

Case Study from ANHR's work
From Gender Mainstreaming to Inclusive Advocacy

2017-2021



Gender remains one of the most fundamental sources of inequality and exclusion in MENA region where Arab Network for Civic Education (ANHRE) is working.

Gender equality is essential for peace, rights, and well-being for all. It lies at the heart of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and is vital to fully realizing the rights and potential of all. Yet, far too often gender inequality in the participation and voice of women and men prevents from reaching the shared goal of addressing the problem in a sustainable and scalable way. Real change requires greater visibility at the highest levels, sustained through concrete actions that make a difference in the day-to-day lives of women. Fighting poverty goes hand in hand with fighting gender discrimination; one cannot be achieved without the other. The decentralization election in Jordan was very imminent which implied a political and democratic reform that can be achieved through good local governance and open public policies. That new stage of the democratic life in Jordan required a great attention to local development process in order to adopt development practices to redress disorders in comprehensive and sustainable development, direct its programmes towards meeting development needs and priorities, empower local organisations and citizens to identify their needs and priorities to develop their areas and communities so that the base of popular participation in decision making is enlarged. That phase was an unprecedented opportunity to encourage civil society organizations to take part in the reform process and increase popular participation in the community's decision-making process and to increase representation and influence of minority groups and women in local governments.

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ANHRE is a regional network in the Arab region works towards the enhancement of citizenship values and promotion of culture of human rights with a focus on mainstreaming gender equality, and rights of persons with disability and vulnerable groups, through coordination of efforts and capacity building. The network includes 63 organizations from 9 Arab countries: Egypt, Lebanon, Algeria, Iraq, Palestine, Jordan, Morocco, Yemen, & Tunisia.

Women in Jordan do not have a full and effective participation in public life or an equal access to leadership positions on all decision-making levels in the political, economic and social life due to many cultural, legal and procedural challenges. By providing a timely, comprehensive picture of gender dynamics within the individual contexts, family lives, and broader community economic fabrics, ANHRE introduced some important topics and questions begging for further discussion among anyone actively interested in formulating a development program for Jordanian society. Yet, an important question should be raised: 'so what?' Indeed, the gender sensitive data that was collected by ANHRE has developed a reliable base of information crucial for action. Gender inequality affects different groups of people in different ways. Thus, any credible or meaningful action requires working holistically with people in all their diversity.

This happened in three ways: The first focus was '**advocacy for**'. The issue of gender inequality in Jordan is identified by those who are not necessarily affected by the issue but are concerned with justice and/or equity (being a voice for the voiceless and enabling the voiceless to find their voice). Gender roles, identities, and expectations are socially, culturally, and politically constructed. Expectations about what it means to be a woman or man can vary over time and depend on context and differences between and within a country.

Who are the women leaders? ANHRE's work methodology is based on a participatory approach that makes work an exploratory experience. It is futile to develop and disseminate standards of women leaders, as this does not consider the diversity and inequalities in the contexts, opportunities and challenges of the scope of the project. In our quest to find women leaders, we decided to adopt enabling a methodology and work strategy that provide equal opportunities for all women to explore themselves and become engaged into learning and action processes.

ANHRE's work has been able to integrate active women in the local community and work with them to attract, build the capacities of new female leaders and engage them in context analysis and the identification and recognition of needs through a range of interactive community activities within a supportive environment, based on human rights values, and considering the differences and various cultural and social contexts, as well as surrounding environment.

"She is an active member of the community, respectable, decent and reliable person. She is committed to developing her community and determined to overcome all the obstacles that stand in her way."

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ANHRE was able to empowering local women mobilizers to take and influence informed decisions and responsible gender equality actions to impact political and societal development, opinion, practices and recognition.

The second source of action was '**advocacy with**'. This means the issue of gender inequality is identified by the community which is concerned and wants to solve the problem by working with the affected within the community. This concerns the power relations between men, women, and those identifying with other gender categories – as well as through the power relations within these groups. ANHRE, as well, effectively engaged the women leaders into the learning process, allowed them to explore the importance of human rights by themselves, and develop strategies to practice the values of cooperation, respect for diversity, equality, equity, respect, responsibility and acceptance in their practical lives. Gender-sensitive community-based initiatives had been planned with women leaders based on community data collected from people, Community leaders, members, and decision makers.

Through a series of activities, the network of local women mobilizers managed to engage and mobilize housewives who participated in kitchen meetings and provided local data to feed the planned community initiatives as local decision actors in their communities. In addition, they were able to engage decision makers at national level, local key actors at local level, and media people.

The third element of action is '**advocacy by**'. This mainly concerns those who are affected by the consequences of gender inequality are thus interested to achieve change in the situation. Aspiring women leaders were able to collaborate and impact political and societal development and opinions as they implemented practical community actions to increase gender sensitive developmental plans and agendas, perception and opinions at local levels.

"MOBADERAT" network has been launched that is specialized on planning, implementing and evaluating gender-sensitive community initiatives.

The women leaders were able to take the advantage of the fact that the decentralization election was very imminent. In the middle of 2020, the government reviewed the decentralization law, recognizing that there are many aspects that need to be improved; hence the women leaders submitted local policy papers and a national policy paper to submit the recommendations of women leaders to the government to be included in the draft local administration law, which will be an alternative to the decentralization law.

To conclude, people can do whatever they plan for. To reach out the mostly affected and marginalized women is important to understand and identify the women's needs as women issues should not be restricted to the educated, working women. It is important to empower the housewives, unreached traditional women to be vocal to address their demands and engage them in the process especially they are those who do not have sufficient financial resources or freedom or decent family support system. What they need only a **CHANCE**.