

YOUTH LEAD FOR GENDER EQUITY, LEARNING DOCUMENT



Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the
Netherlands



Drabzeen
HUMAN DEVELOPMENT
دريزين التنمية البشرية

ابشري... احنا سندك
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WE4L
Women Empowered for Leadership

Hivos
people unlimited



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PREFACE

Drabzeen adopts a Human Right Based Approach (HRBA), focusing on advocacy through youth empowerment and community-based initiatives. It serves as a forum for youth to advocate, learn, and discuss human rights, democracy, and political participation. A variety of tools and strategies are used to achieve this, such as casual talks, debate tools, and social media.

Hivos was founded in 1968, inspired by humanist values. The founders held the conviction that development work should be secular, as true cooperation presumes respect for differing beliefs. Hivos believes that human life in its many forms is valuable and that people are filled with potential. Living a life in freedom and dignity, with respect for each other and the planet, leads to greater individual well-being and fair, vibrant societies.

Women Empowered for Leadership (WE4L) program uses a combination of advocacy, skills training, knowledge tools, and coalition-building. The program works directly with potential women leaders, as well as with political parties, trade unions, civil society organizations, the media, and the creative sector. In WE4L, Hivos and the local partners provide strategic, media, and communication expertise. The focus is at the sub-national level where most practical issues that concern women are usually prioritized. The expectation is that a woman who starts her leadership journey at the sub-national level is likely to gather experience to enable her to lead at the national level.

KEY OBJECTIVES

Hivos' partnership with Drabzeen's focused on empowerment through advocacy as a social change for enhancing women's political and economic participation in Jordan to lead to the project's outcomes.

These outcomes are to:



Enhance decision-maker and community-based organizations (CBOs) engagement in empowering women at the local and national levels



Address social and cultural perceptions towards women in leadership and their engagement



Empower the youth to actively participate in/advocate for advancing gender equality and the role of women in leadership

Drabzeen has contributed to achieving WE4L Outcome 3: The general public increasingly recognizes and supports women in leadership positions through achieving two objective; positive media portrayal of women leadership and its relevance and increasing proportion of target population that is supportive of women equal political participation

CONTEXT

EMPOWERED YOUTH CAN AND DO MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

63% of its population under the age of 30, Jordan has one of the youngest populations in the world. Jordan's 2016-2025 National Strategy for Human Resource Development has identified youth development, engagement, and empowerment as national priorities. Advocacy is a core process for addressing inequity and disparities, therefore we engage grassroots youths, both females and males in bringing the issue of gender disparities to the forefront of the agenda for decision-makers, by building awareness, visibility, and public momentum.

Male and female youth are engaged in the programs from marginalized and distant areas of different governorates in Jordan. Encouraging cautious consideration of local community and cultural specificity in initiatives planning shall gain the support of the community and ease obstacles and accelerate change when discussing controversial topics linked to popular beliefs related to the role of leadership of women. Therefore, youth advocacy invisible assets create this momentum for change and include unspoken factors contributing to change: relationships and networking, tacit knowledge, and energy.

WHY ADVOCATE?

Advocacy can be understood as a range of activities conducted to influence others and goes beyond seeking sustainable changes in political and public contexts. The aspiration is to build a community momentum by the influence of the knowledge, attitudes, and, ultimately, behaviors of individuals at the community level and enhancing means of convincing policymakers to fulfill their human responsibilities to others.



Advocacy



Focal Point



Ambassadors

The youth advocacy work has created focal point representatives and **Ambassadors**. Through tools, the Ambassadors disseminate the skills and knowledge gained in their regions, collaborate in creating creative initiatives and solutions emanating from the community itself. The interventions rely mainly on advocacy for promoting women's political and economic participation and empowering young people with knowledge, and skill.

The tools are needed to be ambassadors of change and leaders in their regions. As a case in point,

social media platforms are used as a tool to send messages, educate and advocate for gender and women rights, increase the broadcast of women leaders and inspire other women. Implementing grassroots youth advocacy training and Café Talks in Jordanian governorates to engage communities in dialogue, consultation, and participation – based on understanding their local context and eventually advocate for women's public participation and create change in the perception of females in leadership positions.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

A survey at the national level was used to identify the prevalent challenges that women face from reaching leadership positions. The survey also sought to understand women's level of awareness on 'Women's political and Public Participation'.

A total of 1,870 respondents filled in the survey, **28.29% male** and **71.71% female**.

agreed that there is a need to raise awareness



The results of the survey gave an insight of the Jordanian context regarding gender stereotypes, cultural norms, women empowerment, and women in leadership positions.



81.27% among the local community about the importance of women's leadership role in the community with the highest in Zarka, Mafraq Aqaba, and Maan



62.58% expressed the need to enhance CSOs networking to empower women economically (Aqaba and Maan)



82.72% called for the need to raise awareness about raising children with leadership and non-gender discriminatory raising



82.53% expressed the need to change school curriculum



70.32% agreed that there is a need to improve the transportation sector (Aqaba Maan Jerash)



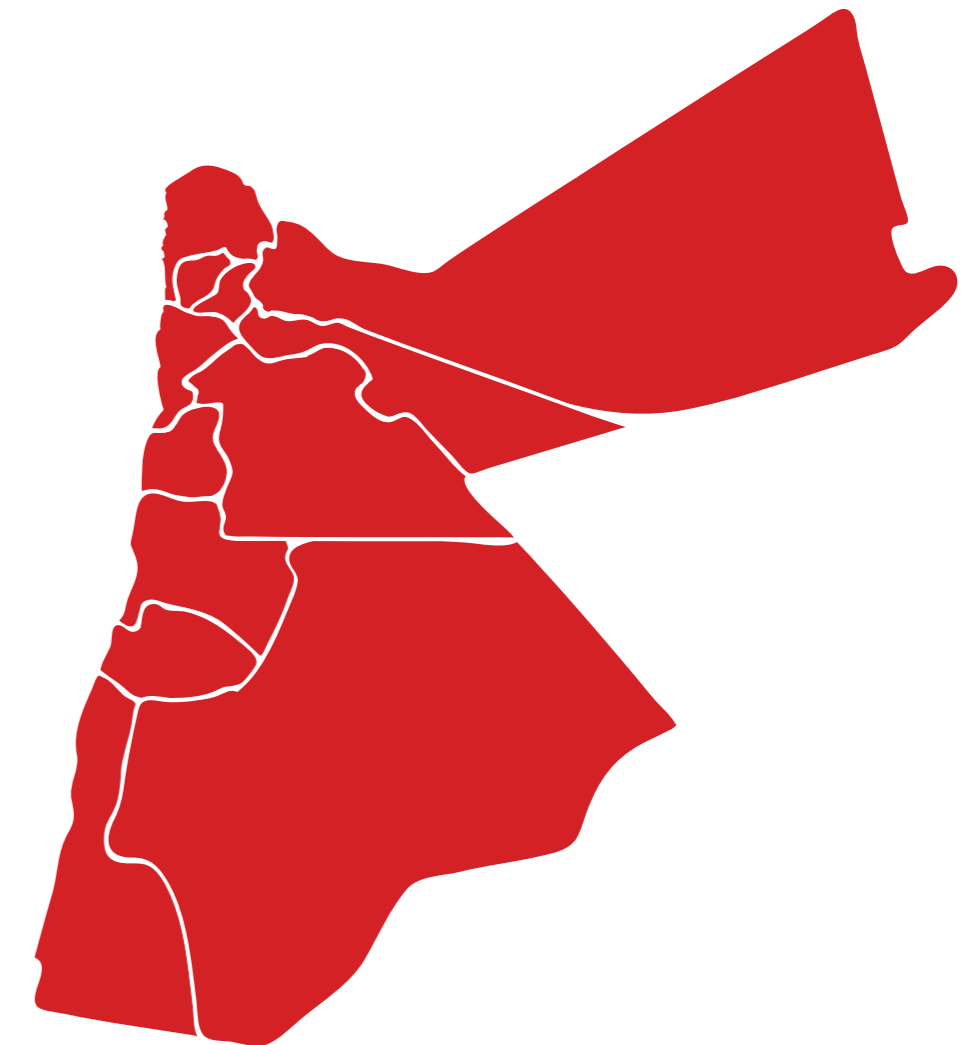
84.63% expressed the need for media to focus and highlight the women's achievements and issues (Mafraq Zarka- Balqa)



73.14% expressed the need to raise awareness



83.23% expressed the need for open dialogue within the community (Mafraq Zarka Jerash Madaba)

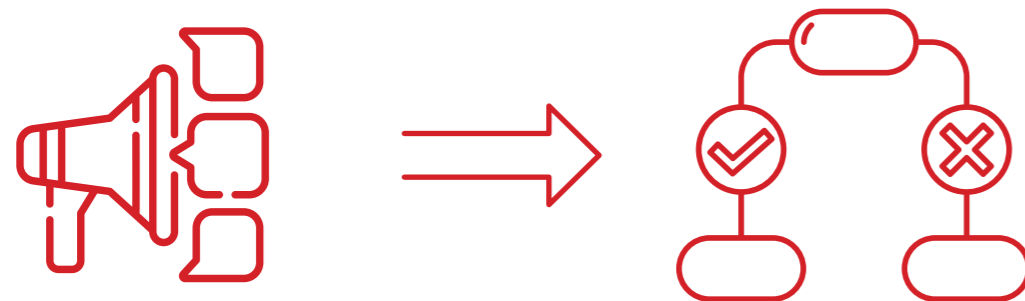


Within this context, Drabzeen adopted the 'insider' and 'insider-outsider' strategies to gain legitimacy, create the political will for action, on the way to policy change and social transformation. By mobilizing constituents to push towards public political and perception change, focal point representatives and Ambassadors from different governorates became youth leaders through peer to peer and skills training, and knowledge education about gender.

With a participatory and community-based approach the key objectives were to enable youth advocate, support, empower, and engage in their local communities on the most prevalent needs and issues. For this, the youth needed to increase the knowledge of their communities on gender and strengthen media as a platform to access knowledge, outreach, shared stories, and best practices. The female and male youth engaged, conduct initiatives and advocacy campaigns that promote the collective voice, improve their communities, fostering a sense of agency and local ownership, and giving them the skills to lead change in their communities.

When youth have the power to make themselves heard, they can help build strong, stable, and responsive communities.

The tool used for advocacy and outreach includes café talk and media tools. Media builds pressure on the decision-makers by strengthening the capabil-



ity and actions of pressure groups and developing public arguments that recognize the government's challenges.

APPROACHES TO CHANGE THROUGH ADVOCACY

Drabzeen developed strategies and approaches to help provide the youth and community members with essential information. This is also aimed at developing the skills and self-confidence that they require to make informed decisions on issues that affect their lives. With the human rights-based approach in mind, working from within a culture is essential to achieving gender equality and women's empowerment. Youth advocacy and empowerment has to do with social change.



Participatory Approach



A Broad Base for Advocacy

Advocacy can seek such social changes by informing and educating its members, organizations, and decision-makers to take necessary actions. Therefore, we follow effective and comprehensive advocacy strategies that usually combine multiple approaches.

Active participation by local youth and other stakeholders aims to enhance both the quality and relevance of the interventions. Acting together involves a higher level of participation including the participation of the most excluded groups. By making the voices of local communities heard openly and transparently, advocacy can ensure that policy dialogue and decision making is informed by the perspectives, concerns, and voices of women and men, including those who are often forgotten and marginalized.

Bringing different groups together also fosters


a common dialogue on issues of importance to women’s human rights. This entails building the capacities of youth so that they are capable of participating in concretely in gender and women issues. As a result of advocacy, a sense of ownership and accountability are developed, which leads to the commitment from stakeholders. The partnership between youth and other stakeholders involves a shared vision and a commitment to work together to bring real and sustainable benefits to the community. It requires long-term commitment, clearly defined expectations, and shared responsibility for achievements. We value the unique contribution and strengths of all partners and we work within an open, accountable, and transparent manner.

Working from **within the local communities** entails understanding and considering the political context, the receiving population, gender


roles, community dynamics, and protection risks, concerns, and priorities. It also requires that we recognize our role as facilitators, our limitations in capacity and resources, the temporary nature of our presence, and the long-term impact of the interventions. Furthermore, it ensures local ownership of development processes. Maximum ownership and sustainability are achieved when interventions are responses to community-driven demands.

To achieve Outcome 3 Drabzeen utilizes its methodology based on ‘Grass-roots’ or community organizing theory’ for Advocacy.


‘THE GENERAL PUBLIC INCREASINGLY RECOGNIZES AND SUPPORTS WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS,



- Collective action by members of the community
- A distinct group of individuals is directly affected by an issue



- Plays a convener or capacity-builder role rather than the ‘driver’ role



- Training, capacity building, community mobilizing, awareness building, action research, initiatives, media advocacy

Figure 1 ‘Grass-roots’ theory’ for Advocacy

Our role is envisioned as helping in facilitating efforts of a collective to achieve social change.



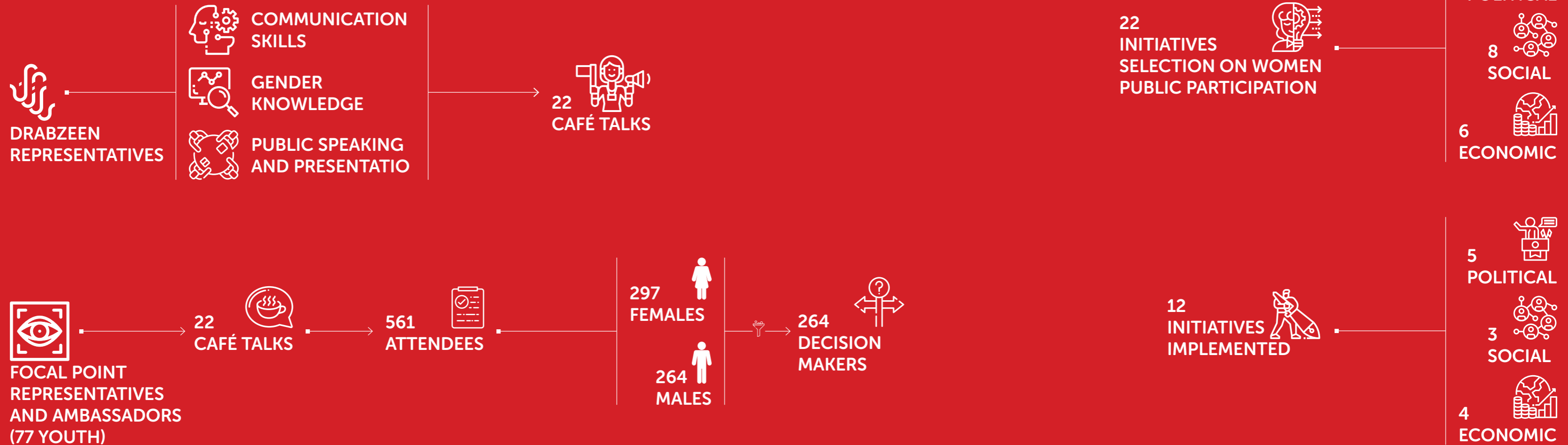
Tool Used (How)	Characteristics	Rationale (Why)
<p>Increasing Knowledge and Learning (Information, Education, Communication, debate, advocacy, peer to peer training)</p>		<p>Advocacy is a skill that combines knowledge, good judgment, and creative problem-solving. Youth capacity building aims to enhance their knowledge about gender issues and Human rights, strengthen their skills in, effective participation awareness of their rights, dealing with the media, public speaking, and advocacy. More ambassadors of change are engaged through peer to peer training, where the ambassadors further train a new cohort of youth to become ambassadors in their communities and advocate for local community issues. This is the niche of the training and is expected to contribute to the sustainability of advocacy.</p>
<p>Initiatives In a nondiscrimination and Safe Place Café Talks</p>		<p>Café talks are platforms to disseminate knowledge and create debates. These are casual welcoming spaces for non-discrimination and provide a safe space for the youth to engage with other delegates and policymakers to understand and consider the prevailing context, the receiving population, gender roles, community dynamics, protection risks, community concerns, and priorities. The café talks culminate with the development of initiatives that arise as solutions to the issues discussed</p>
	<p>Transparent and informative</p>	<p>Full, accessible, diversity-sensitive information about gender and women's rights to express their views freely and their views to be given due weight, and how this participation will take place, its scope, purpose, and potential impact.</p>
	<p>Voluntary</p>	<p>Youth are never forced into expressing views against their wishes and they should be informed that they can cease involvement at any stage.</p>
	<p>Respectful</p>	<p>All views are treated with respect and they are provided with opportunities to initiate ideas.</p>

Tool Used (How)	Characteristics	Rationale (Why)
	Relevant	The issues discussed are all data-based and evidence-driven depending on the survey and needs assessment of the local community.
	Youth Friendly	Café talks are conducted in cafes and in safe environments that are comfortable and familiar to the youth
	Inclusive	Participation is inclusive and avoids existing patterns of discrimination and encourages opportunities for marginalized youth both males and females to be involved.
Media A Tool and target of advocacy		<p>The media's reach to a large number of people offers a powerful tool for advocacy, to inform and build support around gender and women issues. Drabzeen's uses active media to communicate with large numbers of people to advance a social or public policy objective or influence public attitudes on an important public matter and to empower people - particularly marginalized and vulnerable groups. This is through the information that helps them understand their local context - for advocacy and changing it and converting information into meaningful knowledge and expertise, to encourage people to take a certain view on an issue and, hopefully, to communicate their views with policymakers. Through media we open dialogue and debates between governments and people so that those in charge make decisions based on real needs and give voice to youth and women, thereby enabling their full participation in their societies.</p> <p>The messages are sometimes framed around certain incidents, milestone, or outstanding achievement. Translating an individual's story into the broader public issue is another useful strategy we use for framing messages to get attention.</p>

• Capacity Building



• Initiatives Development through Café Talk Tools



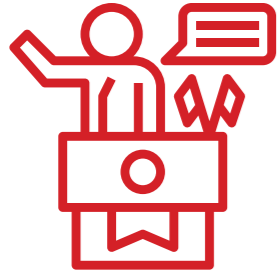
IMPLEMENTATION

• Capacity Building

Trainer	Type of Training	Number of Trainees
Drabzeen Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peer to Peer Training Café Talks moderations and Dialogue Management Gender Knowledge Communication Skills Public Speaking and Presentation 	
Peer to Peer Training By the 11 Focal point representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peer to Peer Training Café Talks moderations and Dialogue Management Gender Knowledge Communication Skills Public Speaking and Presentation 	173 Trainees 115 Females 58 Males Selected 66 Ambassadors

• Initiatives Development through Café Talk Tools

Trainer	Type of Training	Number of Trainees
Drabzeen Representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Production of Initiatives Implementation Guide Research-based needs identification design Effective Guided Meetings 	2 Guides
Focal point Representatives and Ambassadors (77 Youth)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 22 Café Talks on Women in Leadership 	561 Attendees 297 Females, 264 Males 320 Decision Makers
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 22 Initiatives Selection on Women Public Participation 	8 Political 8 Social 6 Economic
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12 initiative implemented 	5 Political 3 Social 4 Economic



POLITICAL

Parties Club (Fifteen women and men participated in empowering dialogue sessions related to political and party life in Jordan, and on the importance of women's political participation. Among the skills acquired are: dialogue, debate, and critical thinking, and communication and communication skills.)

Let Her Reach (30 young women were able to develop their abilities to write electoral programs, and 5 young women decided to enter the electoral life in the upcoming municipal and local elections)

We want You to Get a Ride (Decision-makers participated in several meetings with the Ambassadors of Abshari, during the meetings they discussed the transportation problem, solutions, and challenges that women face due to the lack of a safe transportation sector, in the presence of 28 people from the local community.)

It was agreed on regulatory solutions for the transport sector and adherence to the announced lines).

Legal Break (43 women and men from the local community participated in an open dialogue to discuss the importance of legal awareness for increasing women's willingness to participate in the parliamentary elections.)

Fifteen women were able to participate in awareness sessions about the election law, and expressed their wish to participate in political action)



ECONOMIC

You are Our Strength (12 women were able to develop handcraft skills and market them electronically through 5 educational meetings with the ambassadors who designed a training that meets their needs.

7 women started marketing their products online.)

My product (Fifteen women were able to develop their marketing and networking skills with several local entities and sell their products, which increased women's economic participation.)

Your Right on Our Shoulder (Thirty-six decision-makers, women workers, and specialists in the field participated in three dialogue

sessions on the labor law.

A page on social media has been created to receive complaints and spread awareness about the topic.

Partnerships with civil society organizations and the Center for Justice have been established to help the largest number of women.

A hotline has been established to receive complaints.

Partnerships with civil society organizations and the Center for Justice have been established to help the largest number of women.)



SOCIAL

I am My Family (Empowering 43 men and women from the local community and representatives of the directorates of education through their participation in dialogue sessions to discuss the problems resulting from raising children according to the prevailing stereotypes, and the positive role of theater in modifying this image. The participants agreed on the necessity of activating extracurricular activities to encourage women to engage in political action.)

Nashmiyyeh (Fifteen women were able to participate in dialogue sessions and discussions that increased their ability to communicate, networking with local communities, and advocacy as a means of enhancing leadership skills.)

Nashmiyyeh Radio (The success stories of women from the local community were shared, and the challenges and opportunities of women to participate in political life were discussed.)

CASE STUDIES: ENGAGING YOUTH IN GENDER ISSUES

OUTCOME DESCRIPTION

Drabzeen's Abshiri+ project has been engaging youth – both male and female – from all Jordanian governorates on gender issues through conducting needs assessments related to what women require to overcome the obstacles that hinder their access to leadership by organizing training for the project Ambassadors on hosting Café Talks and the actual Café Talks sessions.

RELEVANCE

Results from some recent studies have indicated a strong shift in attitudes towards gender equality as a result of recent modernization efforts in Jordan. However, Jordan is still a conservative society, and this is more clearly felt outside the capital. Women still live under patriarchal and tribal laws, which treat them as 'creatures' in need of male protection and incapable to be independent or make their own decisions. Furthermore, they are faced with several challenges that hinder their ability to become active members of society. With less than one-fifth of women engaged in the workforce, Jordan has one of the lowest rates of women's economic participation in the world.

With a 95% literacy rate, Jordanian women are amongst the highest educated in the region. Jordan, however, has one of the world's lowest rates of female participation in the labor force. For instance, women are not acknowledged as potential decision-makers. Also, they are mostly perceived as homemakers and caregivers. Thus, their gender role takes place inside the house and not in the social space. These misperceptions are rooted in the culture and mentality of Jordanians, especially those living in rural areas.

Why should we care? A gender stereotype is a generalized view or preconception about attributes or characteristics, or the roles that are or ought to be possessed by or performed by women and men. A gender stereotype is harmful when it limits women's and men's capacity to develop their abilities, pursue their professional careers, and make choices about their lives.

When women counter their stereotype and break expectations about how they 'should' behave, they pay the cost: dominant women are perceived as less likable and less able to get opportunities than men. Gender stereotypes contribute to holding women back in leadership and workplace domains and how we can reduce the negative effects of gender stereotypes. On the flip side, if these stereotypes are addressed, they can contribute to women in

leadership through better women's performance and self-related cognitions in leadership tasks such as motivating employees, managerial decision-making, and negotiating.

Therefore, to change these gender stereotypes, it is crucial to address the youth as they are the future and they can act as agents of change in society. Supportive households and communities are essential to ensuring that women have full access to the opportunities they need to realize their full potential.

CONTRIBUTION

Drabzeen was capable of gathering youth from different socio-economic and educational backgrounds through its Café Talks to discuss gender-related topics and how to increase women's participation in decision-making positions, politics, and other fields that are traditionally considered male domain in Jordan. Based on those discussions, they designed and implemented political, economic, and social initiatives to promote the empowerment of women leadership.

On the output level, several male participants, in particular, used to think there is a difference between women and men in terms of capacities and abilities. Others did not realize that women are at the core of society or what their needs are. These

misconceptions were changed after attending the Café Talk sessions, especially after hearing women's success stories.

Also, the youth became more capable of analyzing challenges and problems to come out with solutions. They acquired several skills such as communication, analysis, management, and others. Local partnerships were developed with the local community, paving up the way for more in-depth cooperation between different parties, as well as having a dialogue with local decision-makers.

The pre and post evaluation of the Café Talks sessions showed an important change in the perceptions of participants: (Display Statistics)

41% increase in awareness of the importance of taking measures to improve the role of media in highlighting women leaderships,

35% increase in awareness related to lost economic opportunities resulting from the lack of women's participation in leadership positions in the labor market,

38% increase in awareness of the importance of coming out with solutions to counter the 'culture of shame' faced by women to increase their participation in a leadership position

40% increase in awareness related to the existence of unused opportunities for women entrepreneurship, which hinder them from reaching leadership positions,

20% increase in awareness on the importance of women's financial independence and how this can help them face the challenges that hinder their access to leadership positions,

20% increase in awareness related to the importance of forming pressure forces to change the policies and legislations that limit women's access to leadership positions.

The major obstacles that hinder women's economic participation, as discussed during the Cafe Talks, are the high levels of unemployment, social challenges related to culture and the concept of 'shame', the absence of real empowerment programs for female entrepreneurs, and the absence of marketing skills, which fails their projects. Therefore, some of the economic initiatives focused on integrating women in the tourism sector, organizing bazaars and online marketing of their products, providing them with proper transportation.

In parallel, the main social obstacles that hinder women's political participation are mainly related to women's stereotypes in society. The latter is

further rooted in the schools' curriculum. The seed of stereotypes is sown in education, and education is where the solution lies. Curricula, textbooks, and teacher training programs should be periodically reviewed to ensure that gender stereotypes are not perpetuated, and apprenticeship programs, tutorials, networks, or scholarships should be considered to promote and encourage the incorporation of women into science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields. Drabzeen's Abshiri+ project has had a direct impact on the stereotypes by addressing them and triggering discussions that led in many cases to changes of perceptions and convictions of several youths – both male and female – who became supporters of women leadership, whereas they formerly opposed it and did not believe in it.

Also, children are raised differently based on their gender when it comes to leadership. Finally, there is no active media role in fighting gender stereotypes. To address these challenges, several initiatives were developed that focus on creating a media platform for women that highlights their success stories, building a database of women leaders, producing alternative media material to amend gender stereotypes, and others.

On the political level, the major challenges that hinder women from participating in politics are the refusal of females to participate in political work

because of society's fear of parties on account of stereotypes, and parties' inefficiency in changing those. For that sake, legal empowerment was targeted to allow women to know their political rights, developing their political skills, and changing the misconception related to political parties.

In the long term, to successfully reduce the effects of negative stereotypes on women in leadership through exposures to role models, several steps need to be taken to ensure a similarity focus. These strategies can include highlighting the dimensions on which highly successful female leaders are similar to other women with leadership aspirations, underscoring the fact that sustained effort and not exceptional luck explain female leaders' success, or framing success as being attainable by providing opportunities for contact between highly successful female leaders and women with leadership aspirations. Increasing the number of women in top leadership positions is not only a goal of gender quality, but it can also become the engine that drives gender equality in male-dominated domains.

OUTCOME NUMBER 4: RAISING AWARENESS ON THE LABOR LAW

OUTCOME DESCRIPTION

Women in Jordan, especially those working in the private system, often face violations of their most basic rights. Most of them are not even aware of what these are; and if they do, they do not have the means to stand for themselves. Consequently, women end up withdrawing from the labor market, which reduces their economic participation and harms the national economy.

To address this need, the Abshiri project worked on raising women's awareness of the labor law and provided them with the necessary advice to reduce and address the violations they face in the labor market through setting a hotline to receive their complaints.

RELEVANCE

Women face challenges when entering the labor market, which leads to their withdrawal of the labor market. During Café Talks sessions held in Aqaba, south of Jordan, women from the governorate working in the private sector expressed that they were paid low wages and that they suffer from a gender pay gap. Additionally, they lack job security (female teachers in the private sector are often dismissed before the summer break for schools to avoid paying their salaries during that period), are often requested to sign documents that violate their rights, and are often paid less than what was agreed upon.

Besides, many of them are not registered in the

Social Security Corporation and do not have health insurance. In other terms, these women are exploited, and this is due to many reasons such as their lack of knowledge in the laws and regulations meant to protect them, their need to work and the fear of losing their source of income or financial independence, social customs that shame women who enter a courthouse. Consequently, women do not claim their right or fear to do so out for not getting fired on that account.

CONTRIBUTION:

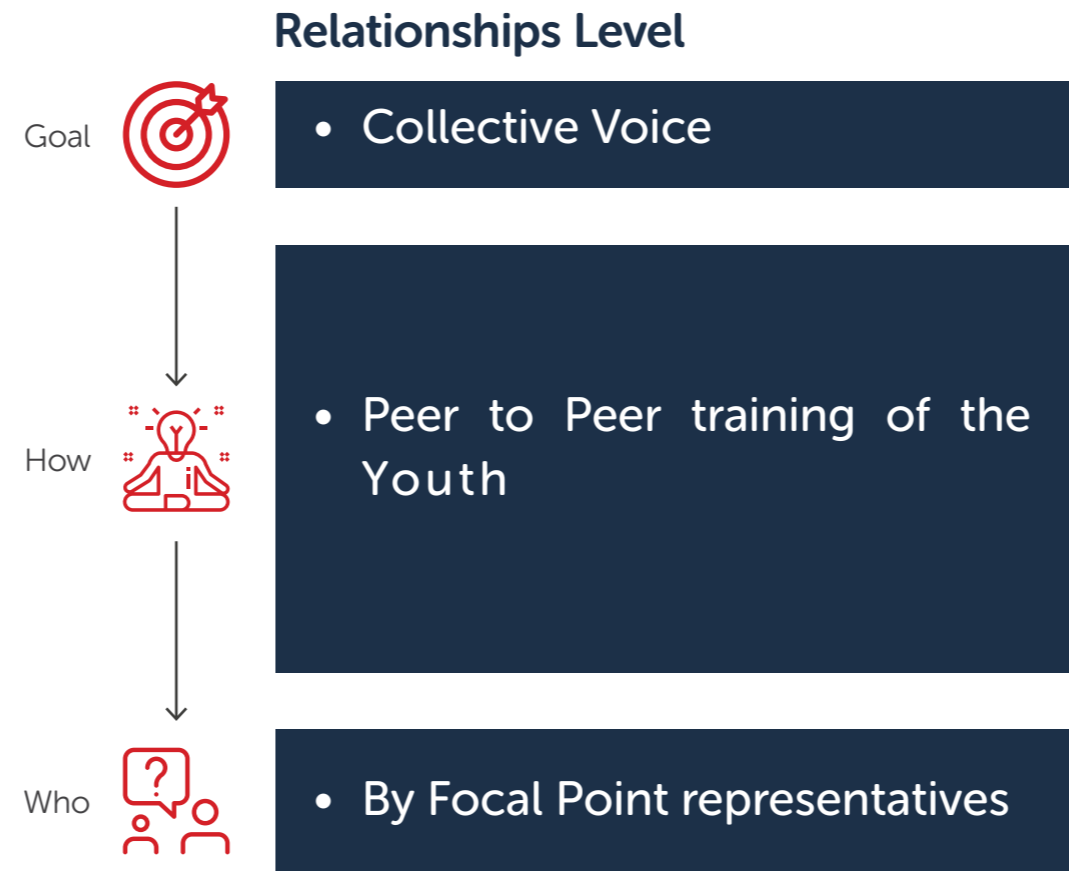
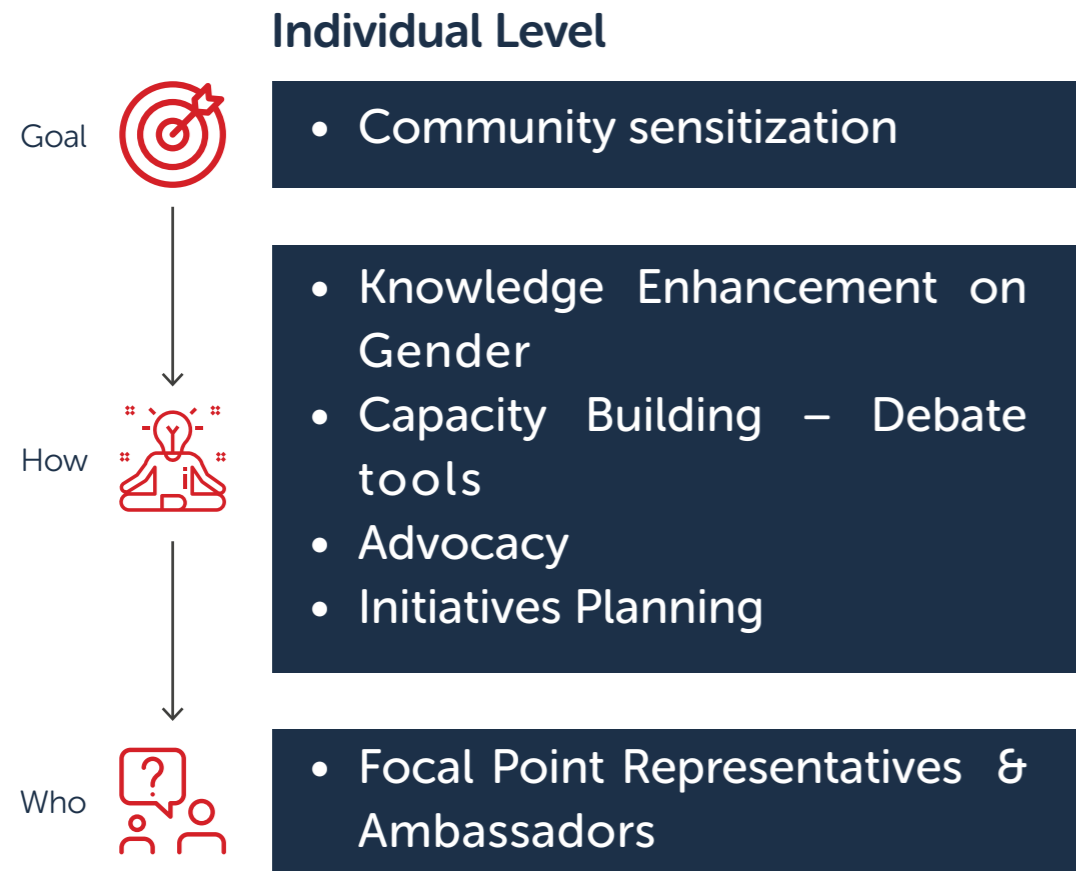
To solve these problems, and support women's decent employment in Aqaba, the ambassadors created an initiative based on a Facebook page to receive complaints of working women whose rights are violated in the private sector within the governorate of Aqaba and give them the necessary legal advice. By educating women on their rights and making them feel supported, they were encouraged to remain in the job market.

Also, 3 awareness-raising sessions - benefitting 29 women and 7 men – were held and turned out to be particularly beneficial during the covid-19 crisis and enabled them to protect their rights, which were at higher risk of infringement on account of the pandemic. On account of the initiative, many women

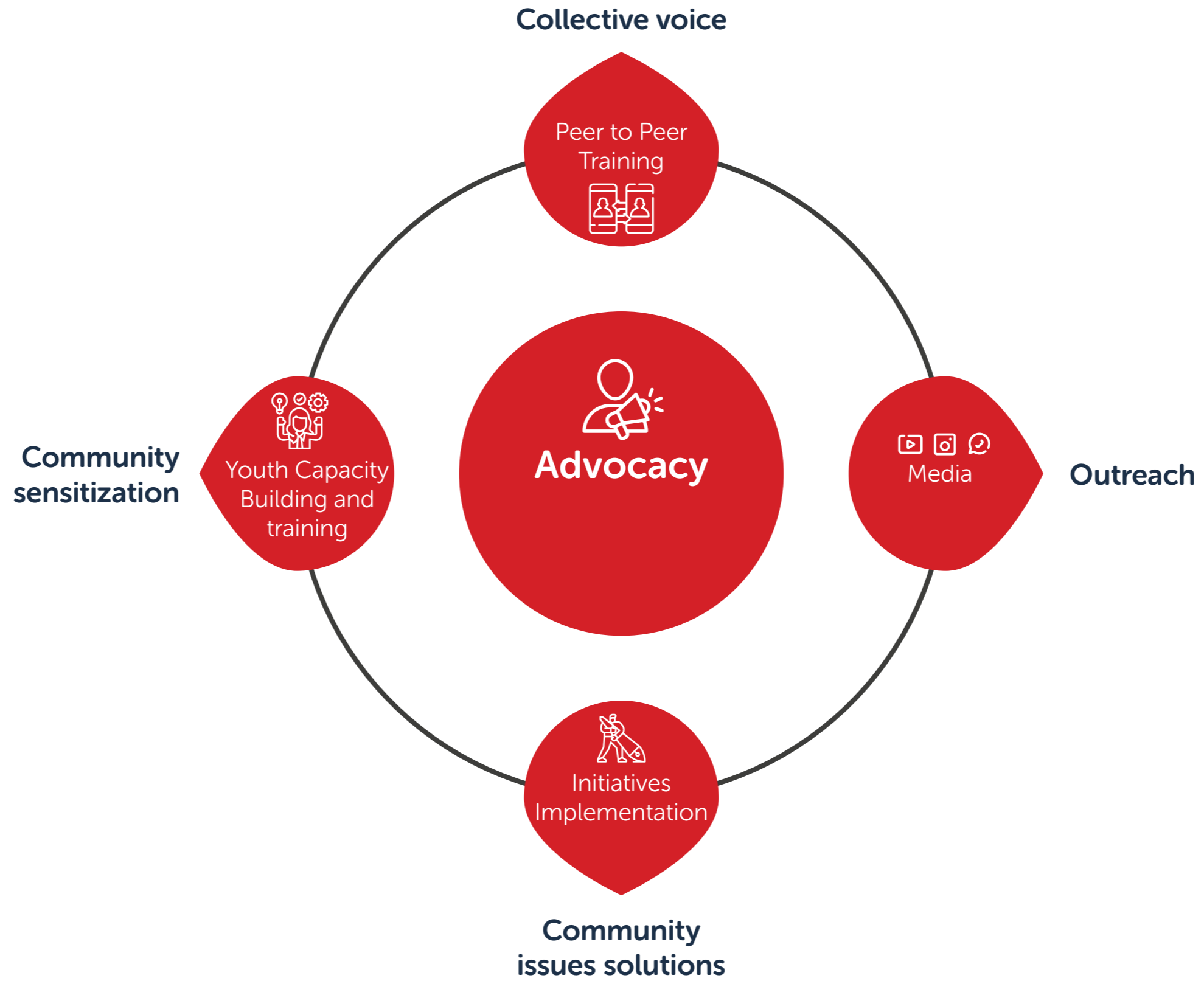
succeeded in obtaining their salaries and becoming registered at the Social Security. This led to more employment security.

In parallel, discussions were held with decision-makers and employers to shed the light on this problem and the consequences it has on the national economy and women's economic participation. This has led to addressing the issue and providing job security to the women. Also, the ambassadors signed an agreement with the Justice Center to publish the hotline's number and receive the largest number of cases. This means that the Center's lawyers would give a free consultation to the women addressing them through the hotline.

FROM ME TO YOU TO US



ADVOCACY TOOLS AND PURPOSES



BEST PRACTICES:



Youth females and males as agents of change.

Youth's input and active participation in the planning, design and implementation of programs as well as their participation helps in facilitating and mobilizing local communities towards change.



Exchange Learning and Experience

Engaging youth and adopting peer to peer mentoring across all youth from diverse demographic and background and contexts and needs specific to their communities helped in wide range of sensitization to gender.



Contextualization

Youth led Initiatives addressed needs of the community and created mutual commitment engagement and outreach of local communities and Youth. This required transformation of the local resources in more valuable useful resources.



Using Online Media platform as an outreach tool and sharing stories

Media provides an up to date, safe and easy to access, friendly platform to disseminate knowledge, engage different actors and stakeholder in shared concerns and priority issues.

Online media as well served as a platform to share stories and lessons learned and inspire youth.



Clustering as way of thinking towards change

Youth gained insight and the ability to define issues, root causes, identify the right stakeholders and properly engage in productive debates when addressing issues related to gender whether they are social, economic or political. Accordingly they were -----in using their local available resources.



Creating a Safe Place for advocacy for all Actors

Café talks provided an enabling environment and appropriate safe accessible place for both males and female youths in space and access to space that is appropriate to youth

STORIES FROM THE FIELD

I AM THE ONE WHO SHAPES MY JOURNEY

Atheer Al-Manaseer, 25 years old, Al-Salt/Al-Balqaa

I studied engineering, even though I did not particularly like it. During my free time, I used to volunteer at a films center in Al-Salt. Later on, I started spending most of my time there watching documentaries about my governorate as part of a workshop organized by the Royal Film Commission-Jordan (RFC). Afterwards, I graduated and started producing videos about women's stories. Working in the field with them was very interesting but also a big challenge as it was not easy to make women feel safe and comfortable during the shoot in order to express themselves and their feelings freely – such as their suffering, success, defeat or challenge – as this is crucial in order to impact people. However, I believe we have succeeded. Furthermore, this experience taught me how to respect local contexts and develop a content that is gender sensitive. It also encouraged me to develop myself in the media field, while enabling me to join theory and practice.

We implemented 2 initiatives in Al-Balqaa. The first one (The political parties' club) aimed at founding



a club that focuses on fighting stereotypes related to political parties, which discourage women from joining them through proposing different activities such as trainings, discussions and debates. The goal was to encourage women to get involved in political parties as well as raise men and community's awareness on the need to provide a proper and safe environment for women's partisanship in Al-Balqaa in order to increase their political participation. Through this initiative, we have trained 22 young women and 8 young men on topics related to political parties and the political life in Jordan, as well as the importance of women's participation. In addition, the youth acquired specific tools such as dialogue and debates.

The second initiative (Radio Nashamiya) aimed at developing a radio platform on Facebook that would act as an alternative media to shed the light on success stories of women and discuss challenges that women face on their way to leadership. This will provide a space for women to highlight their active role in light of the absence of the role of mainstream media in fighting gender stereotypes related to women in Al-Balqaa, which negatively impacts their political participation. I was happy to serve women in my community through this initiative. The thing I liked the most about WE4L program is that it seeks to serve women effectively

while addressing their real needs. Our goal was to promote a real change in the lives of the target women, something that would be tangible.

On the personal level, I gained through this project a lot of knowledge, tools and skills that I can use in my discussions. Today, I am capable to change gender stereotypes of women in our society and highlight the importance of their reaching leadership positions through discussing it with individuals and triggering a change in their mind set.

On the professional level, I am now able to network with people in my region. Moreover, since this was my first project in the governorate, I came to know the real needs and interests of women in my community. Additionally, I both received support from people I worked with and helped them. I was proud of the women who attended the trainings and discussions because they were able to present their issues and voices. This is what pushed us forward and gave us the energy and passion to continue with this project. On the team level, we broke the barrier of fear from political parties. Many of the young women who participated in the project became more interested in politics and in the importance of partisanship.

Radio Nashameyha's page on social media still

receives messages from women who would like to share their stories. This encourages us to go on, and proves that the initiative is achieving its goal and serving women. Finally, my dream is to continue to make women's voices heard through my lens.



WITH US IN MAAN

Raghad Al-Ghanamen, 23 years, Al-Shobak

I did not obtain my baccalaureate. In our society, having a degree is considered more important than knowledge and experience. I felt that people looked down on me because of the negative perception related to men who did not complete their high school education. Such individuals are not considered 'men' and are perceived as useless by society. I felt I had to do something about it, first of all for my self-esteem but also to prove my capacities to people around me. Therefore, I decided to do some volunteering work. This gave me self-satisfaction because I felt I was doing something useful, and I also received gratification from people.

Volunteering became a way of life to me. Through it, I started to feel my value. It was also an opportunity to find employment in different developmental projects. Little by little, I started managing major projects. However, when speaking about the work I do, people would often be skeptical and not believe that I was able to work without a degree. Sadly, our society has determined one way to success. This means that if you choose a different path, you need a strong will to overcome all the obstacles and difficulties.

I live in a remote area. In order to attend a workshop



or some volunteer activity, I had to wake up at 4 a.m., walk to the main street and wait for a car to drive me on its way. I often had to ride different cars until I reached Amman or the needed location, and do the same on the way back. This was tiring, but my persistence on achieving my goal was very rewarding as it made me feel that I would eventually be able to accomplish it.

I was the victim of stereotyping because I had not obtained my baccalaureate. However, I was also unintentionally the perpetrator of stereotyping on women around me. I used to defend widespread beliefs that women should remain at home, despite the fact that my mother had always been a leader and was accepted the way she was by my father. However, our society does not accept such emancipation and refuses that women run for elections or seek change, as people believe that women's place is at home. I supported the convictions of my family and tribe out of fear of rejection. However, this changed when I joined Abshiri project implemented by Drabzeen, which aims at empowering women in order to reach leadership positions.

I applied for Abshiri mainly out of curiosity but also because I wanted to benefit from the training and learning opportunities. I had never been involved in a project related to women's empowerment, and

always thought that only females would attend such trainings. Nonetheless, when I sat for my interview prior to joining the project, I found out that it did not only target women and that many men were attending.

I remember the story a woman shared with us at the beginning of the training about the injustice she faces at work. We both had an argument related to the gender stereotyping and customs I had been raised on, as no one can change his beliefs overnight. Each time I met with this woman during later trainings, we would discuss the topic. It was nice to see that people can be interested in your opinion, even if you have different points of view. This is what distinguishes Abshiri.

Part of the project revolved around Café Talks sessions, which prompted dialogue regarding women reaching leadership positions. I did not know how to discuss such topic, as it is not socially acceptable; and it turned out that my team had the same concern but we decided to give it a try. We thought that if we succeeded in transforming the mindset of one person, this would mean that we could also trigger change in others. Our effort was faced with negative comments such as "are you seriously trying to convince me to allow my wife to run for elections? You are still young to discuss such topics," or "man, do you really think I would

allow my sister to get elected? Everyone will think that we are not men, and this is unacceptable," or "don't get me wrong, but there must be something wrong in a man who allows his wife to run for elections."

We had to learn how to respond to this type of comments, and ask questions that would make people re-think about the topic. We also learnt how to accept the different types of personalities, as well as accept and understand them. Based on these meetings, we came out with ideas for initiatives that we executed later on. We relied on sketches, which had an impact on people and made them think about the roles of women and men, and the freedom to make their own choices.

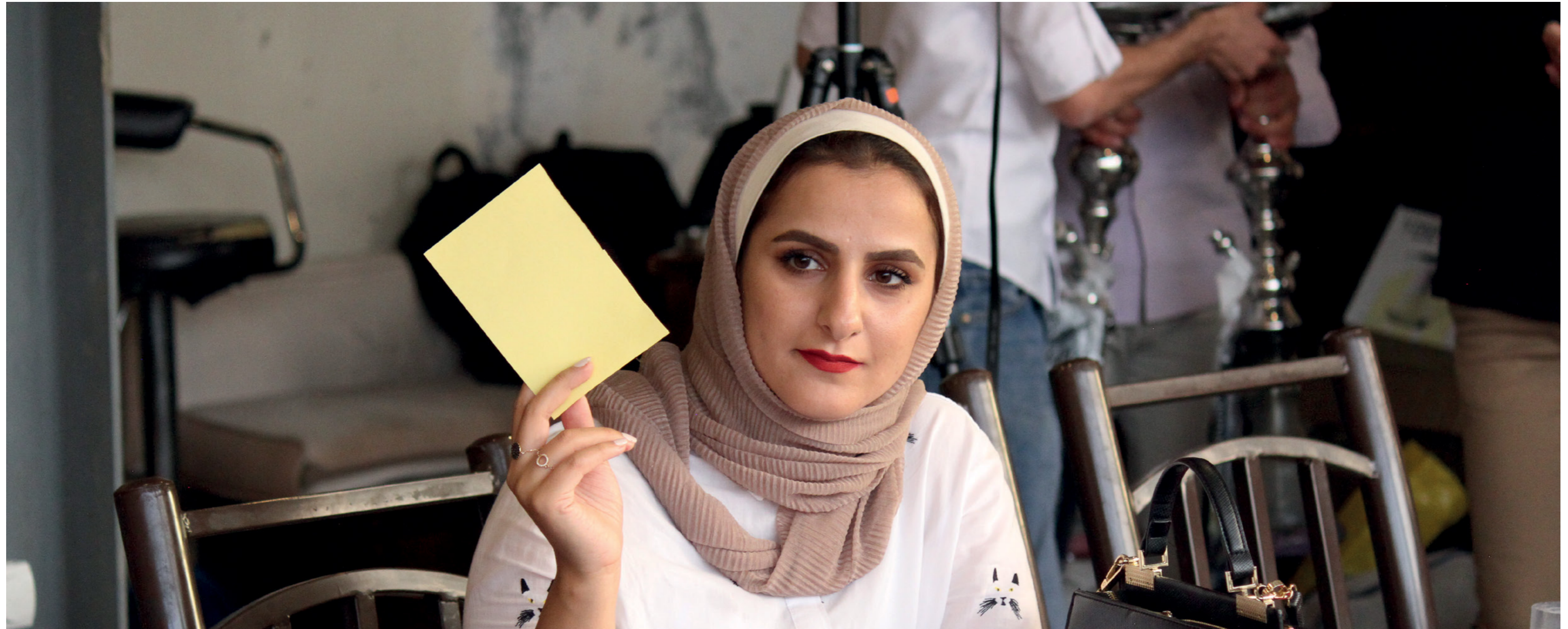
Abshiri project has left an impact on me as an individual and on my team. I used to be shy, but this initiative enabled me to break this barrier and stand on stage in front of people in order to express my opinions. Furthermore, I became more aware of the stereotyping of women and the need to fight it, and developed project management skills. On the team level, change was notable. We succeeded in developing a network of youth activists in all Jordanian governorates, and mingled with people from abroad who have a completely different mindset. More importantly, we supported a female candidate in becoming a member of local council

through gathering the youth and convincing them of voting for her and giving her a chance to prove her capacities.

On the local community level, I am happy to see that youth are launching similar initiatives to support women, and that a lot of young men have changed their gender perception and have proven that by taking concrete actions such as allowing their sisters to attend university or supporting them in entering the job market. I am totally convinced that everyone can change through

discussions and hearing different ways of thinking.

Today, we are convinced that women have a leading role in society and that gender stereotyping should end. Young women and men have a lot of capacities and skills; but unfortunately, we lack projects like Abshiri that provide opportunities for youth living in remote areas to discuss sensitive topics without barriers or hierarchy, based on mutual respect. This is what we seek in future projects.



THE HOTLINE MARATHON

Hanin Al-Btoush, 26 years, Aqaba

I believe that each individual, in particular the youth, have an individual societal responsibility towards women's causes because this social group is the most marginalized. Based on that, I felt it was my duty to do something useful for my society and use my resources to benefit my region. I participated in many initiatives and was chosen to take part of the program. After the training, I was appointed as Abshiri's ambassador in Aqaba. Since the beginning of the project, I had a goal in mind related to empowering women in my governorate and I will keep working on it until I achieve it.

What differentiated Abshiri's WE4L project from others was its reliance on debates. Despite the fact that the ideas might not be new, the way of planning and executing the initiatives was particular and bore its fruits through the Café Talks.

In Aqaba, we implemented the Protecting Your Rights' initiative, which aims at establishing a hotline on social media to receive the complaints of women working in the private sector in Aqaba whose rights have been infringed. The women were provided with the needed counselling to claim their rights, and discussions were held with decision-makers and employers to shed the light on this issue. As a result, women became more aware of their rights and how



to claim them, as their infringement limited their economic participation.

We held 3 Café Talks discussions that benefitted 29 women and 7 men through informing them of the Labor law. A number of these women worked for the private sector. Decision-makers and lawyers interested in the initiative were present. Accordingly, we bought a phone line and made a Facebook page to use as a platform for raising awareness on women workers' rights and for providing a lawyer's counselling. We are currently working on networking with the Center for Justice and NGOs, not only in Aqaba but also across Jordan in order to develop partnerships and benefit the biggest number of women possible.

The initiative implemented in Aqaba encouraged a number of youth to support women's causes. In addition Ro'ya TV channel requested an interview with our team. This encouraged us to go on. Additionally, working as a team is crucial as we complement one another. We managed to cooperate and use our capacities and networks to provide something useful for society, as well as create a sense of social responsibility inside our team. This was not easy but we succeeded in overcoming challenges.

On the personal level, the project increased my knowledge on women's political and economic empowerment. Furthermore, it addressed a topic I

always wanted to work on, which is raising awareness of women workers on their rights. In addition, I learnt how to be patient and persistent as these are the key to success because change does not happen overnight. We worked hard to ensure that each session would be better than the previous one. This meant that we had to be capable of addressing diverging opinions swiftly. Despite the fact that it was not easy to juggle between my work and the initiative, achieving the goal gave me the strength to go on. On the local community level, we perceived change through the Café Talk sessions. There was a lot of interaction, and empowering women economically and politically received a lot of support in Aqaba. Therefore, we succeeded in gaining support for women's cause in Aqaba.

My ambition is that the platform we created will continue to spread awareness regarding workers' rights, and that we can collaborate with the Social Security Corporation and the Ministry of Labor to monitor all labor violations and determine the issues women face. Furthermore, everyone should be aware of the rights granted to him/her by the law. Finally, I would like to ask the Social Security Corporation and all concerned organizations to increase their monitoring of the labor market to ensure that women's rights are not violated; and therefore, remain in the job market.



ALL THE WAY WITH YOU

Mohamed Abu Al Adas, 23 years, Jerash, Liaison officer with Drabzeen

I implemented many initiatives inside and outside the governorate. I expanded my network with youth and in developmental work; and this by itself is considered a success. What prompted me to register in Abshiri WE4L project is the good reputation of Drabzeen as a safe space for the youth. I also liked the emphasis on women's empowerment and the different implementation mechanisms such as the Café Talks, because they paved the way for people to express their ideas and what initiatives they want to be implemented in their communities. In other terms, the initiatives would respond to real social needs.

In Jerash, we implemented 2 initiatives through Abshiri. The first (Your right initiative) aimed at raising women's political awareness of women in Jerash governorate and training women leaders on writing political programs and running for elections, as well as providing them support during their campaign. The initiative trained 12 young women on leading electoral campaigns and writing electoral programs in order to support females in reaching the parliament in the upcoming elections.

The second initiative 'We want you to make it' aims at shedding the light on the transportation



issue, which hinders many women from reaching the job market and in consequence leadership positions. We held 3 discussions with decision-makers to discuss the issue of transportation with them in order to come out with solutions that would enable women from the local communities to commute safely and become active in their society by overcoming this challenge.

The initiatives had a huge impact on the team as well as women beneficiaries. It was such a nice feeling to receive phone calls after the training from women to tell us that “we didn’t know what women’s political participation meant” or “I didn’t know anything about the political parties’ law or elections” or “I wasn’t aware of women’s role inside the parliament” or “I didn’t know the importance of political awareness”. We live in a tribal system,

and therefore, women are not allowed to vote for someone from outside the tribe. In that context, hearing young women say that they will vote for their real representative means that the training has achieved its objective. On account of the Corona crisis, we had to do the trainings on Zoom. However, despite this, the levels of participation and interaction were high and women benefited from that. On the personal level, this program supported me in my education as I learnt a number of technical skills related to organizational work and project management, in addition to dialogue skills.

Until today, so many educated people from my area do not understand my commitment to gender issues and they keep asking “why do I defend women’s rights and their reaching

leadership positions?” This mentality and criticism are still present, and the best way to deal with such individuals is through dialogue. I consider this skill one of the best things I learnt from this project. Through the information we gathered on the importance of women’s participation and the persuasion techniques we learnt, we were able to change some people’s perception of women and their role. Personally, I started to adopt a gender-based approach in everything I do.

Today, I hope to see the impact the project has had and witness a woman’s election as a member of parliament in the upcoming elections with the support and efforts of our initiative ‘your participation is a right’. Our team will support a woman in her electoral campaign, hoping that she gets elected as MP.