

FIGHTING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, ONE COMMUNITY AT A TIME

JORDAN | WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Standing in a crowded room in Dulayl, Enas Dirgham addressed a diverse group of women ranging from newlyweds to grandmothers. A long-time legal aid counselor at the Family Guidance and Awareness Center (FGAC), Enas had provided legal aid on many domestic violence cases, but nearly always via private conversations with a single person. Standing in front of a room of women to tackle the subject—to bring an often taboo issue out of the private realm—filled her with pride.

Thanks to ABA ROLI support, in September 2012, the FGAC established a mobile outreach unit. Together with community-based organizations, FGAC provides legal counseling to girls and women in their own communities. The unit educates women about their rights, referring those who require it to FGAC legal and psychological counseling. While FGAC has been operating in the Zarqa Governorate in northern Jordan since 1992, the mobile unit extends its services to more remote communities. This allows FGAC to work with women previously unable to access its services due to the cost of travel or lack of awareness.

The unit has enabled Enas and her team of lawyers to host about 30 community workshops, educating more than 1,000 women and girls from Zarqa's remote communities about domestic violence and legal rights. Enas says that as word got out, the program generated more interest.

"Each session drew more women, with some traveling long distances to attend," says Enas. "We were very grateful for this chance

to reach out to the communities and appreciated them reciprocating the effort."

In January 2013, ABA ROLI held a seven-day training for FGAC's legal and psychosocial workers on women's rights and on facilitation skills to help guarantee that they are effectively reaching marginalized groups. Throughout the subsequent community workshops, participants—encouraged by the trainings—related personal experiences with domestic violence. Some recounted past injustices, while others sought solutions to ongoing issues. Enas believes that the women felt a sense of security that allowed them to break through cultural barriers to openly discuss domestic violence.

After each session, unit members shared FGAC's contact information with attendees and

consulted individually with those who had shared their experiences. The center has since provided legal services to more than 50 women who contacted the team after attending a session. Additionally, the team has forwarded 14 cases to court.

Enas says that such experiences allow lawyers to grow as they assist those in need. With ABA ROLI support, she adds, the lawyers are able to offer more holistic legal aid services than are typically available. By adding a community-based component to legal aid provision, the team members were able to connect with more people and emphasize prevention. Enas says the ABA ROLI program has enabled her to re-envision domestic violence, and she hopes future efforts will continue to dispel the taboo surrounding this crime. 🌀



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