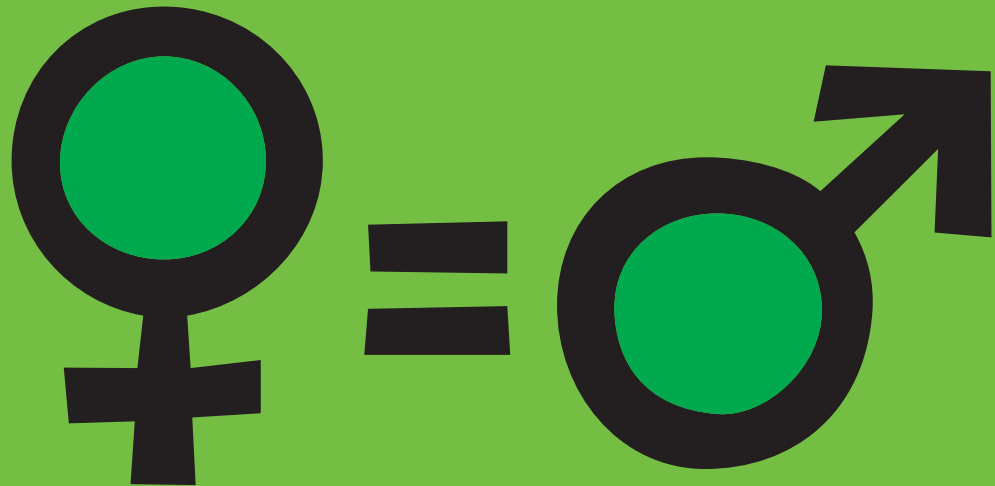


THE CHANGE MAKER'S TOOLKIT

A toolkit
for raising
awareness on
gender roles
& women's
political
participation
in the MENA
region



This toolkit is intended for the use of Change Makers working with men and women from their communities to support change in knowledge and attitudes on gender equality and women's political participation. It provides them with a series of tools for facilitating discussion during one-on-one conversations, meetings, and awareness-raising events. These tools include information on women's rights across the world and in the Arab region, a guide on how to answer frequently asked questions, and simple facilitation techniques (prompting questions, and games and quizzes).

I. WHAT IS LANA?

What is Lana?

Lana - Transformative Political Identities for Gender Equality in Jordan, Iraq and Lebanon is a project designed and implemented by Oxfam GB and partners in Lebanon (ABAAD), Jordan (ARDD-Legal Aid) and North Iraq (WEO) aiming at promoting gender equality and women's political participation in the Middle East region.

The project is constituted of **two initial phases**, the first of which directly addresses women's disempowerment and lack of participation in social, economic, and political spheres and specifically targets the following **root causes**: perception of women's role, power and control, and governance systems.

During phase I, the project will focus on the following:

- Building a base of men and women **change makers**, from diverse backgrounds;
- Working in their communities to **raise awareness** of gender roles and women's political participation thus driving change one individual at a time;
- And **increasing women's political participation** by bringing men and women together and empowering them to advocate for increased women's political participation.

The concept of change makers is centred on recruiting women and men who believe in gender equality and equal power relations. They are provided with **educational materials** and simple messages and in turn they start to change others and **recruit** more change makers who would carry on the same mission, **multiplying** the impact of the project.



Introduction to approach

In order to bring about sustainable and gender equitable changes in policies and practice in the region, Lana programme incorporates the following tools and strategies to shift gender thinking and policy, including:



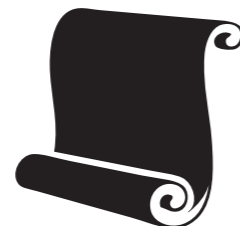
i. Campaign, advocacy and lobbying to ensure institutions and structures become more inclusive and accountable to women at all levels;



ii. Supporting new and existing women's organisations and coalitions to advocate for their rights and to link with and learn from others in the region and internationally;



iii. Challenging conservative attitudes and stereotypes, which erode women's rights and destabilise societies; and promoting women's leadership at all levels of society;



iv. Reforming laws and ensuring they are implemented in full so that women enjoy their rights in practice, not just in theory.

Aims, goal & objectives

The overall project goal is to create an environment where women and men reject all forms of discrimination that give rise to gender inequality, contributing to a more equal, violence-free and democratic society in the MENA region

Its specific objective is for women in the targeted communities of Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq to enjoy increased participation and decision making within the private and public sphere.

EQUAL VIOLENCE-FREE DEMOCRATIC

What is 'We Can'?

Lana project adopts the 'We Can' campaign methodology that was originally implemented by Oxfam and partners in South Asia. 'We Can' was a large scale, multi-year, multi-country attitude belief change campaign that has demonstrated an effective model of change that addresses a number of the above issues. The campaign launched in late 2004 in six South Asian countries – Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka – to reduce the social acceptance of violence against women. From the original 6 countries, the campaign's approach spread to Indonesia, the Netherlands, and Canada's British Columbia, and is now adopted in 14 countries across the globe.

The approach of the 'We Can' campaign is based on two interlinked models of change. The first relates to the process of attitude-belief-practice change

among individuals and is based on the 'Stages of Change theory' developed by psychologists Prochaska and DiClemente in 1982 and refined in 1992. This psychological theory of change has been further adapted by women's rights interventions in Uganda (Raising Voices) and South Asia (We Can End All Violence against Women campaign).



Why are we doing this?

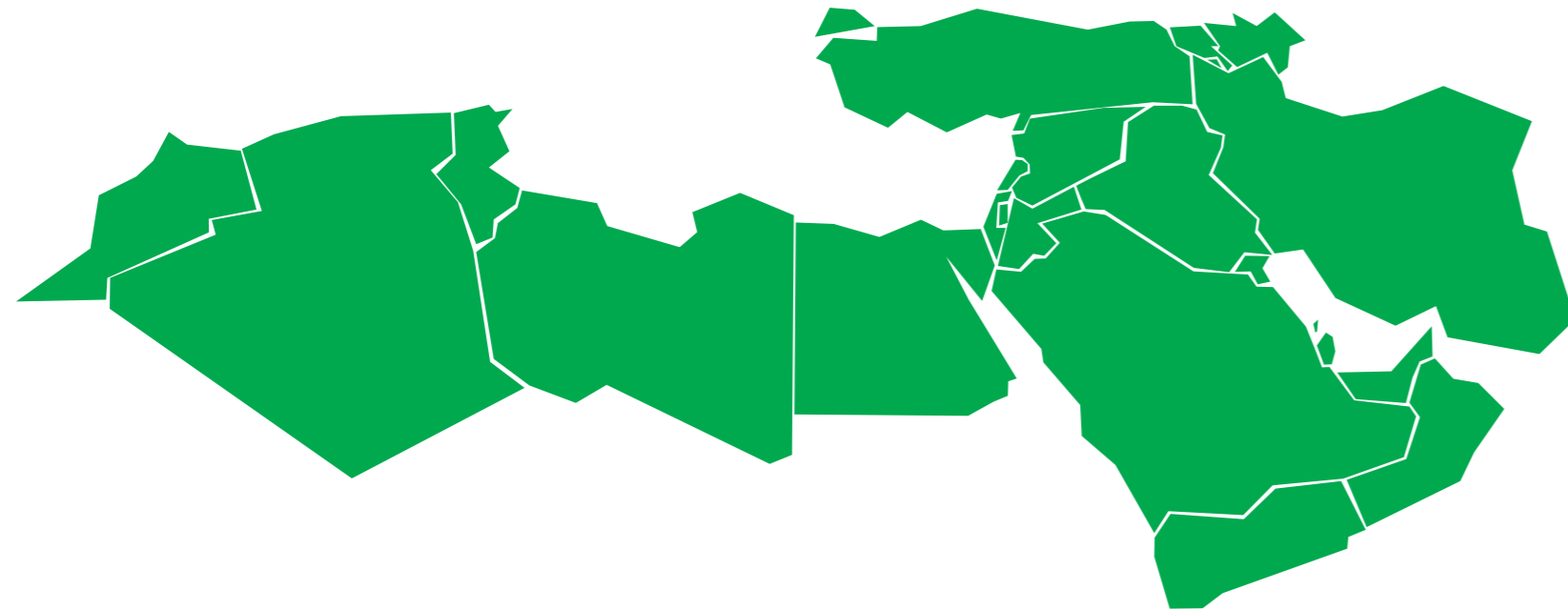
Around the world

- Only 21% of the gap in political empowerment between men and women has been closed.
- No country has an equal number of men and women in parliament.
- No country has achieved gender equality.



MENA region

- The MENA region has closed 59% of its overall gender gap in 2013.
- The region ranks the lowest in terms of providing economic opportunities for women closing only 39% of the gender gap, and in terms of empowering women to engage in political and leadership activities closing only 7% of the gap.
- 13 of the 20 countries with the lowest score on women's participation in the labour force are from the MENA.
- 7 of the countries ranking lowest in political empowerment of women are from the region. 1 of the only 2 countries scoring zero on women's political empowerment is also from the region.
- In terms of access to education for women, the region is in 5th place (before Sub-Saharan Africa).



The Arab World

- The Arab World is ranked by UNDP as the second-lowest region in the world on the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM).
- Arab women's representation in parliaments is the lowest in the world, with the world average standing at 16 percent while in the Arab world (excluding the Pacific region) it is only 6.5 percent.
- Patriarchy is still a major force hindering Arab women's advancement.
- Despite having equality among all citizens enshrined in most Arab states' constitutions, many laws within those states contradict with this.
- Across the Arab World, in laws governing social security, pensions, income tax, inheritance and criminal matters, women are not treated equally, nor do they enjoy all the benefits men do.
- Citizenship in many Arab states (Syria, Jordan, Lebanon) can only be derived through the father therefore women can not grant citizenship to her children.

Jordan

- Women make up 48.5% of the total population
- 14% of the women aged 15 and above are illiterate.
- In terms of political empowerment Jordan has been ranked 117th out of 177 countries
- Females enrol in schools at a higher rate than males (76.1 percent for women as compared to 71.9 percent for men) but only 12% of women are economically active.
- A quota for women in parliament was established in 2003, helping women succeed in winning some seats at the level of local municipals.
- Membership of women in Jordan's 32 registered political parties does not exceed 8 %.



Iraq

- In northern Iraq (Kurdistan Regional Government) a quota system granting 25% of the seats in the Parliament to women was established, resulting in more than 80 women who are currently in the parliament.
- Under the current government, there are no women ministers and the mandate of Ministry of Women's Rights is very limited.
- No government statistics on enrolment of girls in schooling, but official figures from the Iraqi Ministry of Education (MoE) show that even before the escalation of sectarian violence in February 2006, 1 in 6 girls did not attend primary school.



Lebanon

- The state devised no unified personal status law for all citizens legalizing the preferential treatment of men in sectarian codes.
- While the legal codes of the Muslim and Christian sects vary, the general pattern is a patriarchal bias, with all religious laws discriminating between women and men in a myriad of issues, including marriage and assignment of roles within the family.
- Men dominate the leadership of political parties, and amongst six major parties women's participation at the highest levels of decision making ranges from zero to 10 percent.
- Today, Lebanese women are virtually excluded from decision-making positions in both public and private sectors, lagging behind its regional neighbours

such as Iraq and Jordan, despite the fact that they are enjoying greater access to education services compared to majority of women in other parts of the MENA region

- There is not a single women minister and only 4 of 128 parliamentarians are women (a rate of 4.6% of female representation). All of these women were elected to these positions due to their familial connections to the country's political elite.



II. CHANGE MAKERS' FACILITATION TOOLS

About this section

This section includes tools and resources for the change makers to use in their sessions and meetings with community members. It will include the following:

- 1. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ):** This is a list of questions that will serve as a tool for the change makers to support them in addressing and answering the questions they will be frequently asked. The objective of these FAQs is to address common issues that apply to the three countries where the project is being implemented.
- 2. Prompt questions:** These are controversial statements or questions that change makers could use to launch a discussion on women's participation and gender equality with the community members.
- 3. Simplified material on gender basics**

Frequently Asked Questions about Lana



- Do religious institutions deter women from participating in political/public life?

All religious texts and books call for the respect of women and their rights.

- How do I deal with resistance? For example, if someone from the community doesn't agree with the ideas I'm proposing, how do I respond?

One of the best ways to deal with conflict or resistance is through dialogue and peacefully engaging the resisting individual or the group of individuals the notions that the project is addressing. Try showing them, with concrete examples, the negative consequences of the lack of women's participation in decision making on the family and entire community. One such example is the detrimental effect of the inability of poor and marginalised Yemeni women to access social services on their children and families.

- This project is based on the 'We Can' campaign model, implemented by Oxfam partners in South Asia. Given the different context, what guarantees the success of the project in the context of our region?

The project adopts 'We Can' campaign methodology and model as the basis for action. The campaign

is a large scale, multi-year, multi-country attitude belief change campaign implemented by Oxfam GB in South Asia. The 'We Can' approach originally started in 5 South Asian countries in 2004, and has since then been adopted in 14 countries across the globe, addressing a number of issues such as violence against women and advocating women's involvement in decision-making on services, policies and legal frameworks. This approach has hence proved to be an effective model of change, and implementing it in the MENA region, taking into account the specificities of its cultural and political context will surely reap significant results.

• Why do women need to participate in public/ political life, if their role is to take care of the home and family?

Women make up half of the world's population and hence half of every society; and being a significant part of the population, they are entitled to political representation that puts forward their needs and demands.

Unfortunately, societies are shaped by gender differences and inequalities which in turn shape the way decisions are made and resources are allocated. When it comes to gender inequalities everyone loses

– women, men, boys, girls, communities and the economy. However, it is women and girls who face the most discrimination as a result of gender inequalities. Gender inequalities could result in women being restricted from participation in a meetings or activities outside the home, due to a variety of reasons such as having children but no access to childcare or social services, not having the money to pay for transport, or cultural barriers to engaging in public activities. Hence, it's gender inequality that defines women's role as limited to caring for the home and family; participation in public/ political life is a need and a right for both men and women. Gender equality entails women's and men's equal participation in public life and the sharing of the household duties and child care. Women's participation in political life can also support and empower their families just like men's contribution to domestic life enriches and supports the family. Lana is set to shift perspectives on women's roles and the significance of their participation in political life, to ensure gender equality.

• Aren't women's rights already respected? Don't they have their full rights?

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region still lags far behind other regions in the world when it comes to the status of women. Patriarchy, conservative religious interpretations and cultural stereotyping are major forces in hindering the advancement of women. In our part of the world, it is assumed that women's most important role is that of home-makers and mothers. Strong adherence to traditional gender roles means that women shoulder the burden of most of the household and childcare responsibilities, further reducing their chances of participating in the labour market and in civil and political life.

Despite having equality among all citizens enshrined in most Arab states' constitutions, many laws within those states stand in contradicton with this. Citizenship in many Arab states (Syria, Jordan, Lebanon) can only be derived through the father as citizenship laws legally codified patrilineality in citizenship laws. Penal codes across the Arab region enforce preferential treatment between women and men and discriminate against women, particularly in provisions related to rape, honour crimes, adultery and the absence of provisions criminalizing domestic

violence. Contradiction with the stipulations of Arab constitutions are most obviously seen in personal status laws across the region. Personal status laws govern all matters of domestic/family life such as marriage, spousal disputes, divorce, child custody, alimony and inheritance. In Iraq and Jordan, personal status laws are governed by the Shari'a and in Lebanon, the state has devolved the family law to the 18 officially recognised sects in the country that operate religious courts of personal status independent from state courts. Personal status laws are therefore seen the primary site of discrimination against women due to the patriarchal bias of religious texts and patriarchal clerics' abuse of authority.

An Oxfam Research Report by Drs Sylvana Hamieh and Jinan Usta on 'The Effects of Socialization on Gender Discrimination and Violence: A Case Study from Lebanon' published in March 2011 asserts that violence against women (VAW) is widespread in many countries in the MENA; exercised in the household, community, and public institutions. The report cites a UNIFEM study on VAW in Syria in 2005 indicating that 'in 56 per cent of the cases studied, women were mistreated and cursed by male heads of households to punish them for 'mistakes' that they had committed'. Citing numbers from a UNFPA-supported study conducted in 2002 in Lebanon showing that

35% of the 1415 women interviewed were victims of domestic violence and affirming Jordan's 'serious problem of domestic violence and honour killing', the report concluded that 'VAW still receives the least recognition and acknowledgment by Arab states and policymakers of all gender-related issues.' Linking between the 'existing system' and violence against women, the report stated that 'in many parts of the MENA region patriarchal systems and tribal culture continue to prevail.'

• Why are we working on women's rights? What about men, shouldn't we advocate for their rights too?

While it's true that men are exposed to violence in certain situations, especially conflicts and wars, several surveys and studies show that women, across all countries, are the primary victims of violence and discrimination, in rates much higher than men.

Prompt Questions

Questions on women's traditional role

• Why would women need to participate in political life?

Women are more fit to work at home and don't need to engage in public activities

• Who would take care of the kids and keep the house clean?

Women's natural role is to take care of the kids and keep the house clean and men's is to work outside and represent the family in public.

• Aren't women's opinions the same as their fathers'/brothers'/husbands'?

Women don't have opinions or contributions, their opinions are always the same as the men in their families, the men in their families represent them.

• Will their husbands/fathers allow them to go out and engage in public activities?

Women live under their fathers' or husbands' authority and they will not be allowed to go out and engage in such activities.

• Won't this behaviour (going out and engaging in public activities) encourage the women's children to disobey and challenge paternal authority?

Women's participation in public/political activities serves to encourage her children to disobey their father.

• Won't a woman's participation in public and political activities pose a threat to her safety and/or her reputation?

Participating in public or political activities threatens women's safety and harms her reputation.



Questions on the overall environment

- Aren't there more immediate needs than women's participation in political life, such as security threats, staying safe from explosions and working to making ends meet?

There are many needs that we need to address first before we demand political participation of women, such as creating job opportunities to make ends meet for us and our families; and staying safe from explosions and terrorist attacks.

- Doesn't having women in municipal councils and parliaments need a political will to be implemented? Is our work enough to advocate for it?

The participation of women in parliaments or municipal councils needs a political will and needs political leaders to accept to put a quota system into action. Our work won't influence their decision to implement it.

- Won't we be defying our religion and culture if we push for women's engagement outside the home in public and political activities?

Our culture and religion are against this. In our society(ies), women belong in the home and any work to change that is against our culture and religion and the values we believe in.



Questions on Lana's added value

- Isn't this project designed to be implemented in a Western society or a West-influenced society?

This project is not designed to be implemented in our societies as it doesn't take into account our context.

- Why do you think this training will give good results here; we participated in many similar training sessions with different organizations but nothing changed?

This is not the first time we receive a similar training, many NGOs came here and did the same but everything is still the same.

- What will happen after we finish training and you leave? What's next?

After this training session, everything will end and we won't do anything.

- How will you know that this training will be fruitful, how will you guarantee that there will be an impact?

You can never know whether this training will come up with good results or that we will follow up with efficient impactful activities.



Simplified Gender material

Sex vs. Gender	
Sex	Gender
The biological condition of being male/female	The different social roles that define women and men in a specific cultural context
It doesn't change and is universal	Varies with time, place, society, religion, culture, etc...

Points to keep in mind

- Gender roles are socially constructed, maintained and reinforced ways of being: masculine/feminine
- Age, race and class are major factors which determine our gender roles
- Social expectations about appearances, qualities, behaviour and work
- Acquired and learnt from culture
- What is held as proper behaviour for women and men varies from culture to culture
- Women are discriminated against based on their gender: they often have **less access** to power, status, resources, choice and benefits than men.
- Boys may face as much pressure as girls to conform to their gender roles
- The pressure comes from many places – family, friends, school, religion, traditions, and the media
- Since gender roles are created through the process of socialisation, they can also be de-constructed and re-defined with more equitable distribution of power, responsibilities and expectations of women and men.

III. GAMES & QUIZZES

Games on Gender

The 'OK/Not OK' game

- The change maker **shows** participants a series of statements/situations to discuss and decide if situations are 'OK' or not. The change maker tells the group that the purpose of the game is to **sort** these statements into **two categories**: Situations that they think are ok or acceptable in one category and unacceptable situations/Not OK in another category.
- The change maker then **discusses** the statements, one by one and then asks the group to decide whether the situation is acceptable or not. The change maker helps the group reach a **consensus**.
- Next, the change maker **reviews** all the OK category statements, and asks the group if anyone is feeling fear or hurt or if anyone finds the situation **unfair**.
- If any of the participants actually feels that the situation was hurtful or unfair, the change maker would ask the entire group again if it still is OK, and would **discuss** the situation **further**.
- If the group of participants is very aware, all Not OK statements would fall in the Not OK category. But if that doesn't happen, the change maker doesn't need to worry, because she/he had identified the ideas that are still unclear to the group and will have the chance to focus on these later.
- In what follows is the list of statements/situations:

	OK	Not OK
Woman eating last		
Physical Violence		
Sexual Violence		
Woman ill, man not helping in housework		
Boy is going to school, girl is doing housework		
A very young girl is married		
Woman is distracted, remembering the violence she faced		
Woman does not have money to spend on herself		
Man of the house is not allowing woman to go out		
Working couple is back home. The husband is relaxing, the wife is making tea		
Only male community leaders		
Woman eating together with other members of the family		
Husband taking ill woman to the hospital		

	OK	Not OK
Couple taking equal responsibility in their children's education		
Girl is happy, able to go out independently and study		
Couple handling a conflict through discussion		
Couple spending time to talk and listen to each other		
Couple deciding on money and investments together		
Woman is confidently stopping her husband from being violent with her		
Couple sharing household work		
Woman going out, husband taking care of children		
Couple spending leisure time together		
Female and male community leaders		

THE 'OK/ NOT OK' GAME

Batch 1/2



THE 'OK/ NOT OK' GAME

Batch 2/2



The Personal is Political exercise

- The change makers give an example of the power and/or of gender dynamics of what they thought was a purely personal issue from their own life or the life of an invented someone they know. It might also be an invented situation that has not really happened with someone they know, but that is a common

situation. It might be a situation at work; for example:

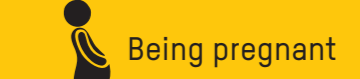
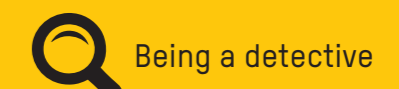
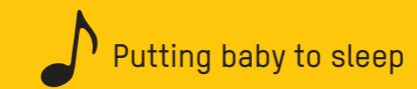
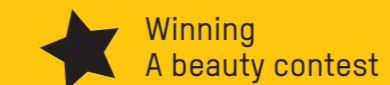
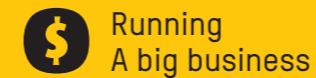
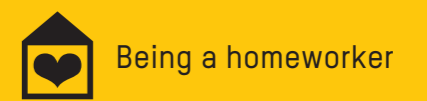
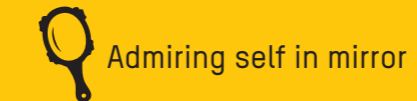
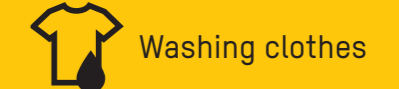
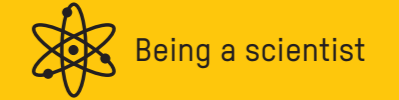
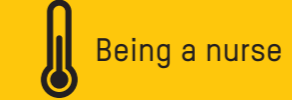
"A male colleague at work in exactly the same role as me (a woman) is being treated very differently by our male bosses – being supported and given development opportunities, while I am not. The quality of our work is identical. He is getting promoted before me and will earn more, but above all, it's so frustrating because I don't feel valued for doing a job that I otherwise love."

- While this might seem as a **personal** issue, it highlights a **political** issue revolving around gender-based discrimination and affecting women in the workplace in general, and not only the person mentioned in the situation above.

- The change maker **discusses** this situation with the participants highlighting the ways that they could use to approach this as an issue that **should not remain personal**, but rather a more **general, structural** and **political** one.
- This exercise trains participants on identifying the practices and structures that perpetuate gender-based discrimination, and on seeing discriminatory behaviour as a general issue that affects women everywhere, rather than a personal situation.

The Gender Card Game

- The objective of this game is to establish that men and women are basically the same, and that the only fixed difference between men and women is **biological**. All other differences are created by **society** and **change** from place to place; culture to culture.
- The change maker would use 19 small cards with the below statements, and 3 cardboards (categories): Men, Women, Both.
- First, the change maker **places** the men and women cardboards in **two corners** of the room, and after giving each participant one of the 19 cards, **asks them to decide** whether the activity shown in their card is usually, in their society, done by men or women.
- The participants would then, each **read out** their cards by turn and proceed to **stand** in the men or women corner of the room.
- In the second part of the game, the change maker **introduces** the **'Both'** cardboard and then **asks** that the participants who feel that the activity on their card can be done by both men and women, shift from their 'Men' or 'Women' corner to the 'Both' corner. Those who don't shift can then **explain** their point of view to everyone and launch a **debate** within the group on the subject.
- As the participants discuss each situation, they will find that **17 of the 19** activities on the cards end up in the 'Both' corner. Only the 'Growing a beard' activity would remain in the 'Men' corner and the 'Being pregnant' remains in the 'Women' corner.
- The activity cards are found on the next page.





Sex, Gender, Fact or Stereotype?

The change maker would list the below statements and have the participants guess which are related to sex, and hence is a fact; and which relates to gender and is socially constructed, hence a stereotype.

	Sex	Gender	Fact	Stereotype
Men are more rational than women so they make decisions about money		X		X
Women breastfeed babies, men bottle feed babies	X		X	
Women give birth to babies, men don't	X		X	
Most community leaders are men		X	X	
Men's voices break at puberty, women's do not	X		X	
Women in Lebanon are paid on average 61% of men's wage, in Jordan 68%. However, in Oman they make 79% - amongst the highest levels of gender wage parity in the world		X	X	
Women are homemakers, men are politicians		X		X
Women are more emotional and vulnerable under pressure		X		X
Women do not want to be the head of households		X		X
Men are more capable of making political decisions than women		X		X

Exercise on Governance: The Decision Making Power Walk

- Change makers **give** participants cards with short descriptions of an **'identity'** written on them – men and women in an imaginary community with different roles and characteristics vis-à-vis local decision-making and community.
- The change-maker gives each participant a character (below); all participants will start off in a **straight line** reflecting **Article 1** of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: "All are born free and equal in dignity and rights".
- The change-maker then asks participants to **listen** to the statements (below) and for every statement to which the character they are representing could answer yes, they should take **one step forward**. Those characters to whom the answer would be no, or is unclear, should **remain** in place.

Power Walk Characters

- I am a middle age man who owns land in the village and outside
- I am a 70 year old widow, living with my son, wife and children at the outskirts of the village
- I am the village leader
- I am a 17 year old woman, with 2 young children who still do not go to school
- I am a 25 year old man, working seasonally as a labourer for various landlords
- I am a 12 year old girl, just finishing primary school

- I am a divorced mother of 3 children, and own 2 cows
- I am a male construction worker, and I have migrated to the capital for work
- I am the local religious leader
- I am a female nurse who visits the village twice a month
- I am the primary school teacher, a woman from the capital, living with a local family
- I am a boy of 15; lost both parents and I make a living with casual work
- I am a 47 year old woman, member of a local saving group

- I am a money lender
- I am a 23 year old woman, and I've just moved into the village as the second wife of the local landlord
- I am a married woman, member of a local saving group
- I am 19 years man, at University in the capital but originally from the village
- I am a 12 year old girl, just finishing primary school
- I am a man recently displaced from my village by conflict
- I am a sex worker and was forced to leave my home by my family
- I work for a local women's group.

Power Walk statements

- I don't have to worry about doing household chores and/or childcare
- If I want money to be spent differently in my household, it will be
- I can easily attend local council or community meetings
- I don't have to worry about harassment at work or in other places
- I am confident that I will not be judged for my appearance
- I can take independent decisions about myself and my family
- I have a secure source of sufficient income
- I can make independent choices about my sexual life
- I feel I have a say in how my community is run
- I have options of which work I want to do, and can choose myself
- People in the family listen to me and value my opinion

- I have time and opportunity to meet with friends
- I have savings
- I am well informed of local and national events
- I have easy access to higher education
- I have a support network of people
- I can trust legal systems and services to protect my rights
- I have the right to own land and such right is realised in practice
- I can be politically active without dangers or threats.

Discussion

1. Identify who are those at the front? Why are they at the front?

Because they know and have the capacities to exercise their rights

2. Who are those at the back? Why are they at the back?

They are disempowered. They have no knowledge and capacity. Therefore they cannot exercise their rights.

3. Do we agree that those at the back are predominantly rights-holders while those at the front are predominantly duty-bearers? How does this relate to you and your gender leadership?

4. What is then the purpose of Oxfam in programming and addressing these issues of inequality, discrimination?

Exercise on Social Accountability and decision-making

In this exercise, the change maker guides participants through identifying the issues they want to focus on and how to plan for the change they want to see; they would also help them map the actors/parties with the highest influence/power in their context.

1. Local decision-making exercise – what, who and how?

A lack of information can be an important barrier to women's participation in decision-making. If they don't know how decision-making processes work, then it is very difficult for them to get involved. In our programmes, we should **identify** what **information** women need and support them to get this information in a format or means that is appropriate to them. This might mean providing information ourselves or making it clear where such information can be found.

2. Mapping who holds power in our community

The change maker helps participants identify the major **players and influencers** in local decision

making on the group's chosen **issue**. Knowing who holds power in any given situation is crucial.

First, they discuss and agree over the **level** of decision making that they need to look at.

For example:

Participants can discuss who is powerful and influential in relation to the problem of the poor quality of health services for women in their community. So, should we look at:

1. Local government overall decision making and expenditure on healthcare?
2. The quality of all local healthcare?
3. Or the quality of maternal healthcare specifically?

• Mapping like this can help the participants find out how people are **connected** and who seems to be the most **influential**. It is a good idea to make the **map** as a group exercise

• Following this exercise, participants would discuss the finding of their power analysis:

- Are they **surprised** by what the results?
- **Who** are the most influential players/actors in their context?
- Whom do they have good **relationships** with?
- And who can they influence to help make the **changes** they're seeking?

IV. CASE STUDIES & TESTIMONIES FROM OTHER OXFAM PROJECTS

Ali Raad, beneficiary of Oxfam's EVAW (Ending Violence Against Women) programme, Lebanon

"SINCE THEN, I STARTED TO ANALYZE MY BEHAVIORS"

I started to be active in social work since 2006 when I first attended training on conflict resolution at my college, which introduced me briefly to gender concepts. Since then I had a curiosity to learn more about it. I didn't know what it was really about until I attended the training organized by Kafa in 2009.

The training methodology was based on brain storming and participatory approach which helped me question and challenge myself regarding all what I believed in. Suddenly all what I learned from tradition and practices with my

conservative society started to shake.

Since then, I started to analyze my behaviors, and discovered I did in fact practice violence a lot in my relationships with my sister and girlfriends. I used to find excuses for my anger, but later when I started to control my behaviors, I became calmer and a more understanding person, which increased my self esteem and changed other people's perspective of me.

When I was nominated as one of the men's forum to end Violence against Women, I felt how much confidence was given to me to act as a role model for other men in my community.

Later on, I was involved in a research on GBV in my community. I discovered how much GBV is common and is practiced everyday

in our life. I felt the same when I was exposed to Oxfam experience in India under the "We can" campaign. Even halfway across the globe, the problem remains the same: cultural norms and traditions represent the major obstacle to end GBV.

I was really enthusiastic to share what I have learnt with others. Even though I started to discuss the issue within different focus groups, I couldn't believe that I will be able to convince others about GBV, but eventually I did, and was surprised I could get their support. Most of whom I trained turned out to become supporters and alliances; they helped spread the message.

It worked like magic, I was empowered to contribute to ending GBV, I started to believe in change and value what I am doing.

Gia, participant, Oxfam's WAJ (Women's Access to Justice) awareness-raising sessions, Iraq

“THE PRESSURE FROM MY FAMILY AND COMMUNITY WAS SO BIG THAT I ACTUALLY TOOK THEM TO THE ‘CIRCUMCISER’, BUT I COULDN’T GO THROUGH WITH IT”

When I was a child, I was a victim of female genital mutilation, and I still remember the pain I endured. Despite all the pain I remember going through, I wanted to do the same for my two daughters, Asia and Maria.

During the awareness-session on personal status law I have attended, Nisreen (paralegal) also talked about FGM and explained the damages of such practices, and it really made me think. I decided that I don't want to circumcise my daughters, but the pressure from my family and community was so big that I actually took them to the "circumciser", but I couldn't go through with it. I don't want them to suffer as I did.

I consider all the information I got from the session to be very important, it has changed my life

and that of my daughters. I wish all women can have access to the same information.

Myriam, beneficiary of Oxfam's WAJ (Women's Access to Justice) project, Lebanon

“I WAS ASHAMED BUT MY UNBEARABLE PAIN AND MISERY GAVE ME THE COURAGE TO CALL THE HOTLINE NUMBER AND ASK FOR AN APPOINTMENT”

My name is Myriam, I am 45 years old. I am not married but have been continuously exposed to rape and exploitation since I was 16 years.

My parents died a long time ago and I was living with my brother in a house composed from two rooms. I left school at the age of 14 and I had to take care of the house.

One night I woke up and saw him sitting on my bed and when I asked him what he's doing he said he came to check on me. The next time he didn't give me a chance to defend myself where he raped me and threatened to kill me if I will tell anyone about what he did and kept on doing all these years.

Two months ago I was taking a sewing class; I was surprised with our teacher saying that we weren't going to work on sewing that day but will instead attend an

awareness session on Personal Status Law.

At first I was annoyed because I didn't know what PSL means, but after a few minutes, I became attracted and actively listened to what was being explained. I then knew that there are rules that would protect me from my brother. I was ashamed but my unbearable pain and misery gave me the courage to call the hotline number and ask for an appointment and use this chance to free myself. It was the first time I felt there was someone who really cares for me and wants to help me. JWF helped me to file a lawsuit at court against my brother and provided me with a shelter to remain in.

Hawar Majid, beneficiary of Oxfam's WAJ (Women's Access to Justice) project, Iraq

“AFTER KNOWING MORE ABOUT MY RIGHTS; I DECIDED TO ASK FOR SUPPORT IN ORDER TO GET MY RIGHTS WITH THE HELP OF THE LAW”

My name is Hawar and I am 25 years old. My husband divorced me without my knowledge, forced me to leave the house in which we lived for 5 years, and took all my properties. I had to go back to Chamchamal and live with my parents; I had decided not to sue him, because I was convinced that I would not get anything out of it because as a man, he gets all the rights and I don't get anything. I have participated in an awareness session held by Asuda in Shorsh. I used to be afraid and shy of speaking about my case.

I attended an awareness-raising session with Asuda and after knowing more about my rights; I decided to ask for support in order to get my rights with the help of the law. The paralegal put me in contact with Asuda lawyer who helped me file a lawsuit against

my ex-husband and I was able to get my financial rights (delayed dowry) in one court hearing.

I think that my participation in the awareness session had a significant impact on increasing my self-confidence; this is why I had decided to go to court.

Faten, beneficiary of Oxfam's WAJ (Women's Access to Justice) project, Lebanon

“I WAS ABLE TO STAND AGAIN AND SEARCH FOR A JOB, EVEN IN CLEANING HOUSES. BUT ALL WHAT I WANTED WAS TO GET MY SON”

I ran away from a very strict and conservative family and married a foreigner. I thought he was a good person, but after marriage I realized that I had entered a prison and got married to an alcoholic and drug addict.

He used to rape me savagely, even during my pregnancy, he even threw me on the street once; I didn't have a home anymore.

The police caught my husband and sent him to prison after he was convicted of possession of drugs and other things. His family took the baby from me and forbade me from seeing him.

Hayat Fakhreddine [paralegal] accidentally heard about my story and told me about Justice Without Frontiers and that they provide free legal services.

I went to JWF where the lawyer explained the legal procedure and what I can ask for at the court: I can get a divorce and put a travel ban on my child so that my husband's family can't take my son outside of Lebanon.

JWF also helped me to get into a safe shelter where I was able to stand again and search for a job, even in cleaning houses. But all what I wanted was to get my son.

After this consultation, I felt safer and trusted that JWF can help me get my son back and raise him even if I am alone. My son is temporarily with me now until a sentence is issued, but I'm confident I will win this lawsuit.

Links & resources

- <http://www.wecanendvaw.org/>
- <http://raisinghervoice.ning.com/>
- Partners' websites and Facebook pages: ABAAD, CFUWI, WEO and ARDD.

Our partners



Women Empowerment Organization (WEO) is a non-governmental, voluntary and independent organization. Established in June 2004 in Erbil, Iraq, the main goal of W.E.O. is to consolidate women's roles and capabilities in the Iraqi community through enhancing their social, political, economic and cultural participation. W.E.O. promotes women's and human rights, gender equity, economic engagement and political participation and seeks to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women.



ARDD-Legal Aid promotes and defends human rights through litigation and free legal services to marginalized people, especially refugees and migrants. It empowers citizens and government institutions to develop justice and peace in Jordan as well as the wider Middle East.



اللجنة الأهلية لمتابعة قضايا المرأة
Committee for the Follow-Up on Women's Issues

The Committee for the Follow-Up on Women's Issues (CFUWI) was formed on October 19th, 1993, in preparation of the Beijing convention to stage an effective participation on behalf of the Lebanese women. CFUWI seeks to develop the participation of women on all levels: social, economic and political, to eliminate all types of discrimination against women, and to mainstream gender within national policies.



ABAAD - Resource Center for Gender Equality is a non-profit, non-politically affiliated, non-religious civil association that aims to achieve gender equality as an essential condition to sustainable social and economic development in the MENA region. ABAAD seeks to promote women's equality and participation through policy development, legal reform, gender mainstreaming, engaging men, eliminating discrimination, and advancing and empowering women to participate effectively and fully in their communities.

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Oxfam GB Gender Equality Hub promotes gender equality in the Middle East and North Africa region. Our aim is that women can realise and voice their rights, enjoy a life free from violence with mechanisms for social and legal protection, and become equal contributors in the development of their respective communities, hence breaking the cycle of violence and exclusion. In our work, we link up our direct assistance to poor women with national, regional and global advocacy and campaigning work. Our advocacy work is informed by research. We have more than 16 partners in the region. Our partnership approach is based on acknowledging the added value of national partners, and promotes trust and mutual support.

For further information, please visit Oxfam website at www.oxfam.org.uk

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