

**HOME IS WHERE THE START IS FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS LEAD GLOBAL JORDAN
DISCUSSIONS ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PREVENTION.**

Women and Girls Lead Global Jordan facilitators are building home-based alliances between women to share information on how to prevent gender-based violence.

“It’s my first time to do such a job. I like it because I feel I can help people, and I want to see change in their attitudes and behaviors such as giving girls the opportunity to learn, work, and even choose a husband.”

April 2015 – It all started with a good film and some popcorn, or more likely, here in Jordan, some homemade cake or biscuits. Deepa Dhanraj’s film [Invoking Justice](#)^[1] has been screening here as one of the “Women of the World” series of documentary films used by the [Women and Girls Lead Global](#) (WGLG) program to spark conversation on the sensitive topic of gender-based violence and gender equality. “At first, after the film ends, most women say the protagonists live in harder conditions than theirs. But after a little conversation, they relate to what they’ve watched and admit that the women in their communities suffer from the same issues. They realize women and girls issues are somewhat universal.,” says Mays Zaneh, Country Engagement Coordinator for WGLG Jordan.

Invoking Justice takes place over 4,000 kilometers southeast, in Southern India, where 3-4 million Tamil Muslims live as the minority, and family disputes are still settled by all-male community councils, called “Jamaats,” that rule according to Islamic Sharia law. Women are forbidden to be present, or even to represent themselves. But one feminist named Sharifa takes a bold step and founds a woman-led Jamaat in 2003.

In Jordan, where Islam is the predominant religion, women confront some of the same issues in that they may be left out of decisions that concern them. “Women who screened the film here understood that they too are vulnerable to some harmful traditions that are actually against religion and law, but they do not know where to go to seek help, “ Mays said.

In *Invoking Justice*, Sharifa’s Jamaat is extremely successful, with over 10,000 domestic cases to date handled by the now highly respected all-women’s council.

Mays and the facilitators she trains hold peer-to-peer screenings of this film and others in the series to spark conversation on what can be very sensitive topics in socially conservative cultures. “The role of the facilitator,” she says, is to create a “link between what the audience watches on film in these foreign countries to what happens in their small communities.”

Although the screenings at the community centers have been successful, Mays thought that home-based screenings might lead to more profound experiences for the women in a setting where they might feel more comfortable to share personal experiences on topics like domestic violence, harassment, divorce, and property issues. She was right.

According to Mays, after only a few months, these little home-based sparks are spreading like wildfire. “Many of the groups have requested to continue having these sessions so they can learn

more tools about women’s empowerment. From the women we had in just one screening, three have already started their own small NGOs to continue education for other women and to work more closely with other vulnerable women in their neighborhoods.”

Nisreen Abu Rumman, a facilitator from Sahab added, “I wanted to reach out to more women who cannot come to the community center, that’s why I enjoy going to see them in their homes. I also enjoy giving them information and resources to help themselves and become more empowered.”

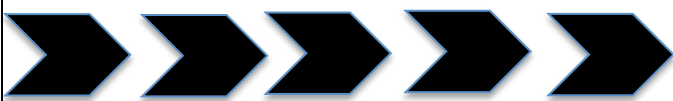
Mays has responded to the increased demand by setting up facilitator trainings of women who will work in homes across the country, setting up screenings and discussions that become fertile ground for new ideas and innovations on how best to empower women and promote more equitable gender roles in the country.

Says Hanadi Maharmah, a facilitator trainee from Sahab, “It’s my first time to do such a job. I like it because I feel I can help people, and I want to see change in their attitudes and behaviors such as giving girls the opportunity to learn, work, and even choose a husband.”

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[Women and Girls Lead Global - Jordan](#) - is a USAID - funded initiative that uses documentary film to inspire and catalyze community action on important global issues affecting women and girls. Participating countries include: Bangladesh, Kenya, India, Jordan and Peru. Partner funders: ITVS, Ford Foundation, and CARE. www.wglg.org

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