept away recognition of women's rights and left the door open to the legalisation of female marriage under the age of 18. During this period, several Salafi and conservative groups suggested that the government should repeal the changes made to the Muslim Family Law, such as marriage age, custody and *khulu'*.

## **ADEW**

ADEW is a non-profit organisation that provides legal assistance, microfinance, capacity building, shelter and social assistance services. It has been working in service, advocacy and capacity building programmes related to women's rights for the last three decades. Since its establishment, it has adopted a holistic approach in responding to discrimination and violence against women. It has conducted field studies and needs assessments to determine the challenges that face marginalized groups, giving them insight into the target groups' and stakeholders' needs and interests.

One of the main goals of ADEW is to provide on-going support and empowerment for women, particularly female heads of households, as such groups are one of the most vulnerable, marginalized and unrecognized by many support structures. Additionally, through its advocacy program, ADEW succeeded pushing for governmental recognition of female-headed households, as well as the adoption of protection and empowerment policies as the State's agenda. The organization also at an early stage launched a programme related to lack of identity cards among poor women. ADEW's legal services assist women to obtain ID cards, birth certificates and other official documents. This contributes to changing women's legal and economic status and assists them in accessing state institutions and searching for jobs.

## **Scope of the Practice and Objectives**

The main goal of the practice was to counter the rising demands from conservative groups to repeal the family laws tackling custody and visitation articles. ADEW realised that the risk of

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<sup>7</sup> Andrew Stone et al, Egypt Private Enterprises in the Aftermath of the Revolution: An Investment Climate Update, World Bank, 2013.

repealing these rights would expose women to a variety of abuses and undermine every aspect of their daily lives. The sudden risk of losing the custody of their children would also contribute

**Detecting the risk before it becomes a reality.**

in the suffering of mothers and their children; hence, ADEW consequently responded to this challenge by initiating the campaign. In this way, ADEW sensed the danger and acted to pre-empt anticipated changes, rather than reacting as they occur. This swift response greatly contributed to the success of the project.

The campaign for protecting women's custody rights was implemented in four phases. The first phase focused on analysing the issues, potential solutions and factors. In the second phase, ADEW identified the target groups of the campaign, their supporters, built a network of human rights defenders, mobilised resources and identified potential opponents. It also included developing counter arguments that its opponents could bring up. In the third phase ADEW started to build strategies, tactics, collectively with other advocates to counter opposing views and create pressure for decision makers to adopt the issue. This was done by organizing national conferences and roundtables, issuing publications and brochures and delivering its messages on visual and print media. The final phase focused on monitoring and evaluation to identify outcomes and measure them against the planned ones in order to assess the campaign's feasibility, challenges and short comings

ADEW's used different tools in the campaign such as targeting print, audio and visual media. It also organised national conferences and roundtables with stakeholders, established personal connections with decision makers and community leaders and produced and disseminated publications, brochures, by using social media to convey message to public and decision makers.

**Advocacy Strategies: Dealing with Resistance**

One of the advocacy goals for ADEW was to build a supportive community and environment for women's rights and the recognition of women as full-fledged citizens. This strategy requires on-going communication with local community, raising its awareness about women related issues.

To achieve this goal ADEW has adopted a set of principles that guide its advocacy work:

- Selecting issues of common concern based on the actual interests and needs of women, particularly those, who are vulnerable and underprivileged.
- Adopting the "Protection and Survival" discourse that entails advocating for women's rights

and gender equality, protecting and empowering them.

- Bringing the voice of marginalized women to the attention of society and decision makers, as well as identifying biased laws, policies and speech against women to be tackled; besides assisting in developing counter strategies, alternatives and solutions.

The advocacy strategies that were adopted included:

- Raising community awareness on the risks of repealing custody rights for women.
- Providing through evidence-based research on the impacts of changes on women, children and community at large.
- Mobilising communities to support mothers and women.
- Using mainstream and social media.
- Building allies and partnership between mothers and supporters of their rights.

**Best practice of successful strategies: provide support, information and representation with the aim of empowering women and enabling them to express their needs and choices.**

The advocacy strategies that were adopted in the campaign to protect custody rights and visitations, sought to achieve their goals by enabling women, who were most affected by the change in the law, to have a direct say in the issues. Thus, the campaign involved mothers and provided support for them to take part in it. It also made information available to them with the aim of empowering them to express their needs and choices.

The advocacy for protecting women's custody rights success depended on the effective advocacy that enabled mothers and women generally to have their rights and interests given significant consideration in the society. This kind of advocacy led to increased awareness in the community about women's rights, generated enthusiasm for volunteering on the issue and established grounds for dialogue in the community about women's rights.

### **Operations and activities**

It is practically difficult to have a successful advocacy campaign unless a very well developed action plan is already in place. In designing an action plan, organisations often examine the steps and activities that the advocacy campaign needs to take with identifying target groups, organisations, and institutions and so on. ADEW's action plan in this case is an example of good practice as it included discussions and dialogues with policy makers, media, government officials, public figures and religious institutions, community charitable organisations and women from different spectrum of the society. The activities included the following:

*Strategic and action planning meeting:* the campaign team conducted several meetings in the first phase of the practice to identify the target groups, establishing a link with other advocates, and drawing up strategies to address opponents' arguments.

*Building a broad network:* ADEW established a network with at least 10 NGOs in five different governorates.

*Conferences and roundtables:* several conferences and roundtables were convened during the campaign. Some of the roundtables targeted decision makers, human rights defenders, stakeholders and local communities.

*Training of media representatives:* to ensure that the media had an accurate and broad understanding of the issue, a training for media representatives was conducted. Practical case studies and life testimonies were used in informing the participants and raising their awareness of women's rights and the specific impacts of repealing the Custody Law.

*Producing publications:* ADEW worked collectively with as many advocates as possible on visual and print media to counter the opponents' arguments and put pressure on decision makers to adopt the issue.

*A documentary film:* this covered the campaign's main activities and presented it in an accessible format for promotion among the public.

*Policy recommendation papers* were published and presented to parliamentarians, Media, different policy makers and religious figures.

The variety of activities contributed in spreading campaign's messages and mobilising communities. It also indicates that the organisation took into account the needs and capacities of each target group and the ways in which the group could contribute to the campaign. Such tactical choices are critical factors to the success of any advocacy campaign.

### **Partnerships and Stakeholders Engagement**

As ADEW's strategy aimed at empowering those marginalised and the most affected women by the government's proposal, it was essential that the practice was conducted with the target groups, rather than for them, involving them in defining the apparent risks from the proposed changes. An innovative aspect about this campaign was the fact that ADEW

collaborated with the Egyptian Mothers Organisation, which is an organisation working specifically on this issue - parent custody (mostly mothers) - at a national level, advocating for the same cause. Thus, Egyptian Mothers Organisation had a prominent role in halting passing the custody law by the extreme regime of Muslim Brotherhood. Through these organisations, women's voices were present in expressing their concerns and advocating directly for the protection of their custody rights. The major success of this aspect was that the engagement of women took place not just in the capital, but also in various governorates across Egypt.

Another edge to this campaign was the direct lobbying activities done with the opposition and their supporters to make the cause more efficient in more political circles. It

also worked with a wide range of Political Parties, such as Al-Wafd, Al-Wasat, Al-Ahrar, Al-Takafol, Al-Tagamo, Al-Salam, El-Ghad, Egyptian Greens Part, Egyptian Democratic Part, and Misr 2000, El-Karama, El-Adl.

**Activities were determined based on target groups' needs, capacities and the role each groups will have in the campaign. This clearly reflects that tactical choices of the practice were very well examined**

### **Critical Factors for Success and Challenges**

The high turnover rate of authorities since the 2011 campaign was a major difficulty in having to reintroduce and lobby for the issue to continuously changing leadership. Another obstacle was the lack of basic gender awareness and women issues among the decision and policy-makers in concern, which meant approaching the cause from a rather basic level.

### **Impact**

The practice managed to send a message to decision makers that repealing women's rights is not acceptable. This message has also been applied to other rights where decision makers sensed that any change to legal rights would face a big resistance not only from women's organisations but also the wider community, political parties and human rights organisations in general.

This was a result of creating public awareness on the necessity of retaining Custody Law as it is, the participation of a large number of women's organisations, increased volunteerism and lobbying of the community as a whole to reject the proposed changes. Thus, the campaign managed to create a public opinion and dialogue that became an integral part of the national political dialogue and wider community's interests.

Measuring the impact:

- Reaching the advocates from several sectors: policy making, media, government officials, public figures and religious institutions.
- Identifying the opponents in at least four sectors of policy making, Parliament, Media and religious institutions.
- Establishing a network with at least 10 NGOs in five different governorates.
- Establish a database for women's life testimonies and statistics.
- At least 60 different stakeholders from different sectors attended the roundtable meetings.
- Preparing policy recommendation papers to be published and presented to the parliamentarians, Media, policy makers and religious figures.
- Provide printed media coverage to the campaign in at least 40 national and independent newspapers, as well as at least 20 TV channels.
- Produced a documentary, which covered campaign's main activities, in order to promote for the issue of concern among the public.

**Lessons Learned**

- Advocacy on women's rights has to be done in cooperation with women generally and with those most affected by the matter of concern. This not only gives legitimacy to any practice but also strengthens its demands.
- Solidarity and networking among women's organisations are key critical factors in any success.
- Training of the media representatives and aligning with key media institutions' and figures grants the needed coverage for the practice.
- The variety of activities based on each target groups needs is essential in order to take into consideration each target group needs, capacities and roles, this enhances the collaboration and support of the target groups.

## PRACTICE 2: RIGHTS TO INHERITANCE AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

### ***Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development (JOHUD), Jordan***

#### **Summary of the practice**

The practice falls within the broader objective of JOHUD to economically support and empower women. One of the main barriers to achieving this is the dependent status of women on their male family members, due to the lack of financial resources available to them. A very significant issue is related to women dropping out their inheritance rights. Most women do so in order to keep good ties with their family members, whilst some are forced to give up their share of inheritance against their will. Therefore, JOHUD implemented a campaign to educate women and the general public about women's rights to inheritance, legal solutions to protect women's inheritance rights and engaging religious and community leaders to fight discriminatory practices against women in relation to inheritance. The project was implemented over a period of four years from 2010 to 2014 as a cooperation project.

#### **Background and Contextual Analysis**

*Sharia* is considered to be the main source of the Jordanian Personal Status Law (JPSSL) in addition to *urf* (Customary law). All matters of marriage, divorce, and inheritance for Muslims are managed through *Sharia* courts and for Christians by the Tribunal Courts. Inheritance rights are administrated through the JPSSL, which is sourced from *Sharia*. The guided principle of inheritance laws quoted directly from the Quran is that "To the male, a portion equal to that of two females"<sup>8</sup>.

Dominant social stereotypes continue to be influential within the dynamics of the Jordanian family<sup>9</sup>. A nation-wide study of young men and women found that all participants believed that the mother or wife's role is housekeeping and child rearing, while the husband or father's role is to be the financial provider and decision-maker<sup>10</sup>.

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8 CEDAW, *Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women Fifth periodic report of States parties Jordan*, CEDAW /C/JOR/5, CEDAW, New York, 2010, p.89.

9 *Ibid.* p.22.

10 U. N., *Consideration of reports submitted by States Parties under Article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women Combined third and fourth reports of States Parties; Jordan*, March 2006, p. 5, available at: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/reports.htm>

The dependent status of women is clear in Jordan's annual overall ranking in Global Gender Gap Index: indeed, Jordan dropped systematically from 93<sup>rd</sup> in 2006 to 134<sup>th</sup> in 2014 and 140 out of 145 countries in 2015<sup>11</sup>. The lowest score of Jordan ranking is the economic participation and opportunity, where it is ranked 142 out of 145. This makes Jordan the fourth lowest country in terms of women's economic rights<sup>12</sup>.

## **JOHUD**

JOHUD was established in 1977 and is one of the oldest and largest NGOs in Jordan. Its mission is dedicated to promoting rights-based, sustainable human development, and elimination of poverty in Jordan. The organisation has around 51 community development centres spread throughout the country. These centres provide sustainable support to local communities and use a variety of approaches to achieve community development, poverty eradication, women empowerment, good governance, youth empowerment, early childhood development and special need, ICT for development, sustainable natural resource management, economic empowerment and work with refugees.

In each of its community centres, Women's Committees are established and led by local women, who design and implement local initiatives. JOHUD provides support through ensuring that women have the means to run these centres, as well as building their capacity to fully participate in advancing and developing their local communities<sup>13</sup>.

## **Scope of the Practice and Objectives**

The decision of implementing the inheritance rights campaign was identified by those who work closely with women at both national and local levels. This is one of the strongest features of advocacy, as those who are implementing it should be contributors to the decision-making processes.

The second significant activity of the practice was after deciding upon the issue. Indeed, the project team along with the volunteers were exposed to extensive discussions and trainings on legal, social and customary issues related to women's inheritance rights. The aims of trainings and discussions were to adequately respond to misinterpretation of religious teachings, explore legal solutions to end biased practices and have the capacity

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11 For further information check: <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2015/economies/#economy=JOR>

12 *Ibid.*

13 More information on JOHUD's work available at: <http://www.johud.org.jo/who-we-are/454>

and skills to change women's and societal attitudes towards women's rights of inheritance.

### **Advocacy Strategies: Dealing with Resistance**

One of the successful strategies of the practice was the engagement of Medias, mass public and a huge number of NGOs and community leaders in the debate of women's inheritance rights before the beginning of the actual campaign. This helped the identification of partners, supporters and spectrum of allies and opponents. This strategy also enabled JOHUD to engage all partners in the design of the advocacy campaign.

**Prioritising local needs and in close collaboration with stakeholders is one of the best practices of advocacy**

The second strategy was to advocate for women's inheritance rights from within the framework of *Sharia*. This meant making the public aware of religious teachings in this regard. A study was prepared, explaining property rights for women and their share of inheritance. The study aimed at challenging the customary practices that deny women their inheritance rights and addressing such practices as un-Islamic.

Engagement of volunteers and youth generally resulted in adopting more interactive strategies that made use of art and theatre to influence public opinion. Using art was a key for a successful intervention, as interactive theatre and movies had a great influence on the behaviour of the targeted audience. Art took the issue to another level, where the discussion of the plays moved beyond the objectives of the campaign to include other discriminatory practices, as well as reached a bigger number of people in the country.

The inclusion of men and women from the local communities in the planning and implementation of the campaign made them have the ownership over the project and the activities. By engaging local community members and volunteers, the resistance to the project was less significant as those were able to speak to the community and represent their voices in the project as a whole.

### **Operations and Activities**

To mobilise public opinion from the outset, JOHUD began with a large event to attract the attention of Media. Under the patronage of HRH Princess Basma Bint Talal, a media event took place to launch the project and to give it visibility. 85 representatives from Ministries, NGOs, international organisations and media attended the event, as well as representatives

of organisations from local communities. Jordan TV, local newspapers and the Farah el Nass Radio Station covered the event. This helped to give the project credibility with the media and the potential partners.

The event succeeded in engaging a large number of organisations and resulted in building substantial cooperation with other national NGOs. For example, after this event, a collaboration

**Minimising resistance by ensuring the ownership of the target groups over the project and engaging community members and volunteers from local communities as key partners and players**

agreement was signed between JOHUD and the Jordanian National Committee for Women (JNCW), which assisted in the development of four policy papers on women's economic empowerment and violence against women in Jordan. This was followed by building a coalition for the advocacy campaign on women's right

to inheritance in Jordan. In collaboration with Arab Women Legal Network (AWLN), JOHUD conducted a lobbying meeting including members from main stakeholders, decision makers and legal bodies in Jordan for the formulation of the advocacy messages on women's inheritance rights. Efforts were invested in working on the necessary collaborations between the legal bodies from *Sharia* and *Awqaf* departments for their support in community outreach awareness sessions and in the dissemination of the messages.

A national advocacy committee of inheritance was established that consisted of 20 main bodies from the Ministry of Justice, *Sharia* and *Awqaf*, Medias and journalists, the JNCW, lawyers, judges and the CSOs working on women's rights. Regular meetings were conducted with community leaders to gain their support at the grass root level. The launch event also helped the project in having supporters in the media who were part of the advocacy campaign.

**Partnerships and Stakeholder Engagement**

Partnerships were built at different levels and stages of the project. However, before doing so, JOHUD made sure that women and men of the local communities were included in the process of the project development. By this, it ensured that the concerned people had an ownership over the project's design and implementation. The number of women and men who participated in national advocacy and networking activities reached 66 women and 24 men.

Partnerships were also built at the local and national levels. Local committees were formed that oversaw the project activities in their communities. At the national level, the Ministry of

Justice, *Sharia* and *Awqaf*, medias and journalists, Canadian International Development Agency /Gender Social Fund, the JNCW, lawyers, judges and the CSOs working on women rights and AWLN were involved.

At the regional level, the Collective for Research and Training Development Action (CRTD.A) in Lebanon; the Center for Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR) in Tunisia, and the Palestinian Businesswomen Association Asala in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip were also involved.

### **Critical Factors for Success and Challenges**

The most difficult aspect of the campaign was to ensure that women at the local level were not part of the resistance to the campaign goals. Therefore, an extensive awareness-raising program was implemented to ensure the support of women and that the change will impact upon positively on their daily lives. Gaining mass number of women supporters was critical to the success of the campaign.

The second challenge was to mobilise religious and community leaders to support the campaign, particularly in the local areas. By choosing to advocate for the issue from within the Islamic Sharia, a potentially strong culturally embedded resistance was confronted. Thus, religious leaders played a crucial role in the advocacy campaign. Also partnering with the Sharia and Awqaf Ministry meant that Mosques' Imams (preachers) had to collaborate and include the topic on Friday's prayers.

### **Impact**

One of the gains of the campaign was the reform made to the JPSL that related to inheritance. The reform included an article that organises al-takharuj (agreement between heirs), whereby women are not allowed to make any agreement or dropping their rights before three months of the death of their fathers. This means that women will be able to study their choices before making them and that they are not in a state of grievance when making such important decisions.

The high profile change in the law had an impact on public awareness of the issue of women's inheritance. Public and media debate and campaign activities managed to generate a positive public opinion towards women's economic participation in general. The issue went viral on social media with positive response spreading to surrounding countries in the region.

Measuring the impact:

The intermediate outcome on JOHUD's participation in regional advocacy and networking activities is the following: the number of participants in Jordan included 29 people (26 women and 3 men) from the original target of 2 members. On the level of understanding of women of their economic rights, the baseline for Jordan indicated a full understanding of 100% following the initial survey administered to the sample beneficiaries (46 women) from the respective project sites.

As for the ultimate outcome, "increased capacities on regional and national policy work (advocacy)" the indicators were:

- The number of appearance and messages on economic empowerment of women carried out by the media reached 23 appearances out of the planned 10 appearances in the target indicator.
- Number of internal and external participants (female and male) using new competencies in advocacy reached a total of 66 women and 26 men.

### **Lessons Learned**

- Including men was a key factor for success in advocating for women's rights.
- Early engagement with potentially resistant stakeholders that serve as significant and culturally embedded institutions, such as religious authorities, helps to cultivate broad support and public perceptions of legitimacy for the advocacy cause.
- Having a clear roadmap for implementing advocacy strategy and engaging local communities and stakeholders in the process of design, implantation and monitoring of the progress.
- The use of different media tools including television, radio, newspapers and social media broadened the distribution of messaging and brought international support as well as national.



**WHAT  
SHOCKS  
YOU  
MORE?**



Dealing with resistance: the "I am unbeatable" campaign to shed light on violence against women  
March Lebanon Association

## II COMBATING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN/GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

### PRACTICE 1: SEXUAL HARASSMENT CAMPAIGN: MAKING EGYPT'S STREETS SAFER FOR EVERYONE

*Egyptian Centre for Women's Rights (ECWR), Egypt*

#### **Summary of the practice**

"Making Egypt's Streets Safer for Everyone" Campaign was initiated by the ECWR in late 2004. The main aim was to address the widespread practice of sexual harassment through mobilising public opinion to urge policy makers in noting the issue as a serious violation of women's human rights. As the campaign started, the ECWR realised that there was no relevant data on the issue and no formal research had been conducted in Egypt. Thus, the practice started by a survey that included 2,800 women from Greater Cairo and five other governorates. The survey's results, which highlighted the prevalence of sexual harassment in Egypt, received widespread media coverage, both in Egypt and internationally.

The ECWR used the survey results to encourage women to fight practices of sexual harassment, challenge negative attitudes related to women's dress or behaviour, to have self-confidence and to face everyday challenges. Whilst, focusing on the nature of sexual violence and harassment as a violation of women's rights and bodies, the ECWR also addressed the psychological and sociological impact of sexual harassment on women<sup>14</sup>.

#### **Background and Contextual Analysis**

Although sexual harassment is a widespread phenomenon, it is mostly unreported and goes without punishment in Egypt. Taking place mostly on public transport and streets, sexual harassment affects 83% of Egyptian women and 98% of foreign women living in Egypt. These figures are from an ECWR survey in 2008, which also found that half of these women faced such harassment on a daily basis.

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14 USAID, Samah Said, *Egypt violence against women study. Overview of services on violence against women*, (April, 2009), available at: [http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/Pnada889.pdf](http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/Pnada889.pdf)

Until recent times, Egypt has no specific article in the Penal Code that criminalises sexual violence. Several articles deal with the issue indirectly. Article 268 of the Egyptian Penal Code does not mention sexual assault but rather indecent assault, by force or threat, or attempted assault. Article 278 discusses indecent and shameful public acts and article 279 discusses indecent acts with a woman in any place. Cases of sexual assault and harassment were treated under these provisions. The punishment under article 268 is imprisonment with hard labour for three to seven years, with increased penalties for cases involving incest and where the victim is underage. Punishment under articles 278 and 279 is 'detention' for a period not more than one year or a fine not exceeding 300 Egyptian Pounds (around \$50).

Although sexual harassment on the streets of Egypt has been always a big barrier for women undermining their freedom of movement, recently the issue has moved to another serious level of what activists in Egypt call as a "collective systematic sexual harassment of women in the street".

After 10 years of advocating for a specific criminal sexual harassment law and to protect women who report such abuse, the Egyptian Government in June 2014 has amended articles 306A and 306B in the Penal Code to criminalise harassment in the form of words, gestures, and actions expressed in person or through other means of communication. The law stipulates a minimum of six months sentence and a fine of 3,000 Egyptian Pounds for the offence. Article 306B specifies a harsher sentence if the offender is in the position of authority over the victim of harassment and for offences involving mob sexual harassment<sup>15</sup>. These amendments, whilst welcomed by women's NGOs, are still considered inadequate to prevent sexual harassment and protect women. Several women's NGOs issued statements that the law has a narrow definition of sexual harassment, its acts and manifestations.

## **ECWR**

The ECWR is a NGO established in 1996. The core mission of the organisation is to improve women's legal and political rights. To achieve its mission, the ECWR works at three levels: promoting women's participation in the public sphere, calling for legislative reform and eliminating all forms of gender-based violence. It has used several approaches

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<sup>15</sup> Sarah Carr, "Sexual Assault and the State: A History of Violence," in *Mada Masr*, 7th July 2014, available at: <http://www.madamasr.com/content/sexual-assault-and-state-history-violence>, (accessed 17th November 2015).

to advocate for policy change and law reform: from research, raising women's awareness, to pressuring decision-makers to take into account women's rights as priority issues<sup>16</sup>.

### **Scope of the Practice and Objectives**

The practice started with a survey to study the prevalence and nature of sexual harassment in Egypt. The launching of the survey, in and by itself, was a vital step towards public realisation of the problem and to advocate for recognition of the problem as a priority concern. Although the survey was the first step of the practice, the ECWR also responded to the direct needs of women survivors of sexual harassment, at the same time providing women with legal assistance and psychological support.

**Best practice: giving equal weight to raising public awareness, pressuring decision-makers and the protection of those who are exposed to sexual violence**

The ECWR then used the survey's results to increase public awareness on the issue of sexual harassment and initiated a media and public outreach campaign. The survey results and survivor testimonies were used to pressure government and policy makers for the enforcement of laws to protect women and for the adoption of new legislation.

### **Advocacy Strategies: Dealing with Resistance**

The campaign incorporated three main strategies.

- Research and evidence based data: the aim of this strategy was to challenge the Government's resistance that sexual harassment was not an issue in Egypt, by providing evidence-based research, as well as change public attitudes and educate women about the problem.
- Awareness raising: the second strategy was to mobilising mass support for the campaign by informing the public of the prevalence and severity of sexual harassment, its size, and impact on women and the community.
- Legislation and law reform: after providing data and evidence of the scale of the problem and mobilizing mass support, the campaign strategically proposed law amendments and reforms for criminalising sexual harassment, punishing perpetrators and protecting women survivors of sexual harassment.

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<sup>16</sup> More information on the ECWR available at: [http://ecwronline.org/?page\\_id=99](http://ecwronline.org/?page_id=99) (accessed on 17th November 2015).

## **Operations and Activities**

Based on the campaign strategic plan, the activities were implemented over the period 2005-2013 and ranged from organising roundtable discussions, disseminating the findings of the survey to publicize the campaign on the media.

One of the ECWR roundtables was “The Absence of Legal Deterrence and its Impact on Egyptian Society” which took place in 2008. 75 political and legal experts and 8 Members of Parliament participated, in addition to lawyers, journalists, media representatives and twenty NGOs. Despite the fact that the roundtable was unable to engage the Ministry of Internal Affairs, it succeeded in discussing a number of draft laws on sexual harassment. Thus, the Ministry of Internal Affairs had to later cooperate with the ECWR in organizing the second seminar that was held on May 14th, in 2009 entitled “A Deterrent Law... For the Sake of the Security of Egyptian Streets”. By such an engagement with government institutions, the campaign made a significant start through attracting ministries and institutions that had a major role in combating sexual harassment against women.

The campaign incorporated various creative and innovative tools to deliver its message. These consisted of:

- An animated movie under a title “A Very Important Film” directed at children and aiming to raise a generation who are aware of what can be done regarding sexual harassment and how they should react.
- Awareness days incorporating tools that were particularly designed to attract young people.
- An online petition was conducted aiming at collecting one million signatures to enact a law against sexual harassment.

## **Partnerships and Stakeholder Engagement**

One of the major gains for the campaign in its first year were the cooperation and partnership with the concerned authorities to address the issue of sexual harassment. This included partnerships built through the campaign with the Ministries of Internal Affairs, Tourism and Justice. Cooperation also took place with national NGOs and international partners such as the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the European Union (EU).

The practice also managed to have in-kind support from national and international educational and cultural institutions. The Goethe Institute held several volunteer meetings and one awareness day at their headquarters in Cairo. Support also came from the Masrawy

Company, one of the biggest Egyptian websites, which contributed to the campaign by allocating a section of the website where users can sign up to join the campaign as volunteers. This also helped in publicizing the campaign among internet users. The Filbalad Company also advertised for the campaign's events free of charges and also helped in circulating the research surveys through their website. Nile Radio Production contributed by donating air-time on both of its stations (Nile and Nogoom F.M), and at a discounted airing fare for its campaign's public service announcement. This is in addition to other media and cultural institutions support, such as El Sawy Cultural Wheel, which hosted one of the campaign's major events

Many foreign women (tourists, students and residents) were complaining from sexual harassment in Egypt and many incidents were reported. The British Embassy, as well as several other embassies, routinely warns their citizens, intending to visit Egypt, that sexual harassment is very common. The ECWR felt the need to disperse this information and engage the Minister of Tourism in a discussion on the effects of sexual harassment on tourism in Egypt, who responded positively to the campaign and launched its own media campaign. The awareness campaign involved TV ads emphasising the negative impact of sexual harassment on the tourism sector.

Linking sexual harassment of women to the security and economy of Egypt succeeded in getting the attention of the government to cooperate with the campaign. Such cooperation helped getting the mainstream media to cover the activities, hold televised discussions on the issue, which in many ways extended and expanded the campaign to reach a bigger number of audience across the country and the region as a whole.

### **Critical Factors for Success and Challenges**

The first year of the campaign was very challenging in terms of raising the issue, researching it and gaining the support from local and national organisations. The nature of the issue, as a sensitive and taboo subject, required an open and free space for debate and discussion. This was one of the critical factors for the success of the campaign, as the ECWR did not impose any idea other than exposing the issue to an open debate. To fulfil this end, the ECWR hosted seminars and meetings of men and women from different backgrounds and social classes. This encouraged those who were hesitant to raise the issue to participate in the conversation and to become more engaged in the fight against sexual harassment. Through such activities, the ECWR managed to minimise and neutralise the number of opponents and increased the number of supporters, aspects that contributed significantly

to the launch of the campaign.

The other challenge was the opposition of the Minister of Social affairs to the campaign, who was apparent in the rejection to permit the campaign's activities. The Minister, moreover, used its

**Best practice in dealing with opponents and allies: minimising the number of opponents, neutralising others and boosting the number of supporters**

power to delay permissions and cancel activities without justification after previously granting permission for the activities. This resulted in a delay to implementing campaign activities and reduced the media coverage of the

events. However, with the ECWR partnering with other government's entities such as the Ministry of Tourists and Foreign affairs, the Minister of Social affairs had to reduce its pressure on the campaign and loosen the restraints put on the ECWR's activities.

**Impact**

The ECWR is considered to be one of the first, if not the first, organisation to address the issue of sexual harassment in Egypt. In 2005, when the ECWR started its campaign, sexual harassment was still considered as a taboo subject that both the government and the society alike were negating and resisting to recognise. This manifested itself in the negative reactions and criticism in the early stages of the campaign. However, this societal attitude started to change as the campaign progressed, which clearly articulated in the following impacts:

*From invisibility to visibility:* the first impact of the campaign was that it turned the issue of sexual harassment from a taboo into a critical issue that required an urgent and collective response. By doing so, the recognition of the problem as a national priority was achieved. Light was shed on sexual harassment, changing the societal perception of the issue. Media focus raised the public awareness of the issue and urged policy makers to take action.

*From Self-blaming to reporting sexual harassment:* as sexual harassment has become increasingly debated and perceived as socially unacceptable – relatively comparing to the past – more cases of sexual harassment started to be reported, as many women were encouraged to speak up and seek justice. The famous case of Noha Rushdie, who reported sexual harassment and managed to get the perpetrator sentenced for three years with hard labour after she went public with her case, served as an instrumental example in changing attitudes<sup>17</sup>. The campaign supported Noha and used her case to encourage more women in report sexual harassment. The

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17 See more information on the case: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/7682951.stm>

sentence was also an achievement of the campaign, as before the police and judicial personnel used to reject cases of sexual harassment.

*From denial to addressing and incorporating sexual harassment into the agenda of both the Government and NGOs:* as an example, the Ministry of Tourism started to recognise the issue and include it in its agenda. Many initiatives have been taken up by civil society organisations and pressure groups addressing the issue. Due to the pioneering work of the ECWR in this campaign and the efforts exerted by many other NGOs, the first law criminalizing sexual harassment was drafted in 2014. The Ministry of Interior established specific units to combat violence against women and sexual harassment against women<sup>18</sup>.

*Criminalisation of sexual harassment in the law:* is finally considered a crime in Egypt and perpetrators can now face penalties, such as long jail terms and high fines according to a law issued in 2014.

*Imitation of the ECWR strategies and activities around the region:* NGOs in Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates have contacted the ECWR to reuse many of the campaigns materials in their countries. The most important of these materials was the animated movie.

Measuring the impact:

This change in the societal perception can be measured by the following quantitative indicators: number of initiatives and movements addressing sexual harassment initiated after the first year of the ECWR campaign. Fuelled by volunteers, young and old, individual and professional, the campaign has taken on an unprecedented dynamism and has led to the formation of a number of independent initiatives. The latest estimation done by the ECWR on the number of initiatives addressing sexual harassment is at least 100.

The change resulted from this campaign was monitored on four main levels: on the street level, in the media, on the security level and on the cultural level. The ECWR received an external evaluation related to this campaign from a foreign university.

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<sup>18</sup> More information on the Ministry of Interior units and activities, available at: <http://www.dostor.org/630961>

<sup>19</sup> More information on the campaign coverage available at: [http://www.telegraaf.nl/buitenland/1512065/Egyptisch\\_man\\_valt\\_vrouwen\\_lastig\\_.html](http://www.telegraaf.nl/buitenland/1512065/Egyptisch_man_valt_vrouwen_lastig_.html) (Dutch - daily newspaper), and [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/7514567.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7514567.stm) (BBC) and <http://www.mg.co.za/article/2007-11-03-sexual-predators-prowl-egypts-streets>

- Media coverage of the campaign and its activities: the campaign activities were widely publicised by the media<sup>19</sup>.
- Number of successful partnerships established between the ECWR and other community actors during the life time of the project.
- A study on sexual harassment was done in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior affairs. The ECWR is currently cooperating with the Ministry of Justice in “My Right Project”, offering legal and psychological support for female victims of violence<sup>20</sup>.
- The ECWR is currently discussing a strategy for combating sexual harassment in government universities with the Ministry of Higher Education represented by University presidents.

### Lessons Learned

- Involving the general public and the media in addressing the issue through raising their awareness is the first and most important step to force policy makers to admit the problem and eventually make a change on the ground.
- Unifying the efforts of other NGOs working in the same field facilitate achieving the desired change.
- Shifting the relationship between the NGOs and the governmental entities from “competitors” to “partners” contribute greatly to the sustainability of the practice.

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<sup>20</sup> Anne M. Price, Katherine Mayer, Helen Rizzo, *Targeting Cultural Change in Repressive Environments: The Campaign against Sexual Harassment in Egypt*, available at: [https://docs.google.com/viewerng/viewer?url=http://ecwronline.org/pdf/studies/AntiHarassment\\_for\\_ECWR.pdf](https://docs.google.com/viewerng/viewer?url=http://ecwronline.org/pdf/studies/AntiHarassment_for_ECWR.pdf)

## PRACTICE 2: 'I AM UNBEATABLE' CAMPAIGN *March Lebanon Association (MARCH), Lebanon*

### **Summary of the practice**

In 2014, a coalition for combating domestic violence against women in Lebanon, composed by several NGOs, developed a year-long campaign to pressure the government to issue a law on the VAW, which was submitted to the Parliament at that time for approval and to mobilise people and raise their awareness on the seriousness of the VAW in Lebanon.

MARCH's role was to develop the campaign slogans, visual materials and manage the social media in raising the awareness of Lebanese people and educating women on their rights. MARCH's unique role in the campaign was through the development of unconventional slogans such as "We're unbeatable" and "Sure, she can" that were raised in the Women's Race that took part on 4 May 2014 in the streets of Beirut. The other role of MARCH was the creation of a stunt film during the race, where a man was filmed abusing his wife. The film went on social and mainstream media and created a huge debate in the country and beyond.

### **Background and Contextual Analysis**

The Lebanese legal system is mostly based on the French and Egyptian legal systems. However, in relation to family issues, religious sects have their own legal laws and procedures covering issues related to marriage, divorce and inheritance. In Lebanon there are 18 legally recognised religious sects<sup>21</sup>. The difference between religious groups means that issues related to family are differently dealt with between sects and are, therefore, treated primarily from religious perspectives.

Domestic violence against women is a very serious problem that leads to the killing of women and threatening of others' lives. On yearly basis, several women are murdered by their husbands. Since 2008, civil society has advocated for a VAW law. The cabinet considered a draft law in 2009, backed by women's rights NGOs. However, some political parties managed to stop the adoption of the law by the parliament<sup>22</sup>.

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21 UNICEF, MENA Gender Equality profile, *Status of Girls and Women in the Middle East and North Africa*, 2011, available at: <http://www.unicef.org/gender/files/Lebanon-Gender-Equality-Profile-2011.pdf>

22 *Ibid.*

The issue of domestic violence intersects with women's religious-based rights in the personal status laws, as women have only a restricted right to end their marriage, unlike men who have an utter right to one-sided termination of the marriage contract<sup>23</sup>. Furthermore, women are often deterred from seeking divorce due to concerns about losing custody of their children.

In April 2014, the Parliament passed the Law on Protection of Women and Family Members from Domestic Violence, which established protection measures. However, the law has yet to define the VAW clearly and criminalise certain types of violence such as marital rape. Legal procedures that should deter abusers from contacting their victims are also yet to be established clearly. Thus, the law can be seen as "good but not complete"<sup>24</sup>.

## **MARCH**

MARCH's mission is to empower citizens to recognise and fight for their basic civil rights, raise a tolerant open Lebanese society in order to foster diversity and equality, and reach genuine reconciliation among the various communities. Committed to civic responsibility and creative thinking, MARCH seeks to foster a more participatory and collaborative community.

In its current strategy and projects, MARCH is currently focusing on fighting for the right to freedom of expression (and fighting censorship), women's rights, diversity and conflict resolution activities. It has also established 24/7 hotline that provides free legal assistance to guidance through connecting users in need to a network of lawyers and experts, who offer a free legal advice<sup>25</sup>.

## **Scope of the Practice and Objectives**

Campaigns against domestic violence were established by several the CSOs in the last decade. The demand for a protection law was made repeatedly after each murder of a woman. However, the outcry each time was short-lived and the incidents soon forgotten. The yearlong campaign's promoters thus realised that the issue required constant attention and sustained activities to mobilise people, policy makers, media and government to take serious steps towards eliminating the VAW in Lebanon.

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23 Human Rights Watch, *Human Rights Watch Submission to the CEDAW Committee of Lebanon's Periodic Report, 62<sup>nd</sup> session, October 2015*, available at: [http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/LBN/INT\\_CEDAW\\_NGO\\_LBN\\_21901\\_E.pdf](http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/LBN/INT_CEDAW_NGO_LBN_21901_E.pdf)

24 *Ibid.*

25 More information about MARCH available at: <http://www.marchlebanon.org/en/Home>

### **Advocacy Strategies: Dealing with Resistance**

The message that MARCH sought to convey was that domestic violence against women is a public issue similar to issues related to politics and economics. The strategy herein was to put the issue at the top level of public priorities, turning it from a private to a political issue, in order to be seen as something that negatively impacts women's lives and the general public.

Shocking the public was an effective strategy that was used by MARCH. It aimed to give a public attention to an issue that was usually perceived as a private. Furthermore, it aimed to give life to an issue that has been theoretically treated. The stunt film was a daily reality that some people would practice. However, seeing it publically highlighted, made people aware that such a practice is unacceptable and repulsive. Seeing such a scene in public sheds light on a reality that would have been invisible to some and thus forced them to confront their own understanding of domestic violence.

### **Politicisation of the VAW as a tool by addressed in the political agenda**

The strategy was used to pressure the government through showing what real life for women is, as a result and consequence of the government's failure to protect women, thereby embarrassing policy makers and government who resisted the issuing of the VAW law.

Using material on social media (Facebook, Twitter and YouTube) as a strategy aimed to engage a larger number of people in the debate and generate a greater level of interaction with the issue. The film generated a huge number of views and comments, which increased the pressure on the government beyond the race and the activities of the campaign.

MARCH engaged youth in several activities that started in a series of workshops in the universities in Lebanon. The presence of youth in the demonstration was significant and helped in founding innovative and unconventional ways of campaigning, as well as in spreading the campaign and stunt video in particular on social media.

### **Operations and Activities**

The activities of the campaign included workshops, conferences, publications, press releases and public demonstrations. The latter was one of the most significant activities of the campaign, where the CSOs of all forms joined the race of MARCH team. The team

ran carrying signs and wearing T-shirts with the slogan “We're Unbeatable”. The slogan attracted media and people and generated debate about its purpose.

MARCH also contributed in the race through the stunt film that went viral: as part of the “I am Unbeatable” campaign, in collaboration with M&C Saatchi. MARCH created a stunt during the event, where a man was seen mistreating his wife in the middle of the marathon. The stunt filmed during the marathon was a new idea and the first time a domestic violence scene is recorded and posted on social media. This stunt influenced the attitude towards domestic violence and it attracted over 900,000 views on YouTube at a regional and international level. As the video shows, women who were watching the violence scene on site got angry and tried to help the mistreated woman; indeed, they tried to get the man off her and call the general security forces.

The performance was filmed and posted on YouTube in order to focus the attention on the issue and keep on fighting for an improved law and for women's rights. To keep the focus where it should be, on the Mother's Day of 2014, MARCH asked people to consider: “What if it were your mum?” By this, MARCH aimed to personalise the issue, make the public feel that it is an issue that affects every individual of the community and thus each has a responsibility to fight it.

The race, with its various activities, sent several messages: it was specifically educational for those who were not engaged in the fight against the VAW and have not known or been aware of the realities of the VAW in Lebanon. At the end of the film, the domestic violence scene, people did not believe that it was a stunt, and were completely not accepting what they saw: many of those who watched it then supported MARCH slogan “we are Unbeatable!”

### **Partnerships and Stakeholders Engagement**

Besides the mobilization campaigns, MARCH also adopted other projects to fight and defend women's rights in Lebanon. MARCH worked closely with several organisations, particularly KAFA, which was the lead organisation in advocating for a law that protects women from domestic violence.

Thus, the practice is also part of the ‘Sure, she can’ women empowerment program, a joint initiative between the National Democratic Institute, MARCH, the Arab Centre for Development and Women in Front. MARCH played a key role in the selection, training, and support of the selected participants. MARCH has primarily focused on the development of women and strengthening their capacities. 75 women from different faiths and diverse political affiliations were chosen.

Throughout the sessions, MARCH fostered constructive dialogue to create consensus methods of problem solving. The main objectives of this project were: 1) Helping women in Lebanon to overcome political and religious divisions in order to develop strategies and initiatives at the political level; 2) Strengthening women's participation on key issues.

### **Critical Factors for Success and Challenges**

The critical factor was that the stunt film and campaign strategies did not propose a particular demand. They left the public to decide how the issue should be tackled. The spontaneous reaction of public was to ask 'What is the government doing in protecting women?' This question generated a public debate around domestic violence law without it being proposed as part of the campaign. Hence, the realisation of the need for a law came as a result of raising people's awareness and changing their attitudes.

Whilst the advocacy to draft a family law started in 2008, the race with its various activities helped to speed up the government adaptation of the law, which was a month after the race that took place in March 2014.

### **Impact**

In the first instance, the targeted group was the people participating in the race. Subsequently, the stunt film also helped to influence the Lebanese decision makers and pushed them to adopt the law on domestic violence and to be more supportive for abused women. Moreover, the Lebanese General Security created a special unit to receive calls and claims from women in need for help.

The practice addressed the successful use of social media and media campaigns in highlighting a humanitarian cause that has been picked up not only at a national or local level but also at regional and international levels.

The idea of the stunt film was replicated in different countries. Interestingly, the widespread of the idea reached as far as Japan, where the practice has inspired the NGOs there to duplicate and adapt to their context. This shows that good practices can be replicated beyond the context where they were implemented first and that successful ideas can travel fast and far.

Measuring the impact:

The stunt film was viewed and shared on social media with more than 900.000 views; it also attracted national wide media coverage and was followed by many campaigns rejecting

domestic violence and calling for human rights and gender equality. Every year, on the mother's day, MARCH launches a new campaign speaking in the voice of women who have been silenced.

### **Lessons learned**

- Visualising the message: the first lesson learnt from the campaign that is a "picture is worth a thousand words". This was clearly manifested in the reaction to the stunt film, particularly with the impact on social media.
- Social media has no boundaries or end date: the use of social media contributed in spreading the message to a wider audience and in sustaining the idea, as the stunt film continued to be viewed after more than a year of the activity.
- Engaging different groups of the community: such work was done at grassroots level before taking the street, with public engagement important stage before initiating any practice. The activities that took place prior to the race increased the reaction and number of protesters, which sent a loud message to the government that domestic violence against women is unacceptable.
- Always work in coalition with others: working in coalitions strengthened the messages and demands and most importantly, it contributed in creating a variety of activities that attracted different groups from the community – youth, children, women, policy makers and the media.

## PRACTICE 3: PALESTINIAN WOMEN THROUGH THE EYES OF THEIR YOUTH *Jerusalem Center for Women (JCW), Palestine*

### **Summary of the Practice**

The GBV is still considered a taboo in Palestinian society. The JCW believes that to break the taboo, the issue of the GBV needs to be addressed in everyday conversations. Furthermore, women's rights, in order for women to live in dignity, need to be accepted across generations, gender and borders. Realising that there were several practices and initiatives on the issue of the GBV in Palestine, but with very limited impacts on the ground and on policy makers, the JCW developed a youth-led practice aiming to engage youth in the fight against the GBV and generating support from the policy makers, and most importantly, sending a message to survivors of the GBV that they are not alone in this fight. The practice used a range of activities, from workshops, debates, documentation and production of documentary film and testimonies of the GBV cases.

### **Background and Contextual Analysis**

Similar to other countries in the region, Palestine legal system is based on pluralism, where civil laws and family issues are dealt with separately. Until 1993, Jordanian laws governed the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Since the OSLO Accord (1993), where the Palestinian Authority was recognized as an official body with a government to take over the Palestinian occupied territory, civil laws have gone through reforms. However, family laws, although there was some reform, continue to duplicate the laws of the Jordanian Personal Status Law in relation to family issues.

The GBV is multifaceted in Palestine, on the one hand, men and women are subjected to several types of abuses daily at the hands of Israel military forces, often being interrogated and arrested arbitrarily and abused. On the other hand, the GBV takes different forms within the family. The Palestine Survey on Domestic Violence (2006), revealed that 10.9% of married women were sexually abused. Physical abuse accounted for 23.3% of among women in Palestine. Currently, Palestine has no law with specific protection measures for women victims/survivors of violence. There are no government shelters for women victims/survivors of violence, although the law and shelters are specified as priority goals in the adopted strategy to combat the VAW.

## JCW

The JCW was established in 1990 to advocate for the rights of Palestinian women and enhancing their role in society, nation building and the peace process, while working to end oppression and human rights violations against all members of Palestinian society. The JCW

### **Empowering youth to be active agents in finding profound and creative means to fight GBV**

strives to create a context where women obtain not only equal opportunities but also the ability to influence all aspects of society as an indispensable component to constitute the

foundation of a real democracy. Promoting women's leadership, political participation and full inclusion in the workforce will ultimately enable them access spheres of power, decision-making processes and peace building arenas<sup>26</sup>.

The JCW has set forth the following goals:

- To protect and advance Palestinian women's rights and status.
- To train and educate Palestinian women to encourage and enhance their activities in community activism and politics.
- To advocate for respect for human rights, an end to occupation and a just and lasting peace.
- To raise awareness locally and internationally of human rights abuses committed by the Israeli occupying forces against all Palestinians, with a particular focus on women.

### **Scope of the Practice and Objectives**

The practice of "Palestinian women through the eyes of their youth" started in January 2012 until December 2014 and was supported by UNDP. The first step of the practice was a gender and development training that targeted universities' male and female students. Through this training, students became familiar with the basic concepts of gender, gender equality and equity, women and girls' human rights, and development.

### **Advocacy Strategies: Dealing with Resistance**

The JCW's advocacy and lobbying work was innovative in many ways. The initiative shed light on the abuses that women face through working with youth, which made the women more able to gain empathy. The JCW sought to have youth project their understanding of women's rights and gender-based violence through creative writing and broadcasting of

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26 JCW, Annual report, 2012, available at [http://www.j-c-w.org/templates/rhuk\\_solarflare\\_ii/annualreports/JCW\\_Annual\\_Report\\_2012.pdf](http://www.j-c-w.org/templates/rhuk_solarflare_ii/annualreports/JCW_Annual_Report_2012.pdf)

their ideas. This simultaneously built understanding of a key section of society as well as encouraging and empowering youth to be active agents in engendering change and awareness around the issue.

### **Activities and Operations**

The training was designed to have practical application, where students translated what they had learned into practice. Students were asked to write stories where they reflect what they have learned on women's human rights and particularly the GBV. Through the use of stories, students were able to tangibly grasp the concept of the GBV, the reality facing men and women and in return understand their own context.

### **Trainings aimed to bridge the gap between theory and practice**

The third step was the selection of powerful stories for the production of a documentary. This was used to sensitise the general public on the issue of the GBV and as an interactive method for the campaign against the GBV in Palestine. It also served as an advocacy tool for raising awareness among local, national and international audiences.

The campaign conducted many meetings with political bodies, created factsheets, videos and posters that were widely disseminated. The three different posters were placed in community based organisations, schools, youth centres, cafes and mosques in East Jerusalem and the West Bank. Additionally, this work contributed to critical political dialogue and major changes in laws that focus on violence towards women.

### **Partnerships and Stakeholder Engagement**

One of the key partners the JCW collaborated with was the Ministry of Women's Affairs, whose mandate includes setting policies for women's issues. Over 20 meetings were held with the Ministry over the life-time of project.

The JCW also became a member of a larger network of women organisations that worked in Palestine on the GBV issues, collaborating particularly with those seeking to change laws to protect women. Finally, the JCW also became a member of the Ayisha Network in Tunis that works on the GBV issues in the Middle East, which is part of a larger political dialogue on how the rights of women need to be held at the regional level. These networks and partnerships formulated powerful tools to reach out to different groups and engage the community at large in the fight against the GBV.

### **Critical Factors for Success and Challenges**

One challenge was to convince students to take part and participate in the project, as the GBV was considered a sensitive family issue by many of them. As such, many youth were uncomfortable in speaking about these issues. Overcoming the problem and having youth

#### **Youth participation through peer support groups mobilised other youth in the project and encouraged many to share their experiences**

from the JCW network participating in the project in the first phase, encouraged others to follow their suit. The peer-to-peer communication and sharing information

increased the number of students who were ready to take part and share their knowledge, feelings and experiences with the GBV, the results of such participation revealed that students have realised the significant of the practice and had been more aware of the issue than before.

Different groups worked with decision makers on specific issues. There were meetings with the President's Office on issues related to the GBV, especially honour killings. The Ministry of Women's Affairs worked with JWC and the network to bring these issues to light at a larger political level. The Union of Women, which JWC is part of, also met with the Minister for Women Affairs to discuss the GBV. This engagement helped to lead to major changes in laws and legislation regarding women's rights and abuses. Approaching specific offices of government emphasising certain issues of importance to them helped to establish a broad dialogue across institutions.

### **Impact**

This project was able to highlight the issue of the GBV and having youth speak about it brought a different perspective to what victims of violence faced. Furthermore, the women affected by the issue were able to feel support and solidarity from different groups.

Through this campaign, the JCW worked on the amendment on the part of the penal code that provides leniency to perpetrators of honour killings. Eventually, this law was amended and honour killings became punishable by law. Furthermore, through advocacy, the President created a legal committee tasked with conducting a comprehensive review of all the articles in legislation related to discrimination against women and to make the necessary legal amendments.

#### Measuring the impact:

The JCW was able to draw on groups of the population from other streams of work to get over the hurdle of finding sufficient numbers of participants. However, this tactic comes with a risk that it concentrates the impact of several campaigns among a small group of people, narrowing the overall impact of an organisation. This risk – ensuring campaigns have sufficiently broad appeal and impact – should be assessed at strategic and operational levels of the organisation. This is a lesson in not only designing advocacy strategy but also in how important preparation and research are in creating strategy.

#### **Lessons Learned**

- Preparation has to begin early and the practice be given enough time to create change.
- A clear message or theme needs to be articulated and repeated throughout the campaign to ensure that the vision is efficiently and effectively communicated to the public.

## PRACTICE 4: GENDER EQUALITY AWARENESS RAISING AGAINST INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE (GEAR AGAINST IPV) *European Anti-Violence Network (EAVN), Greece*

### **Summary of the Practice**

The GEAR against IPV approach is a set of coordinated actions and interventions in schools. The approach is guided by specially designed educational material developed to target adolescents who are victims or perpetrators of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) or sexual violence or at high risk of becoming victims or perpetrators in the future. The practice is a multi-country advocacy practice that was implemented in Greece, Austria, Croatia, Germany, Cyprus, Romania and Spain.

The aim is to promote the development of healthy and equal relationships between sexes and to achieve zero tolerance towards violence. This is achieved through raising adolescents' awareness on: the characteristics of healthy and unhealthy relationships; challenging gender stereotypical attitudes and socially imposed gender roles; how power inequality between the sexes is related to psychological, physical, sexual abuse against women and girls; and through proposing ways by which adolescents can contribute into the prevention of all forms of the GBV<sup>27</sup>.

### **Background and Contextual Analysis**

Gender inequality and the VAW are both universal phenomena. The existing and continuation of gender inequalities within the structure of institutions such as education, family, legal frameworks, and so forth, is one of the main root causes of the violence against women and girls. With very few exceptions, the societal structure of all countries of the Euro-Mediterranean region is still patriarchal, at a greater or lesser extent. Therefore, the EAVN believes that the only road towards achieving gender equality is to start deconstructing stereotypical gender attitudes of children at an early stage.

**Participatory-centred approach  
in developing the packages  
based on the national contexts**

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<sup>27</sup> Full information about the project and implementing organization available at: <http://www.gear-ipv.eu/the-gear-against-ipv-ii-project/the-gear-against-ipv-approach>

## **EAVN**

The EAVN is a NGO established in 2006, with its headquarters in Athens, Greece. Its approaches are designed on the basis of scientific, educational research and facts-based perspective. The EAVN carries out its mission through activities such as the development of educational and awareness raising material; implementation of awareness raising activities; prevention interventions targeted at adolescents; training seminars targeted at professionals of various disciplines (educators, teachers, health, mental health and social care professional); provision of information to victims of domestic violence and referral of victims to shelters, counselling centres, and creating networks of organisations whose activities are related to prevention and combating of domestic violence<sup>28</sup>.

### **Scope of the Practice and Objectives**

The GEAR against IPV approach aimed to formalise a systematic response to IPV in the schools or other settings. It targeted adolescent students, teachers, professional organisations and decision makers.

The first step of the project was to build the capacity of national partner organisations in developing packages for implementing seminars, trainings and workshops with adolescents and teachers. At this stage, partner organisations produced a national package that adopted the methodology of the EAVN's master training package and modified the materials in a way that reflected their contexts and needs. The EAVN supervised the production of the national packages' and monitored the processes of implementations. GEAR against IPV at this stage finalised the Master Package and developed 7 National Packages. These are complete educational packages, ready to be used and containing all of the necessary information to work with students, teachers, and other target groups. They include information, methodology and step-by-step description of the suggested process about how to organise Teachers' Training Seminars (Booklet II) and Adolescents' Awareness Raising Workshops (Booklets III & IV).

The first target group was secondary education students. Female and male students were invited to attend a series of activities that assessed and challenged culturally inherited gender stereotypes and beliefs. The activities addressed questions related to differences between males and females and how individual differences are constructed and reproduced to emphasise the characteristics of superiority of one sex over the other. By this, students were

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28 More information about the EAVN available at: [http://www.antiviolence-net.eu/aboutus\\_EN.htm](http://www.antiviolence-net.eu/aboutus_EN.htm)

exposed to theories of social construction and learned how to distinguish between biological and socially constructed traits. In this process, students were empowered through knowledge and tools of how to deconstruct gender stereotypes, which, in turn, contributed in changing their attitudes towards the violence against women and girls.

The second target group was the secondary school teachers and other professionals working in the school setting (e.g. psychologists, social workers) in building their capacity for implementing interventions with students.

### **Advocacy Strategies: Dealing with Resistance**

- Learning by doing: this strategy aimed at educating students by exposing them to experiential and interactive activities to explore their own attitudes and the impact they have on their lives. It also allowed them to discover and exercise life skills that will enable them to develop relationships free from violence and exploitation.
- Provide materials to a wide audience: this was achieved by providing ready-to-use materials for an intervention that target teachers, adolescents, professionals, and decision makers.

### **Deconstruction of gender discourses as an empowerment tool**

- Integrating the GEAR approach into the school curriculum: besides enhancing the educational environment and forming a protection and prevention response, the integration of the approach into school curriculum ensured sustainability of the approach and its operational activities, as teachers comprise a permanent “task force” at schools that can implement such interventions on a permanent basis.
- Link the GEAR approach to states’ fulfilment and compliance with their regional and international obligations, particularly Article 14 of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention).

### **Operations and activities**

Project’s activities and the implementation of national packages were also extended beyond the partner organisations to reach professionals and organisations that are active in the fields of health promotion and education, gender equality and prevention of the GBV, as well as to professionals who are providing services to adolescents belonging to high-risk groups.

Other activities of the project included training and targeting of decision-making centres, such as departments of the ministries of education, and policy makers interested in promoting and integrating the GEAR against IPV intervention in secondary education's curricula. The collaboration with these departments led to the enhancement of public authorities' commitment to integrate gender equality in the school curricula, particularly the integration of gender equality and the adoption of the VAW and girls prevention strategy.

### **Critical Factors for Success and Challenges**

Success was largely achieved through close cooperation among partner organisations and the support that the EAVN provided throughout the process from developing the packages to the implementation of the project activities.

Project monitoring through a well-developed mechanism also led to concrete results. This included regular reporting forms, checklists, focus groups, face-to-face meetings and communication via emails. The pre and post questionnaires for participants of the trainings also helped improving the materials constantly, which resulted in enhancing the materials using a more participatory approach. Results of the evaluation study showed that these activities were highly effective and appreciated by the participants from different target groups.

Challenges and difficulties were mainly due to a lack of financial resources, which sometimes limited the training to just the capital or delayed the implementation of student workshops for a period of time.

### **Impact**

The master package provides guidelines that can lead to the development of culturally adaptable national packages for any country that wishes to implement the GEAR approach. The Master Package has been already evaluated by 10 experts and improved on the basis of their comments. Moreover, a revised edition was made in 2015 on the basis of the experience gained during the first period of implementing the GEAR approach in Greece, Austria and Germany.

GEAR against IPV has become one of well-known approaches in Europe and demands for using the master or national packages are growing in the region. This is because it is one of a very few approaches that includes material and activities that directly connects IPV with gender inequality and include tools for monitoring and evaluation.

The approach has been implemented in Greece since 2009. In Austria and Germany, the national packages have been used since 2009 and 2011 respectively. Since 2014, the GEAR approach against IPV has been adopted and implemented in Croatia, Cyprus, Romania and Spain. In 2015/16, the EAVN will test the approach in working marginalised children and those at risks of the GBV in Greece and Spain.

Measuring the impact:

The adoption of the GEAR against IPV curriculum in schools is one of the indicators for the success of the practice. This adoption also indicates that there was an impact made on decision makers, who adopted the curriculum.

The duplication of the practice in several countries is another indicator that shows the effectiveness of the practice, the flexibility of the materials to be applied in another context and the validity of the approach of the campaign of GEAR against IPV.

### **Lessons Learned**

- The organisation that will undertake the development of the National GEAR against IPV Package and the implementation of the practice in each country must have a) significant experience in the fields of gender equality and IPV/GBV prevention b) has previously implemented schools-based programs and teachers' trainings and c) have access to high school settings.
- Teachers' training and practical support of teachers during implementation is of critical importance for success.
- In this practice, once again, linking activities to international commitments was useful in bringing pressure on authorities and government for action.

## PRACTICE 5: WOMEN'S VOICES RADIO WEBSITE

### ***Association nationale femmes en communication (ANFEC), Algeria***

#### **Summary of the Practice**

ANFEC launched a radio website "Voix de femmes" (Women's Voice) in 2009. This radio website targeted women through a series of programmes that tackled issues related to violence and discrimination against women in various areas. Besides targeting women and providing a space for them, it also aimed at raising public awareness pertaining to women's issues, including: domestic violence, discrimination, low representation in politics, family law, health, work and women's rights. Before launching the radio website, ANFEC conducted an extensive training programme on issues related to patriarchy and gender based violence for journalists and graduate students, who then volunteered in the program and continued to support it.

#### **Background and Contextual Analysis<sup>29</sup>**

According to the report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women its causes and consequences (2010), approximately 500,000 women in Algeria experienced some form of GBV on a daily or regular basis<sup>30</sup>. The report estimated that one in ten women living with their husband or partner are subjected 'daily' or 'often' or to physical violence such as beatings, locking in, or ejecting into the street<sup>31</sup>. Domestic NGOs report that physical violence against women has been increasing. Between November 2009 and April 2011, approximately 8,500 women were reported by the Government to be victims of domestic violence with 3,500 physical abuse, 2,500 violently assaulted, 1,000 sexually assaulted, 600 sexually harassed and 100 killed<sup>32</sup>.

Sexual harassment is also considered to be a big problem in Algeria. A major step in fighting sexual harassment was made in 2004 when the Government adopted a new Penal Code

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<sup>29</sup> Please see practice number 2 of section 3 for analysis of Algeria's legal system and women's representation in politics.

<sup>30</sup> OHCHR, Yakin Erturk, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women its causes and consequences*, U.N. HRC, 7th Sess., Add. No. 2, UN Doc. A/HRC/7/6/Add.2, 2010, available at: <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Women/15YearReviewofVAWMandate.pdf>

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> The United States Department of State, *Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2009, Algeria, (USSD Report 2009)*, published 11 March 2010 (accessed December 25, 2011), available at: <http://www.state.gov/q/drl/rls/hrrpt/2009/nea/136065.htm>

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

provision, which criminalises sexual harassment<sup>33</sup>. Despite its criminalisation, sexual harassment remains largely unreported. One of the central obstacles to women's equality and advancement in Algeria is the ongoing threat of religious fundamentalism. For almost three decades, women have been the target of fundamentalist violence and oppression, which also has a profound influence on State policies<sup>34</sup>.

## **ANFEC**

ANFEC was established in March 1995 with four regional offices and an executive office in Algiers. Its goals are to inform and raise awareness about the condition and status of women; act against the political marginalisation of women and their low representation in decision-making processes; promote women's rights for expression in all its forms and organise activities for lobbying and advocating for the realisation of women's full citizenship rights<sup>35</sup>.

By 2011, ANFEC had 20 branches in all the regions of Algeria. Largely, it focuses on media as a tool for advocacy. Through online radio, ANFEC works to publish the women's production work in various fields. The organisation also conducts awareness campaigns and training in the fields of health, women rights. Complementary to the goal of enabling women to express their concerns and issues, ANFEC fills a gap in relation to providing the public with information other than that presented in state owned media and that which is regulated by the state.

## **Scope of the Practice and Objectives**

Launched in 2009 Voix de femmes is an online radio station that tackles issues related to all forms of violence and discrimination against women, be it in health, education, labour, politics, and within the family. It is an independent source of information that gives a voice to those women who have never had the opportunity to express themselves in the media. Moreover, it deals with taboo subjects rarely discussed in other media outlets.

## **Advocacy Strategies: Dealing with Resistance**

- The main strategy was using media as an instrument for societal transformation, primarily using online radio as tool for social action and means to achieve positive social change in relation to women's rights.
- Effectively using information and knowledge to address challenges and prospect of change in relation to gender equality.

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34 Ann Luerssen Crowther, *Empty Gestures: The Insignificance of Recent Attempts to Liberalize Algerian Family Law*, 6 WMMJWL 611, spring 2000, available at: <http://scholarship.law.wm.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1229&context=wmjowl>

35 More information on ANFEC available at: <http://www.femmesencommunication.com>

- Ensuring people's access to information and communication. Herein, the practice addressed communication as a right, through this strategy gender perspective was present, as a core principle of the process of democratisation.
- Upholding diversity and providing a platform where a mass of voices are heard, pluralism of ideas and opinions are guaranteed.
- Building a new culture of journalism by working with the online radio team: new graduates of journalism are trained in digital audio techniques and in developing, building and producing programmes, reporting, interviews and profiles on specific themes.
- Increasing the number of women journalists and breaking gender stereotypes in the media.

### **Partnerships and Stakeholder Engagement**

ANFEC partnered with a variety of CSOs, international organisations and academic and independent media institutions. The partnership seemed to have contributed in widening the scope of the radio and its outreach.

### **Operations and Activities**

ANFEC started by convening several training and workshops for journalists aimed at changing their attitudes and building their skills in storytelling. The web radio team also trained new graduates in digital audio techniques and in developing and producing different programmes relating to addressing VAW and women's rights.

ANFEC has also built a network of professionals who are experts in issues related to the VAW and gender equality, civil society and human rights activists, who provide analysis and contribute to debates during

programmes. It also continues to develop debate with journalists committed to change of

**Enabling women to voice their issues via untraditional tools offers an opportunity to reach and influence a wider spectrum of community groups**

patriarchal attitudes, particularly focused on fundamentalist religious discourse. Through debates and programmes, it continues to educate members of civil society and challenge public opinion and institutions on the situation of women in Algeria.

### **Critical Factors for Success and Challenges**

One particularly unique aspect to this practice is that the radio is the first in the region specifically addressing issues related to gender equality. The other uniqueness of the

practice is related to the presence of women's voices in the radio station's different debates and programmes. Without women's engagement, sharing their experiences and thoughts, ANFEC would not be able to achieve its mission. The prevailing voice of women from different regions makes the practice sustainable.

The absence of grants disrupted the continuity of training new volunteers for the radio and delayed the maintenance of the equipment. In turn, this affected the quality of the sound and placed a burden on the radio staff and volunteers.

### **Impact**

By having the opportunity to speak about abuses, concerns and issues related to their everyday life, women were given a voice in the media. By voicing their personal stories, women managed to generate debates around issues not visible in the media before. The impact of such a practice cannot be measured, as it could extend beyond women who are calling and having interventions on the radio to those who are listening but have not got the courage to call.

ANFEC presented a model for an electronic media, free, committed and revolutionary. Tackling what were considered to be taboo subjects, which have never been addressed by the media before, revealed not only the fact that the community can be tolerant to debates in relation to issues of sexual violence, marital rape, and the GBV generally, but also that it is ready to take part and engage in finding solutions. This has paved the way for more actions to be taken by other CSOs as they have realised that the community is somehow ready to engage with such issues than it was thought before.

Debates on the radio and posts written on the website have also become a source of information for different national and international organisations and researchers.

Measuring the impact:

- The sustainability of the practice despite lack of funding, where for a period of time the radio relied only on volunteers.
- Organisations' continues support and cooperation with the radio, as it is considered to fill a big gap in relation to reaching women in rural areas as well as providing educational programmes that attract women and the general public.
- Demands received from students of journalism to involve them in trainings and work of the radio.

### **Lessons learned**

- Plan and think ahead of a strategy for the sustainability and continuity of radio programming. The nature of radio demands continuity in order to sustain demand for the service.
- Develop a training model for staff and volunteers and staff with the training experience they need to pass their expertise to new staff and volunteers.
- Collaborate with others who hold experience in the sector – in this case community radio stations – to exchange experience and ideas.



Running parity "5050" campaign to raise awareness of the importance of gender parity in politics across Europe  
*Elvira Buijink - European Women's Lobby*

## III WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

### PRACTICE 1: PROJECT "EQUALITY FOR LOCAL DEVELOPMENT: GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN MUNICIPALITIES"

*Center of Women's Studies and Policies (CWSP), Bulgaria*

#### **Summary of the practice**

The main focus of the practice was to systematically scrutinise discrepancies related to gender inequality in Bulgarian municipalities. It aimed to raise gender awareness and the capacity of municipalities to mainstream gender in their work by using the 3R method (Representation, Resources, and Realia)<sup>36</sup>, gender analysis and gender budgeting. The project included:

- Trainings for municipal staff on different gender analysis methodologies that could be used in their daily work.
- Conducting surveys to enable local authorities to collect gender-based information, map and analyse the influence exerted by women and men and their access to local resources.
- Organising roundtables with representatives of other municipal administration staff and decision makers on national level to discuss national issues relating to gender.

#### **CWSP**

Since its establishment in 2003, the organisation has been providing technical assistance and consultancy to women's NGOs in Bulgaria, as well as to public administration at all levels in raising capacity in gender mainstreaming and gender equality policy development.

The CWSP provides training on gender equality issues for different target groups (youth, trade unions, local authorities, political parties, etc.)<sup>37</sup>. Other activities of the CWSP are

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<sup>36</sup> Information about 3R Method can be found on the link <http://www.cwsp.bg/en/htmls/page.php?category=495&page=4>

<sup>37</sup> More information about the CWSP is available at: <http://www.cwsp.bg/>

largely focused on monitoring gender equality and the status of women, promoting women's human rights and encouraging the participation of women in political, social and economic life and regional cooperation.

Since 2006, the CWSP has represented over 20 NGOs and networks across Bulgaria and participated in the National Council on Equality between Women and Men of the Government of Bulgaria.

### **Scope of the Practice and Objectives**

The project aimed at fostering sustainable change in local communities by encouraging balanced participation of women and men in social and economic development of their community and increasing analytical and practical capacities of local authorities to implement concrete and reliable gender equality policies.

### **Advocacy Strategies**

The practice has developed a strategy based on policy development to improve gender equality at the municipal level. Indeed, working and pro-actively collaborating with municipalities, the CWSP achieved to draft legislative proposals in order to implement and foster a concrete turning point in mainstream gender by using the 3R method. Through this, it provided local governments with specific policy suggestions to firstly deconstruct normative gender discourses and stereotypes and then change attitudes of male local representatives towards gender equality.

### **Operations and activities**

To realise its objectives, the project implemented the following activities:

*Training and building the capacity of councils servants:* 20 participants from 3 Bulgarian municipalities were selected to participate in 4 trainings. The trainings were organized in cooperation with Swedish experts. They took the form of four seminars covering different methodologies of gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting in the daily work of municipalities. The trainings also included the introduction of the gender equality policy in public life, as well as the practical skills for applying the instruments of gender mainstreaming in the work of the municipality.

*Analysis of local policies:* Seven micro-surveys were conducted in areas concerning gender-related local policies. The surveys suggested the ways to integrate gender perspectives and to improve gender equality at the local level. The surveys were based on the 3R method in

order to enable local authorities to collect gender-based information, map and analyse the influence of women and men and investigate the way women and men participate in local activities.

*Study Visits:* Bulgarian, Lithuanian and Estonian municipal servants visited Sweden to learn from best practices and experience from Swedish state and local institutions.

*Discussions and roundtables:* Including other municipal administration staff as well as other local municipalities and decision makers on the national level gave the opportunity for dissemination of project results and promoted innovative know-how experiences for the implementation of gender equality. An International Conference in Vilnius allowed for the dissemination of the experience at a European level.

*Publications:* a Gender Equality Manual aimed at building the capacity of municipal staff, information brochures and web postings on the partners' websites were produced.

### **Partnership and Engagement of Stakeholders**

The project mainly had a partnership with municipalities in Bulgaria but it had also cooperated with other CSOs that had the same mission of gender equality policies. As the project aimed at enhancing gender equality and mainstreaming within municipalities, the main target group was the municipality's staff. By training the staff on gender analysis and enabling them to conduct the developed surveys for this purpose, their knowledge was not only built but also contributed to the sustainability of the project methods and ideas over all decision-making processes.

**Coordination and collaboration  
at the regional level  
enhanced implementation  
at the national level**

### **Critical Factors for Success and Challenges**

The main factor that led to success is that the project was implemented simultaneously in Lithuania and in Estonia. The multi-country approach allowed exchanging of experience, strategizing at the regional level, testing the methodology in three different countries and partnering with organisations that had different experiences. For example, the Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson in Lithuania<sup>38</sup>, which was the coordinator of the project, had significant experience in monitoring the implementation of laws and policies related to

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38 More information about the organization can be found at: <http://www.lvgvbe.lt/>

equal opportunities as well as investigating complaints relating to discrimination in work, public service and education. This experience enhanced what the campaign could offer in terms of monitoring and the ways by which the 3R methodology can be adopted in the municipalities.

One of the difficulties was the resistance to the topic due to the existing gender stereotypes among servants of municipalities and their underestimation of the gender discrimination within the municipalities' policies and practices. Municipal servants had never had the opportunity before to see local policy through gender perspective, which they did not previously consider to be significant in their work. By exposing them to different types of trainings, capacity building activities and exchange visits, they were placed in a better position to understand the issue and thus join campaign efforts to eliminate discrimination.

### **Impact**

Changing of servants' attitudes and perceptions was the most significant impact of the project. Whilst changing policies and integrating gender perspective was vital for the project, the practice would not have succeeded without the staff's adoption of its methods, goals and vision. They were then able to translate such knowledge into practice and pass it on to colleagues in the municipalities in Bulgaria.

In 2007, three Bulgarian municipalities made initial steps in the implementation of gender mainstreaming at the local level. The experience of the trainings and surveys not only built the knowledge of staff, but also inspired them to use a gender lens in their everyday work. As partners of the CWSP, the municipalities of Sofia, Veliko Turnovo and Plovdiv took part in the international project "Equality for Local Development: Gender Mainstreaming in Municipalities" (2006-2007).

In its subsequent projects, the CWSP modified and used the same methodology to train 60 experts from the Bulgarian regional and local administration. The CWSP aimed to build the national and local experiences by developing expertise in the field of gender mainstreaming in Bulgaria as a whole, which contributed to sustaining their work in the country.

Measuring the impact:

- The existence of well-trained staff on gender analysis.
- Adoption of gender analysis methods at the municipalities' level.
- The change to servants' attitudes regarding gender equality or/and how gender mainstreaming was implemented/integrated at local level.

### Lessons learned

- The use of practical examples and relating the training to the daily reality of the municipal servants allowed them to easily understand the 3R and the other gender analysis methods. This was done by working through examples of comparative local policies and contexts in other countries.

**Building the knowledge of municipalities’  
servants enabled the change to be from within  
and an effective enforcement of gender  
equalities policies**

- Learning by doing is the best approach for changing towards gender equality. The surveys that civil servants conducted in their local context in practice became an eye opening experience for them in relation to gender discrimination and in understanding why gender matters in all local policies.

## PRACTICE 2: ESTABLISHMENT OF A COALITION AND ADVOCACY FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF THE QUOTA SYSTEM IN ALGERIA

***Centre d'information et de documentation sur les droits de l'enfant et de la femme (CIDDEF), Algeria***

### **Summary of the Practice**

In 2005, CIDDEF undertook an advocacy work to improve the representation of women in politics by seeking to introduce a quota system. Realising this goal required several levels of work. First, CIDDEF undertook a comparative study on the political representation of women in Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria. The study aimed at analysing the status of women in politics in Algeria through comparing it to that in Morocco and Tunisia. The results of the study were used to sensitise public towards the importance of women's political participation – and the potential impact of quota system – by showing how systems worked in other countries and the ways in which the quota system could enhance women's political participation, particularly in the Parliament.

### **Background and Contextual Analysis**

Algeria is a multiparty Republic. The President is elected by a popular vote<sup>39</sup>. As of November 2008, there are no presidential term limits<sup>40</sup>. The President has long dominated the domestic political system of Algeria, generally with a strong backing from the military<sup>41</sup>. He heads the Council of Ministers (Cabinet), the High Security Council, appoints the Prime Minister and one-third of the upper House of Parliament, known as the Council of the Nation<sup>42</sup>. Both, the President and the Parliamentary Chambers have the power to initiate legislation, however, laws cannot be passed without the approval of the chambers, which requires the support of the presidency<sup>43</sup>.

The legal system of Algeria is based on Civil Law and Islamic *Sharia law*. Although civil laws and policies apply to men and women equally, Article 1 of the civil code stipulates that “in the absence of any legal disposition, the judge pronounces himself according to the principle

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39 *Ibid.*

40 *Ibid.*

41 *Ibid.*

42 CIA, *World Factbook*: Algeria, 9 November 2010.

43 Congressional Research Service, *Algeria: Current Issues*, 22 February 2011.

44 The Freedom House, report on *Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa 2010 – Algeria*, 3 March 2010, available at: <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=383&report=86>

of Islamic law and, if necessary, according to customary law"<sup>44</sup>. It is primarily for crimes against women, such as rape or abduction that such legal dispositions are missing. Consequently, women are disadvantaged by and victimised in legal dualism system<sup>45</sup>.

Although Algeria has ratified many of the international conventions and treaties related to the rights of women and children, these treaties have not been fully implemented, particularly when a convention comes into conflict with Algerian law. Algeria has made extensive reservations relating to: Articles 2, 9 (41), 15 (4), 16, and 18 of CEDAW. These reservations relate to family issues such as child custody and divorce<sup>46</sup>.

Female illiteracy, particularly among rural, poor and older women, is a serious concern, affecting 28.9% of women and girls over 10 years of age<sup>47</sup>. There are no constitutional or legal provisions that restrict women's political participation; indeed Art. 29 of the constitution, amended in 2008, stipulates that: "All citizens are equal before the law. No discrimination shall prevail because of birth, race, sex, opinion or any other personal or social condition or circumstance".

Women's right to vote and stand as a candidate is guaranteed by the Constitution since Algeria's independence in 1962. Indeed, a woman won a seat in the Parliament in the first election in 1962, event that was relatively very progressive comparing to the presence of women in other Arab Parliaments. However, the presence of women in the Government and Parliament is still limited, with a representation of one to two women in the government as ministers.<sup>48</sup> Women currently occupy 8% of the 389 seats in the lower House of Parliament (the National People's Assembly). One potential reason for women's low presentation in Parliament is the poor presence on political parties' electoral list, albeit Algeria is of the very few countries in the region, where women are presidents of political parties and have stood as presidential elections.

## **CIDDEF**

CIDDEF was established on May 9, 2002, as a space for knowledge and experience exchanges between all partners, and aimed to bridge boundaries between civil society and public institutions. This space has become not only a necessity for activists of women and

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45 *Ibid.*

46 Congressional Research Service, *Algeria: Current Issues*, 79, February 22, 2011 (Last accessed December 25, 2011).

47 The Foreign and Commonwealth Office, *August 2010 Human Rights Assessment of Algeria*, September 2010.

48 Boutheina Gribaa et al, *Strengthening women's leadership and participation in politics and decision-making process in Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia*, UN-INSTRAW and CAWTAR, 2009, available at: <http://www.genderclearinghouse.org/upload/Assets/Documents/pdf/Mapping%20situation%20women%20participations%20politics.pdf>

human rights but also for professionals (researchers and students) of women's and children's issues. This was a necessity because of the lack of well-documented research and information, and the limited space for information sharing.

To meet these objectives, CIDDEF has developed space for IT equipment means of communication, including a documentary database on the status of women and children's rights. To respond also to some of its objectives, CIDDEF implements activities that seek to inform public opinion towards women's and children rights. It has also organised several studies and set up psychological and legal counselling services. CIDDEF has been enriched by the creation of a quarterly journal that provides a forum on women's issues and children.

### **Scope of the Practice and Objectives**

The practice started by conducting a comparative study on the representation of women in politics in Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia. After completing the study, 3000 copies were distributed to the universities in Algeria, research centres, researchers, political parties and government ministries, including the offices of the Prime Minister and the President of Algeria.

This work served as the basis for comparing the representation of women in political bodies in the three countries. From this study, it appeared that there was a necessary for CIDDEF to undertake substantive work in order to improve the representation of women in politics. To do so, CIDDEF started its campaign by engaging with different political parties, women's NGOs and other human rights organisations. CIDDEF also worked with 30 women from political parties. This group also received extensive training in order to strengthen their capacity, help them engage effectively in political life, and encourage them to stand for parliament elections.

The advocacy work began with the training and empowerment of 30 women from political parties, who formed a coalition and worked closely in collaboration with CIDDEF to make a petition for a quota system within the political parties in order for their parties to present and advocate for it in the parliament. The petition was disseminated widely and a copy sent to the President of the Republic.

This advocacy has led to a revision of the constitution in 2008 and the introduction of Article 31(a) (3) "The State works for the promotion of the political rights of women by increasing their chances of access to representation in elected assemblies". 15 trained activists subsequently ran for parliamentary elections and 5 of them were elected in the Parliament.

The Electoral Law, amended in 2012, stipulated in Article 2 that the representation in the political parties' lists should be through quotas that represent 20% to 50% of the candidates for the Parliament, depending on the number of seats in each electoral district.

### **Advocacy Strategies: Dealing with Resistance**

The practice has developed several strategies to realise its goals of increasing women's political participation. The first strategy was the use of evidence-based research, where women's status in politics was not only studied but also compared to their counterparts in the region. This strategy served to inform and educate policy makers, academics, women, political parties and the general public. Through this, it provided information that can be used beyond the advocacy campaign and enable other organisations to build on its results.

The second strategy was the involvement of political parties in the advocacy, where, despite their political differences, they all realised the importance of women's political participation. This was done through debate, workshops and effective engagement with the study results.

The third was the representation of women's politicians in the advocacy campaign, where

**The advocacy practice was carried out by women's politicians rather than the organisation, a strategy that influenced change from within the parties' structure**

after being extensively trained, they have carried out the advocacy activities. Women were, thus, not only represented but also the decision makers in the campaign, their plea hence was related to their demands.

Most importantly, women took the initiative to work with their political parties, influence them and then brought them in agreement with the advocacy goals. By this, the campaign was a reflection of women's voice and a representation of their own demands. This also contributed in making the campaign relevant to women politicians and making their voice heard.

### **Operations and activities**

CIDDEF implemented its activities to inform public opinion towards women's and children rights. In this sense, through comparative research in Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria, the political representation of women could be analysed. The outcome of this study, by showing the quota system positive implementation in the neighbour countries, allowed CIDDEF to

minimise resistance towards the idea of quota system and to sensitize both civil society and parliamentarians to the importance of female political participation. Hence, the dissemination activities planned on the basis of the investigation results successfully helped CIDDEF to reform the electoral laws and introducing the quota system in Algeria.

### **Partnerships and Stakeholder Engagement**

Crucially, CIDDEF sought to empower a target group by turning them into a key players and a drive force for change. Having built close connections with women politicians and trained them on lobbying and advocacy to carry out their demands, the group became crucial in delivering the required change. This strategy of partnership increased the effectiveness of the campaign to achieve its goals, as the group embodied the change sought.

CIDDEF also managed to sensitise a broad range of stakeholders to the issue through the production and distribution of research. As well as acting as evidence for their own work, thus, engagement with concrete research resulted in a productive partnership with stakeholders and sustained the future work with them.

### **Critical Factors for Success and Challenges**

The first challenge was working with political parties and having them agree upon one common goal. Political parties have different political agendas, driven by various ideological stands, and have their own visions of change or how things should be tackled in the country. To realise their cooperation, the quota system and the increase of women's political participation were introduced to fit within their agendas as well as serve their political interests.

The other critical success factor is that women politicians were at the core of the campaign, they were the key forces of implementing its activities as well as being its decision makers. They influenced their political parties from within through their awareness of the structure and function of the parties.

### **Impact**

Building knowledge in relation to women's political participation in the whole country with the comparative study contributed in informing professionals, academics, human rights activists and political parties of the situation of women within the political sphere. This allowed the campaign based on research and make evidence-based messages and proposals on the ways in which women's political participation could be enhanced through a quota system.

The second significant impact of the practice was the investment in women politicians. This was achieved through enhancing the capacity of activists in the coalition, by encouraging women from different political parties to work for a common goal, by preparing them to political positions and by teaching them to defend their beliefs and work with politicians.

The impacts women were making were regularly assessed through a monitoring mechanism developed by CIDDEF. The organisation held regular meetings with political activists to support

**Evidence-based facts and analysis, engaging stakeholders and their ownership over the campaign, and making sure that the voice of women is loud and heard are key factors in making change happen**

their efforts, advice on how to overcome challenges and follow up their progress with their parties. This mechanism kept women in close

cooperation with CIDDEF, as well as providing them with the techniques, arguments and other required skills for taking part in the advocacy campaign and beyond.

The tangible impact the campaign made was manifested in the position of several women parliamentarians. They are currently preparing further proposals for laws in favour of women's rights.

Measuring the impact:

One major impact that can be measured is the performance of political parties regarding women quota in the 2012 elections. Generally speaking, political parties have respected the women's quota requirements. The number of women nominated by political parties was of 7700 women (31% of the total number of candidates). However, due to the absence of lists' ranking rules in the election law, women were at the top of a limited number of party lists, and only a relatively small number of parties' lists alternated male and female candidates in their lists' order.

The success of CIDDEF's techniques led the organisation replicating them in tackling other issues, whether in relation to violence against women or other advocacy campaigns.

### **Lessons Learned**

- There will be no success if organisations do not invest in the capacity of stakeholders to advocate and have ownership over the advocacy initiative.

- Coordination, strategizing and action plans should be decided upon in close cooperation with stakeholders.
- Working with closed spaces, like political parties, from within could open the door for more work in the future with these bodies. It also sustains the work beyond a single initiative as changes become manifest in the culture and approach of an organisation.
- Bridging the gap between different political parties through engaging them in a common goal would work better through coalitions that are built closely with stakeholders and based on their needs.
- The effectiveness of comparative analysis – particularly between neighbouring countries – in making potential reforms tangible and in motivating change.

### PRACTICE 3: TRANSNATIONAL CAMPAIGNING - EUROPEAN WOMEN'S LOBBY 5050 CAMPAIGN ACROSS EUROPE *European Women's Lobby (EWL), Belgium*

#### **Summary of the Practice**

The 5050 campaign is one of the coordinated actions of the EWL members working together towards the goal of equality at all the EU institutions ahead of the European elections. Through the diverse tools and strategies of the 5050 campaign, which aimed at developing and strengthening transnational exchanges of good practice for mutual learning, the EWL enhanced the political dialogue between stakeholders and decision-makers. This led to the support of decision-makers to women's rights across Europe.

#### **Background and Contextual Analysis**

In Europe, women are still underrepresented in decision-making processes. Indeed, in the European Parliament, women represent 37% of the seats comparing to 63% for men. There are differences in women's representation according to the representation of each country. Countries such as Latvia, Estonia and Austria have 50/50 representation, and women outnumbered men in the representation for Sweden, Ireland, and Finland (55%, 55%, 62% respectively). However, women's representation is much smaller for Luxembourg (9%), Cyprus (17%), and Hungary (19%)<sup>49</sup>. At the national level, women accounted for 28% of members in the single or lower houses of parliaments of the EU member states in 2015<sup>50</sup>.

The EWL recognises the multiple and complex roots for the underrepresentation of women in political positions in Europe. The persistence of traditional gender roles and stereotypes continue to deprive women from the support they need and resources that would enable them to stand for elections and hold positions at the highest level of politics. Women are still required to balance family and care responsibilities with work and political activism. Such duties are thus hindering many women to perform political positions.

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<sup>49</sup> See database on European Parliament at: [www.ec.europa.eu](http://www.ec.europa.eu) (Last accessed 31 December 2015)

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

## **EWL**

The achievement of parity in representation at the political level in Europe not only requires empowerment of women and a call for 50/50 representation, but also revisions of laws and policies and changes in attitudes towards women and their rights. As the largest umbrella organisation in the EU, the EWL implements and coordinates different actions that aim to promote of a progressive role for women in society via international cooperation and close collaboration of members. The EWL membership extends to associations in all the 28 EU member states and 3 candidate countries, as well as to 21 European-wide bodies, representing more than 2000 organisations. The EWL tackles issues related to the VAW and socio-economic policies within all the EU institutions. It uses regional and human rights international framework such as CEDAW and the Beijing Platform of Action to lobby for change.

The EWL carries out coordinated European campaigns and is constantly strengthening and energising the Europe-wide the EWL membership, by developing and intensifying the transnational exchanges and emphasising the exchange of good practice for mutual learning. The organisation is active in rolling out membership action plans to strengthen and coordinate actions on the EU policy developments and legislation for impact both at the national and European level.

### **Scope of the Practice and Objectives**

Since 2009 and ahead of European Parliament elections, the EWL and its partner organisations have been running parity campaigns to raise greater awareness of the importance of gender parity in politics. The EWL 5050 campaign takes a multi-tiered approach to influence policy-makers, key actors and public opinion to support and implement actions contributing to equal representation of women and men at all levels of national and European decision-making bodies.

### **Advocacy Strategies: Dealing with Resistance**

- Exchange between diverse women's rights organisations across Europe and working together on a common cause.
- Agreeing on joint strategic interventions across Europe between organisations and the EWL.
- Building partnerships with unusual allies for the cause.
- Reaching out to the public with one voice.
- Creating toolkits applicable to diverse regions and women's rights organisations.

### **Operations and activities**

The EWL 5050 campaign has overseen and continues to develop a range of tools for different audiences. Furthermore, the 5050 campaign establishes contact with high-level personalities to become ambassadors for the 5050 campaign.

The EWL also uses other tools such as coordinated events in different countries of the region, gender audits, joint declaration, petitions, fact sheets, manifestos, and lobbying kits, and social media to mobilise and raise public awareness and engage stakeholders in the 5050 campaign. The activities and impact of the campaign are monitored constantly to learn, reflect and improve future work.

### **Partnerships and Stakeholders Engagement and Participation**

High-level personalities were selected and asked to become ambassadors for the 5050 campaign, giving it greater visibility. The EWL also sought to establish ties with different parties to mainstream parity in representation in terms of candidates within the parties and to win champions within the different parties to speak up for equality in representation.

### **Critical Success Factors and Challenges**

- Main success factors were related to transnational cooperation and activism, mutual learning, peer-to-peer work and cross border campaigning.
- Addressing the overrepresentation of men at all levels of decision-making - promoting gender parity in all areas of decision-making across Europe.
- Different way of doing politics and policy making and highlighting good-practice with regards to parity.
- Change of political climate with regards to women's rights and gender equality
- Lack of support of national and European decision-makers.
- Rise of religious fundamentalism and religious freedom and the effects it can have on women's rights or vice versa.
- Freedom of the media and press and dignity of women in portraying women in media and advertising.

### **Impact**

Through activities, such as events, gender audits, joint declaration, petitions, fact sheets, manifestos and lobbying kits, the EWL raised public awareness on the lack of parity and the overrepresentation of men in all area of decision-making; and stakeholders continue to join the campaign. Currently, the EWL has 34 Associate Member Organisations, which are a

combination of women's organisations from across the world and which agreed and accepted the mission, aims and objectives of the EWL.

As a result of the campaign, more women are aware of the lack of measures to empower them to be part of decision-making bodies. More women are also willing to participate at senior decision-making levels and to promote and advocate for parity. Reaching out women across all sectors and walks of life, providing educational programmes, the EWL made women aware of their right to be part of decision-making and making decisions, which are affecting their lives and future.

The 5050 campaign established contact with high-level personalities, who have become ambassadors of the 5050 campaign.

Measuring the impact:

The impact was measured through the use of:

- Satisfaction surveys and evaluation forms during and after the implementation of activities.
- Systematic debriefings of actions and meetings.
- Quantitative indicators such as number of people, in particular differentiating by gender, participating in events, conferences etc.
- Evaluation of the stream of communication/ public commentary on the topic.

### **Lessons Learned**

- Draw all on resources and knowledge used in previous work to see whether it can be transferred to the current case. As part of the 5050 campaign, the EWL drew on their expertise and deep knowledge by using resources such as the EWL's analysis of Beijing+20 and contribution to the EU Gender Equality Strategy and the work on the Istanbul Convention.
- There is a risk in not including the diverse voices from a range of women and feminists across generations. To counter this, the EWL sought to further build relationships across the women's movements. They also developed policies for diversity, including for its membership and its strategic partners, which are continuously monitored and evaluated.
- The EWL also made use of different tools of communication and engagement depending on the audience to ensure that the messages were effective.
- Although working across a range of different countries, the EWL sought to build approaches that strengthened mutual learning, whilst ensuring that operations and actions were contextualised according to the local circumstances.



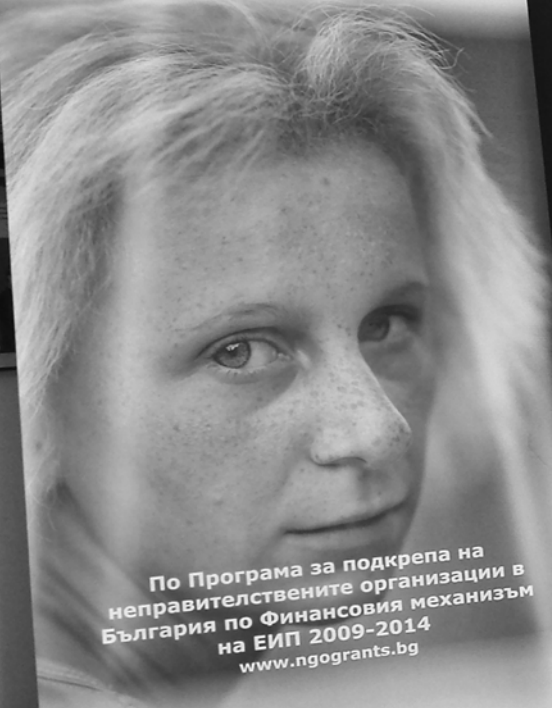


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## IV PROMOTING WOMEN'S RIGHTS AS HUMAN RIGHTS

### PRACTICE 1: STRENGTHENING THE CAPACITY OF SOUTH ASSOCIATIONS ACTIVISTS

*Association voix de femmes marocaines (AVFM), Morocco*

#### **Summary of the Practice**

The project was implemented in 2009-2010 and sought to strengthening the capacity of South development associations in Morocco. The project was a response to observations made in Southern Morocco, where the AVFM found that there was not adequate number of women's organisations, nor enough representation of women in the development organisations. On the other hand, the number of development associations led by men is numerous. Moreover, the work of development organisations in the South was limited to that of a charitable and service approach without any consideration of human rights approach. The offices of these organisations were composed of men, who, generally speaking, have very negative attitudes about women's groups and human rights. Therefore, the project implemented activities that resulted in bridging the communication with these associations, correcting their biases, bring the right approach to their work and integration of women in decision-making offices and boards.

#### **Background and Contextual Analysis**

The situation of women and girls in Morocco is marked by limited legal progress, whilst legal implementation and practice of reforms remains poor, discrimination is widespread through institutions and communities, and violence against women and girls continues to be pervasive.

Although there have been many significant reforms of the law addressing women's rights and gender equality since the early 2000s, implementation of CEDAW faces continuous problems<sup>51</sup>, with persisting gaps between the written law and its application and inadequate

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51 EU Neighborhood Library, *National Situation Analysis Report: Women's Human Rights and Gender Equality in Morocco*, 2010, available at: <http://www.enpi-info.eu/library/content/national-situation-analysis-report-women%E2%80%99s-human-rights-and-gender-equality-morocco>

protection from sexual violence for women and girls<sup>52</sup>. In early 2014, some reforms were made to laws so that perpetrators of rape of minors could no longer escape prosecution in case they marry the victim.

## **AVFM**

Against this background, the AVFM found that the number of women's groups were small in comparison to the number of development organisations overall acting in the country. Even the focus of many of the development organisations was limited largely to water, transport infrastructure and sports. Their offices are usually made up of a majority of male employees and do not focus on women rights, even having prejudices against women's groups and human rights in relation to rural women. In part, as consequence of this, there is a lack of representation of women in public life.

### **Scope of the Practice and Objectives**

Women's rights and issues of gender equality were not well represented among the practices and approaches of development organisations in Southern Morocco. The AVFM found that this often restricted its work and activities in that region. The project attempted to build bridges with development organisations, working with them to challenge their biases and prejudices and encourage a more open approach to women's rights in their work.

The practice focused on changing the attitudes and behaviour of the members of development and charitable organisations. As organisations that work for the development of local communities, they are a crucial segment of civil society and could be instrumental in women's empowerment. Therefore, the AVFM believed that for its work to reach these communities, it was pivotal that attitudes held by members of development organisations regarding women to be changed and challenged. Also, it proposed a set of skills and capacity building programmes to transform the institutional structure of these organisations through policies and programmes that would contribute in the empowerment of women and generate organisations' commitment towards gender equality and representation.

With this theory of change, the AVFM worked for two years with these organisations through trainings that challenged members' attitudes and perceptions. It also engaged other community members in the training and targeted by its activities women activists in villages

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52 Amnesty International, *Annual Report. Morocco/Western Sahara*, available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/middle-east-and-north-africa/morocco/report-morocco/>

and marginalised communities, which were the constituencies of these organisations. By such an approach, not only board members were empowered but also their wide range of target groups and constituencies. The practice also gave a special attention to women members of the organisations, who were targeted through specialised training that raised their self-confidence, built their skills to participate effectively in community work and prepared them to take part at the leadership level of their organisations.

### **Advocacy Strategies: Dealing with Resistance**

- Target key decision-makers in the development organisations in rural areas.
- Empowerment of women in rural areas through their participation in association boards and decision making processes.
- Attitudes change through training and offering trainings that challenge the discriminatory attitudes and practices.

### **Operations and Activities**

The practice was carried out in 2009. It aimed to provide board members of the development organisations and stakeholders in the Southern region with the tools to enhance the representation of women in decision-making bodies. This was accompanied by work to encourage, inform and support the process of women's participation in public life through a year-long campaign for changing attitudes and practices in regard to women's rights and gender equality.

In order to promote women's rights amongst development organisations, the AVFM sought commitments from development organisations and conditioned their participation in the training only if they nominate female and male members to take part. The training was conducted in two phases, each of them consists of 12 days. The follow-up training was also held in local villages of the branches of development organisations.

24 development organisations and 6 women's rights organisations were invited to take part in the training. The training started by an introduction on human rights in Islam that aimed at unifying concepts and correcting mistaken information on the Universal Declaration of Human rights and CEDAW.

### **Partnerships and Stakeholder Engagement**

A partnership was developed with development organisation in the Southern region to enable them to take an effective part of the practice. Women in the region were also

targeted to take a role as key players. Through their full participation, women managed to lead and have leadership over the project which resulted in introducing an immediate change on some of the organisations that participated in the practice.

### **Critical Factors for Success and Challenges**

The AVFM experienced two barriers in its work to change attitudes. Firstly, negative gender stereotypes were held by some members of the organisations and conservative opinions such as “the place of a woman is in her house not in public life”. Secondly, a lack of women's self-confidence limited their ability to move beyond traditional perceptions of their role in the home.

Introducing rights-based approach and linking it to human rights values in Islam was a factor that attracted most of the organisations' members. Through this approach, the target groups involved realised that women's rights are not incompatible with Islamic values.

### **Impact**

There was recognition from the members of development organisations, where they addressed the knowledge and skills gained from trainings, several commitments as well made by the organisations members that they would encourage women to participate in their office.

Several women were nominated and successfully become board membership of their organisations.

Measuring the impact:

- The integration of women into the offices of the development organisations.
- Among 25 women beneficiaries of this practice, 24 could integrate women as elected members in their boards.
- The development of the Tizi network which has organized several awareness raising campaigns.
- The participation of women via the Tizi network in the project proposal on the constitution in 2011.

### **Lessons Learned**

- Firstly, being proactive in engaging those of opposing views directly.
- Creating a space for free discussion and encouraging debate between people of different views whilst respecting the other and valuing the other's point view.

- Highlighting positive arguments that are situated in the local and cultural context of the target groups, such as the approach of explaining human rights and women's rights from within the framework of Islamic values of human rights
- Making the practice sustainable is only possible by enhancing the knowledge and capacities of local actors and organisations



## PRACTICE 2: WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS PROTECTION *Gender Alternatives Foundation (GAF), Bulgaria*

### **Summary of the Practice**

In order to pressure the government of Bulgaria to comply with its national, regional and international legal mechanisms regarding gender equality and violence against women, GAF used shadow reports to UN Treaty Bodies as an advocacy tool, such as the Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Report mechanism, CEDAW Committee and Commission for the Status of Women and litigations (in Bulgarian courts, European Court of Human Rights, CEDAW Committee).

### **Background and Contextual Analysis**

There is a high number of structural inequalities that continue to persist in Bulgaria. These inequalities are layered in social practices and societal mind-sets and present barriers before the implementation of policies against gender-based discrimination and violence. These barriers also limit the implementation of gender policies and enforcement of laws to prohibit gender discrimination in the country. With such systematic and structural gender discrimination, GAF devotes efforts to combating the historical gender inequalities that assign women and girls a subordinate role in society and the family. GAF works to raise awareness on the pervasive negative effects of patriarchal structures and to protect the rights of vulnerable groups through giving them the chance to be actors in their own empowerment.

### **GAF**

GAF has been working for decades against gender-based violence. Between 2002 and 2011, the GAF team was part of the Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation, Plovdiv. Due to the need for operative freedom, including financial and organisational independence, the team founded GAF. The decision was also taken as a response to the persisting passivity of the national and local decision-makers and institutions in their work with women and girls, especially when it comes to ensuring their access to information, services, protection and empowerment. The quality of the existing services for women and girls were inadequate.

GAF works on pro-active research, education, legal and psychosocial counselling, campaigning and lobbying for legislative changes in the field of gender equality and women's rights.

### **Scope of the Practice and Objectives**

The GAF team prepared a shadow report for the 52<sup>nd</sup> CEDAW Committee session in July 2012. The team aimed at using the report as a tool for holding the Bulgarian Government accountable for the implementation of CEDAW as well as a tool for advancing women's human rights in the country<sup>53</sup>.

### **Advocacy Strategies: Dealing with Resistance**

The legal advocacy tools of GAF were powerful in the sense that it used the obligations the State has already committed itself to. GAF pursued a strategy of holding the government to be accountable on such commitments through reporting and communications with international bodies that aimed at improving women's rights. Women's voices were also used throughout the process of reporting, as GAF engaged a variety of local and national grassroots organisations in the process of writing the report.

By this, the shadow report was not only an advocacy tool but also by itself a practice of raising the public awareness. The report addressed issues related to women and girls in the society; in order to break the historically rooted gender stereotypes, increase the awareness of decision-makers on women's issues and to promote a legislation on gender-based violence.

The report also used, to raise the awareness in the country on CEDAW, its optional protocol and general recommendations among judges, prosecutors and lawyers. The aim of legal personnel's knowledge building in relation to CEDAW was to enable legal personnel to use and apply the Convention in relevant cases. It was also used to enhance coordination of responses between police, courts, social services, healthcare providers, NGOs and media to ensure effective implementation of related national policies and mechanism.

### **Operations and activities**

- The main activities of GAF included:
- Conducting legal, social and economic research and monitoring to promote human rights and equality;
- Drafting proposals for amendments to Bulgarian legislation concerning human rights, discrimination and gender equality;

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53 More information about GAF available at: [www.genderalternatives.org](http://www.genderalternatives.org)

- Organizing round tables, seminars and other forms of discussions on the issues of gender and human rights;
- Working out a program for gender research and education;
- Implementing education on human rights of workers, entrepreneurs, state administrators, lawyers and students, and other NGOs;
- Creating and publishing practical guides and theoretical studies on gender issues and human rights.
- These activities enabled GAF to prepare a shadow report entitled: “Substantive equality and non-discrimination in Bulgaria”. The report is based on research findings as well as the daily interaction with NGOs and female survivors of gender-based violence. The report was presented in July 2012 at the 52<sup>nd</sup> session of CEDAW Committee<sup>54</sup>.

Before submitting the report, the GAF team, together with other organisations, was trained by International Women’s Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific (IWRAP) on advocacy during the interactive dialogue with the State.

### **Pressuring the State at the international level led to a better coordination at the national level**

The team prepared a set of recommendations, which were all adopted by CEDAW Committee in its concluding observations to the state of Bulgaria. By achieving recognition of its recommendations at the international level, GAF managed to communicate these back to the CSOs and policy makers in Bulgaria and build activities to advocate for the implementation of CEDAW’s recommendations.

The report was used to pressure the government of Bulgaria to comply with its obligations. Following this report, GAF partnered with other organisations to prepare and submit reports in the areas of gender equality, sexual violence, sexuality education, abortion and contraception, for the Universal Periodic Report, 22<sup>nd</sup> session (May 2015), Geneva, Switzerland.

The process of preparation of the shadow report improved the GAF team capacity in raising critical questions for the government, particularly concerning women’s human rights and women’s access to justice in the contemporary context in Bulgaria and in the region.

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<sup>54</sup> The shadow report is available at: [http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/docs/ngos/GAFfor the session Bulgaria CEDAW52.pdf](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/docs/ngos/GAFfor%20the%20session%20Bulgaria%20CEDAW52.pdf)

### **Critical Factors for Success and Challenges**

Success factors of the practice are related to GAF engagement with civil society, international organisations and the State of Bulgaria. Without such close coordination and cooperation, it would be difficult to translate some of Bulgaria's international commitments into policies and laws.

Communication with state authorities is difficult after recommendations are issued by the UN human rights treaty bodies. However, the experience of GAF gained through the reporting process enabled the team to use different communication means by which many of the shadow report's recommendations have become legal acts or policies.

### **Impact**

Through the practice, GAF managed to amend legislation, improve the social services and increase the awareness of citizens. In its concluding observations, adopted on 27<sup>th</sup> July 2012, CEDAW Committee took into account all the recommendations prepared by GAF and presented in the shadow report<sup>55</sup>. As a result, the GAF team is currently in contact with the

### **Engagement of all stakeholders and representation to women's voice in the report resulted in an adoption of the report's recommendation by CEDAW which in turn paved the way for better implementation of Bulgaria's commitments**

Bulgarian Government and its relevant institutions in order to take part in the implementation of those recommendations.

The practice has become a more popular tool for advocacy among other human rights organisations in the region. For example, the ASTRA network now uses it to defend women's sexual and reproductive rights in Central and Eastern Europe.

Measuring the impact:

- The adoption of CEDAW Committee to the recommendation of the report.
- Duplication of the practice by other organisations and for reporting to other international human rights mechanisms.
- Involvement of NGOs in the shadow reporting process.

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<sup>55</sup> See CEDAW concluding observations at: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/docs/co/CEDAW-C-BGR-CO-4-7.pdf>

- The continuous communications with government to implement CEDAW concluding comments.

### **Lessons Learned**

- Ensure coordination support by other NGOs and experts creates pressure on the state to take a positive approach in implementing its obligations.
- The use of shadow reports is highly effective in building support in international and national arenas. Success in the former with this tool is also useful in building pressure on the government to facilitate change.

# CONCLUDING REMARKS: 14 LESSONS LEARNED

The analysis of the practices revealed that in different parts of the region, there is still a variety of obstacles that constrain advocacy initiatives on women's rights and gender equality. Negative gender stereotypes and attitudes; lack of political will to enforce change; insufficient economic resources allocated for women's empowerment and gender equality programmes and so forth are some of the obstacles that women nowadays face. Correspondingly, the reforms and change introduced in these practices were realised through different approaches that tackled social, political and economic factors. The practices discussed in this report highlighted various approaches and strategies that contributed in achieving reforms or introducing new policies and attitudes towards gender equality. These practices thus can help offering some examples of how change should be sought, introduced, and approached.

## **1. Context specific but contesting reality**

Approaches of the practices were determined by several factors, such as, the political will, economic and political environment and barriers, challenges and opportunities available for change. For instance, in a context where the State has controlled spaces for freedom of expressions, like in Algeria, the creation of a virtual space for women to come together on the web and express themselves through the web radio was vital for ANFEC to reach women and educate the general public about taboo issues that are ignored by the owned and regulated media of the state. Virtual spaces on social media also used to disseminate information widely through materials that aimed at shocking the public and thus changing their attitudes towards violence against women, which is the approach that MARCH had successfully managed to do through the stunt film of domestic violence scene in the street.

## **2. Introducing change from within**

The good relationship with State's institutions and the possibility to introduce change from within, in some contexts, was an opportunity for some organisations to influence State' legal and political institutions. In Bulgaria, for example, the CWSP worked closely with municipalities' servants to conduct surveys on gender equality and policies within

the municipalities. By training and developing the capacity of servants on gender issues, the servants were empowered to survey issues related to gender and thus, the change was introduced from within the municipalities. The same approach was used by JOHUD, where the advocacy to protect women's inheritance rights and thus, empower them economically involved working with Ministries of social development, legal justice, and religious affairs. By doing this, JOHUD ensured that the proposed reform that was required in the inheritance provisions in the family laws would not meet any resistance at the government level.

### **3. Knowledge building and information sharing at the national and regional level**

Other practices used regional and international coalitions and mechanisms to influence public policies towards women. In Algeria, through the comparative study conducted in Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria concerning women's political participation, CIDDEF aimed to minimise resistance to the proposed quota system in the parliament. By involving an analysis and example from neighbouring countries that share similar contexts to that of Algeria, where quota system is successfully implemented, CIDDEF was successful in realising its goals of reforming the electoral laws and introduction of the quota system.

### **4. Building a solid regional support for national advocacy**

Coordination at the regional level, for some organisations, helped to influence national and regional policies equally, exchange of experience and capacity building of the CSOs at the national and regional level as well as enforcing policies regionally that could help them to advocate nationally. The 5050 campaign implemented by the EWL enhanced the political dialogue between different stakeholders and decision-makers for exchange of evidence based facts and stories of women across Europe as well as in individual member countries.

### **5. Research and shadow reporting as advocacy tools**

In other places, where there was lack of information about an issue and thus, resistance to address it publically was immense, like, the case of sexual violence campaign implemented by the ECWR in Egypt. Research, herein, was used as a first step to inform the general public and create a supporting environment for advocating for laws and policies to prohibit and criminalise sexual violence. Furthermore, it has also been used as a tool to hold government accountable towards their international commitments and obligations. GAF used shadow report to UN Treaty Bodies as an advocacy tool to introduce changes and reforms needed for eliminating all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls. The process included researching and monitoring state's compliance with CEDAW and other treaty bodies and regional mechanisms.

## **6. Mobilizing stakeholders to protect the already gained rights**

Whilst the majority of the practices aimed at using approaches to introduce change and reform, some practices aimed to protect the already achieved gains by the CSOs. That was particularly the case when there was a regression in relation to women's rights, such as the case of Egypt aftermath of the 25<sup>th</sup> January 2011 revolution. ADEW mobilised women, who were threatened by the proposed reforms to Custody Laws that intended to repeal the custody rights that women have enjoyed since the reform made to the family law in 2005. Thus, ADEW has not only opposed the change to custody laws through mobilisation of mothers and building a coalition of CSOs to counter state's proposal but also sent a strategic message that reversing the rights of women is not acceptable and would be resisted.

## **7. Turning target groups into key players**

The 12 practices have also been unique and successful in targeting different audiences, involving different actors and encouraging new players to take part in the advocacy for women's rights and the elimination of the GBV. The JCW turned youth from being a target group to key players in fighting the GBV. Through training and working closely with university students, youth created a film that told their stories with the GBV. By telling their stories, youth managed to reach wider audiences and find new ways of mobilising society against the GBV. Another example is the GEAR against IPV Campaign, which was implemented by the EAVN, which has targeted teachers, built their capacity to identify cases of IPV and provided the support and protection needed for the survivors of IPV. Teachers have become key actors and by this the practice sustained the work against violence against adolescents in the schools beyond the practice circle and activities.

## **8. Reaching out marginalized community**

The geographical locations of the practices also varied, whilst some organisations expanded the scope of the practice to urban and rural areas, some were more specific in targeting particular areas. Noticing that most of the CSOs in rural areas in the south of Morocco were male controlled and governed by patriarchal values, the AVFM practice focused on the Southern area of the country. It specifically targeted men and women through trainings, debates and workshops that addressed the issue of women's representation at the CSOs boards and encouraged women to take part at their associations' decision-making processes.

## **9. Changing laws as well as attitudes is pivotal in the advocacy related to gender equality**

As it is shown in the analysis, in most of the practices, the transformation of gender

normative ideology and values is one of the vital and significant goals to achieve equality at the levels of policymaking and society. To change attitudes, norms and inform policies, several organisations had first to deconstruct normative gender discourses and expose the false claims of anti-equality forces' rhetoric by offering facts and evidence-based research and information.

### **10. Dealing with opposition and resistance requires multiple and flexible approaches**

The difficulty in dealing with opposition is not only related to finding the right ways to approach it. More importantly, as several practices demonstrated, it is how to engage effectively with opposition without compromising principles of equality and justice. This particular issue was significant for achieving change and bringing women's rights on the agenda of decision making.

### **11. Neutralizing opponents**

One lesson in dealing with resistance generated from the practices in general is involving key players in trainings, design of the campaign or organising debates and encouraging dialogue with different groups before the start of the project. By this, some of the opposition members if not turned to be supporters are neutralised.

### **12. Empowerment should be both a tool and a goal**

One key aspect of the campaigns in the majority of the practices was concerned with the empowerment of key stakeholders: those that one seeks to advocate on behalf; the victims, the survivors and the marginalised. Several organisations successfully brought the voices of women out into the public domain to great effect. The subsequent success can be considered a result of two factors. Firstly, in empowering women and building their capacity to produce their own messages and campaigns, the impact of the campaign grows exponentially. Secondly, those with direct experience of the issue are the ultimate experts in the issue. As such, it is extremely hard for institutions to deny arguments created on these bases. Furthermore, as it has been seen in a number of examples above, public awareness and interest in an issue is much more sensitive to personal stories and situations relatable to their own. Therefore, women's ownership and engagement is a key part of any advocacy strategy seeking to address gender equality.

This last point is very significant as advocacy aims to ensure that the voices of the most vulnerable or affected are heard, that their rights are defended, respected, and that decisions makers take their views and concerns into account.

### **13. The power of combining strategies**

Most of the practices' advocacy strategies involved the use of several approaches at the same time, or in different phases of the campaign, such as targeting the media, producing facts-based research, involving high profile individuals, and developing advocacy materials and messages targeting one or various audiences. In a successful practice, as it was clear in most of them, there was a need to combine direct and indirect strategies in order to maximise the impact of the advocacy practice. Furthermore, it was also apparent in the successful practices that activists have to revisit and adjust their strategies to the changing environment, which may have resulted in modified strategies and altered ideas of campaigns' milestones.

### **14. Strategic Learning vs. Evaluation: Measuring the success**

For many practices, it was often difficult to measure the impact of advocacy work, not least because of the long-term nature of the issues which they were trying to change. In some cases, measurement of their contribution to a law reform or a change in social attitudes was easy to identify. In other circumstances the specific contribution, and therefore measurement of advocacy efforts, of a single organisation was difficult to measure through evaluations and surveys aimed at measuring the success. Measurement of success was often enhanced when there was strategic learning processes that aimed at learning from mistakes, pitfall, shortcomings, successes and achievements by doing and by paying close attention to target groups' reflections, engagement and thoughts on the practice.

“Practices from the field” presents 12 successful practices in advocacy and policy dialogue pertaining to gender equality, developed in the Euro-Mediterranean region. The 12 practices have been selected among 82 eligible practices within the framework of the CSO WINS Project, funded by the European Union. The identification of the practices started by a call for proposal for the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to submit an advocacy or a policy dialogue initiative considered to be successful in the political, economic, social and cultural field.

The selection was done taking into account criteria like the CSOs’ profile in relation to the experience they have in advocacy and policy dialogue, the effectiveness of the practice and if it has produced concrete results which effects continue in time, the innovation and the duplicability of the practice and the need for a geographical and thematic balance and representation of diversity within the Euro-Mediterranean region.

With the aim to foster the transfer of the lessons learnt, this analysis proposes approaches and tools (grassroots mobilization, capacity-building, lobbying, international human rights mechanisms and litigation and community organizing) to mobilize policy makers and public opinion in favor of women’s rights. Furthermore, the analysis is based on eight components: background, scope and objective, strategies, operational methods and activities, partnerships and engaging stakeholders, impact, critical factors for success and lastly lessons learned. This overview provides a tool to outline critical success factors that can be useful for all those actors willing to engage in policy dialogue and advocacy for gender equality.