

S E S S I O N 1

Who Is a Leader?

Session Objectives

- To explore definitions of leadership and the characteristics of good leaders.
- To broaden the participants' perspectives about who is and who can be a leader.
- To discuss and critique the workshop's learning methodology.
- To share participants' expectations and goals for the workshop over the next 11 sessions.

Before You Start: The “Communicating in a Workshop Setting” section of the handbook provides some ideas for what to do when you arrive for the first workshop session, what to do when the participants arrive, and supplies that you may need throughout the workshop. As an effective facilitator, your role is to direct conversation, stimulate discussion, keep to the agenda, share responsibility with other participants, and join in the discussions. Enjoy yourself—remember you are also participating in the workshop to gain knowledge and to have fun.

Suggestions for Facilitation

Read aloud the following story told by Asma Khader. Discuss her definition of a leader and leadership characteristics. The questions that follow may help guide the group discussion. One person—the facilitator or a volunteer—may wish to write down key points on a chalk board or flip chart.

The Question and Answer (Q & A) facilitation method works well here. The facilitator may ask additional general, open-ended questions that complement the Questions for Discussion below to get the discussion going (see Appendix B for more on this facilitation tactic).

One Woman Can Make a Difference

Asma Khader: Human Rights Advocate

“I am not sure whether I am a leader, but I know that becoming one means that you perceive the urgent need to address a problem—that you feel the need to fill a space by initiating activities, campaigns, and programs to focus on specific issues. If people in your community truly believe that you are fulfilling a need, then they will support you, bestowing upon you the position of leadership. When people trust you, they will look to you to help them reach their own goals.

About twenty years ago, a frightened and grief-stricken young woman came to my office requesting my help. She recounted how her husband had murdered their fifteen-year old daughter who was pregnant as the result of a rape. He was sentenced to only six months in jail, claiming that he killed the girl to vindicate the family’s honor. Yet this woman, determined to honor her daughter’s memory, revealed the truth to me—that her husband was in fact the rapist, and that she suspected him of murdering their daughter because the pregnancy had begun to show. The court readily believed her husband and did not bother to investigate the crime.

Although this woman came to my office only once and then disappeared, thanks to her, I learned a great deal about how women and girls suffer due to specific laws. I realized that I could not be an effective lawyer if I did not do my best to change laws that cover up and even sanction crimes against women. This woman challenged me to address a problem that I could not ignore—crimes of honor.

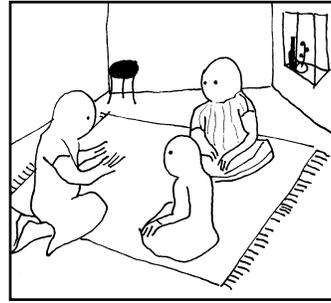
And so it happened that I became one of the leaders in the campaign to eradicate honor crimes. Yet I think that this woman who trusted me, who was brave enough to visit my office and inform me about this reality, she was the leader. She overcame her own fears to expose her husband’s crime and seek my assistance. People like her challenge us to examine issues that we had not previously considered. We must follow such people and try to serve.”¹¹

Asma Khader, an attorney, human rights advocate, and former president of the Jordanian Women’s Union, has spearheaded campaigns to eliminate honor crimes and violence against women and girls in Jordan.

¹¹ Based on a videotaped interview with Asma Khader on June 1, 2000 by Women’s Learning Partnership.

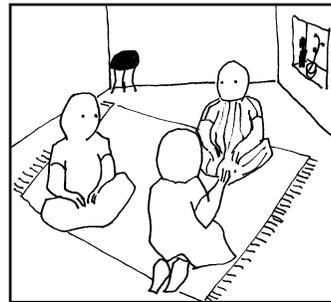
Questions for Discussion

- How does Asma Khader define leadership?
- What qualities and skills does she have that make her a leader?
- How does Asma Khader become a leader? Does her leadership derive from personal characteristics? From the situations she is confronting? Both? Are there other contributing factors?
- What motivates the mother to visit Asma Khader's office? What role did this woman play in Asma Khader's life?
- Is Asma Khader the only leader in this account? Why or why not?
- Can a leader also be a follower? In what way?



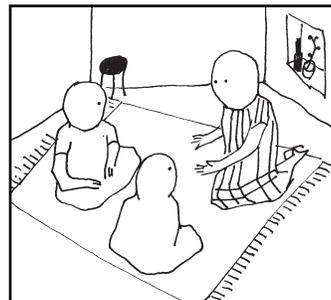
Questions Around the Group

- Ask each participant to summarize briefly: How do you define leadership? What characteristics does a principled leader have?



Observations

- How did you feel when we went around the group to ask each person for her opinion? Were you comfortable speaking in that format?
- Were you surprised by something you heard?
- Did writing down the comments during the discussion help or hinder it?
- If you were facilitating today's discussion, what would you do to encourage participation by all the group's members?



Workshop Evaluation Questions

The facilitator or a volunteer should take notes on a chalk board or flip chart during the following group discussion.

- What would you like to achieve by the end of the 12 workshop sessions?
- Do you have any questions or concerns about how the workshop sessions will be structured?
- Do you usually find it easy or difficult to participate in group discussions? Are there ways that the facilitator or other participants can help the rest of the group feel more confident about speaking up?
- What specific leadership issues would you like to have addressed over the next 12 sessions?

Suggestion: You may ask the participants to submit their responses in writing or, alternatively, you may record their responses on a flip chart. The responses are to be returned to the participants when they evaluate the workshop at the end of Session 12 so that they may gauge how their understanding of leadership changed over the course of the sessions.

Instructions for the Next Session

During the next week, think about a woman whom you consider a leader. This woman may be a conventional leader such as a political official or she may be an ordinary person—somebody who perceived a basic problem in her life or that of her community and sought to solve it. In other words, you may realize that this “unconventional” leader is a member of your family or one of your friends. Be prepared to give a brief summary (three to five minutes) of this leader’s story to the group during the next session. Focus on the challenges that this leader confronted as well as on the qualities and skills that she demonstrated in addressing problems.

Leadership is:

Gender-Inclusive: Ideally, men and women become partners in defining, working for, and achieving goals that benefit all.

Communicative: Everyone has something to contribute and every instance of contribution becomes an instance of leadership.

Purposeful: To define and elaborate a purpose is to engage in a learning process. At the same time, it is engaging in exercising power.

Democratic and Egalitarian: In a communicative, participatory society, participants respect and value each other as whole human beings.

Means-Sensitive: “The ends do not justify the means” is a well-known principle of ethical behavior across the world. This principle means that ethical people do not use unethical means to achieve goals regardless of their importance or immediacy.

“The Building Blocks of Leadership”