

S E S S I O N 1 2

How Do We Define a Successful Organization?

Session Objectives

- To discuss the importance of sharing experiences and learning from one another to further an organization's aims.
- To share participants' definitions of a successful organization.
- To critique how well the workshop teams' hypothetical organizations meet their objectives.
- To reflect on the goals and achievements of the workshop over the past twelve sessions.

Before You Start: The "Communicating in a Workshop Setting" section of the handbook provides some ideas for how to conclude the leadership workshop. Participants may wish to organize a small party or outing to mark the end of the workshop, and may also want to exchange personal information in order to stay in touch with one another. Remember to photocopy and distribute the Participant and Facilitator Evaluation Form, and allow enough time at the end of the final session for everyone to fill it out. This form is useful for adjusting and improving future workshop programs.

Suggestions for Facilitation

Read aloud the following story about the establishment of the Arab Court. Discuss among the group whether the Court meets the group's criteria for a successful organization. The questions that follow may help guide the group discussion.

During the last session, group members were asked to divide into teams to discuss the creation of a hypothetical organization. Following today's discussion about the Arab Court, each rapporteur from Session 11 will describe her team's organization, focusing on how and why the team designed it the way it did. The rest of the group should carefully consider each organization's purpose, structure, and activities, and ask questions to help each team clarify how the team's hypothetical organization will meet its objectives.

Facilitation methods for this session and the following exercise could involve holding the discussion with the entire group or dividing the participants into smaller groups (see Appendix B for further suggestions).

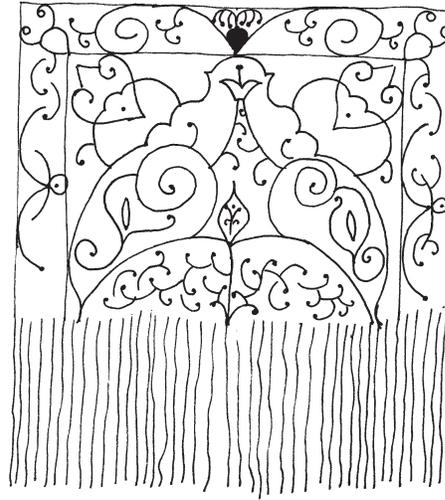
The Permanent Arab Court to Resist Violence Against Women

The Permanent Arab Court to Resist Violence Against Women was born during a November 30–December 1, 1996 meeting of Arab non-governmental organizations held in Rabat, Morocco. The establishment of the Arab Court, as it is known, took skeptics by surprise for some insisted that violence against women and girls is endemic to Arab/Muslim culture and to all societies, inevitable in the interaction between males and females, or simply not a serious problem. However, the women and men who worked to institute the Arab Court sought to prove the skeptics wrong. While the Court's emergence may have seemed sudden to observers, it was the culmination of accumulated experience and knowledge shared by violence survivors and those who strive to combat this scourge.

As part of the regional preparations for the Fourth UN Conference on Women, men and women from fourteen Arab societies convened in June 1995 in Beirut, Lebanon. Survivors of and advocates against gender violence bravely lifted their voices in an unprecedented recounting of testimonials. They described in vivid detail how they and other women had endured violence by members of their families and communities. Listening to these witnesses reinforced the conviction that gender violence was at the root of women's and girls' inferior status in health care, education, and decision-making throughout the diverse cultures of the Arab world. Those in Beirut reached a consensus that they must tackle this problem in order to champion women's human rights effectively.

During the next year and a half, advocates, researchers, and survivors collaborated to formulate their objectives and design a plan of action. Their goal was to transfer the issue of gender violence from the private arena to the public discourse, and to develop a methodology for addressing the problem that is sensitive to local cultural, political, and socio-economic realities. The exchange of unique experiences among individuals unified by a shared goal led to the creation of a flexible permanent court that meets regularly and implements activities on a regional basis.

Headquartered in Beirut, where the general coordinator resides, the Arab Court's membership is open to all who agree with its objectives and support the cause. Members have not envisaged the Court as a traditional one where cases are litigated but rather as a unique venue for women, a safe space for open and free discussion about gender violence and its solutions. As such, the Court's proceedings resemble public hearings rather than adversarial confrontations between prosecutors and defendants. The Arab Court's flexible structure has enabled members to adapt it to the needs and circumstances of various individuals and societies.



Since its creation, the Court has focused mainly on eradicating four forms of violence against women and girls—violence in marriage such as spousal abuse, violence resulting from divorce, violence arising out of custodial relationships, and violence caused by property disputes. The Arab Court's plan of action entails detecting and documenting all acts of violence for the general public, examining and denouncing all factors that encourage gender violence, lobbying governments and NGOs to take concrete steps that vindicate women's rights to bodily integrity, and introducing new laws and amending existing legislation to fully protect women and girls. The Court cannot compel individuals, groups, or governments to take action; its effectiveness depends on the commitment of its members to prevent and eliminate gender violence.

Most recently, the Arab Court concentrated on two activities that members deemed necessary: revising personal status laws in various Arab societies and pressuring governments to provide more services to survivors of violence. The Arab Court has continued the practice of listening to witnesses whose trials, tribulations, and triumphs inspire and guide those who struggle against gender violence. Learning as its membership grows, the Court spearheaded a regional movement against violence through patience, persistence, and personal outreach to those most in need.²⁶

²⁶ The information on the Permanent Arab Court to Resist Violence Against Women is from <http://www.arabwomenscourt.org/>.

Questions for Discussion

- What circumstances led to the establishment of the Arab Court?
- What are the Arab Court's principal goals? What plan of action have the Court's members developed to meet these goals?
- How might telling her own story help or hurt a victim of violence?
- What impact did listening to testimonials have on those who met in Beirut in 1995? Why has the Arab Court continued the practice of listening to witnesses?
- Can you speculate on how the Arab Court might have functioned if a government or governments had established it? How would an organization founded by governments differ from the Arab Court as it exists now?
- What aspects of the Arab Court helped it to succeed in its aim?
- What should the Court do to ensure its continued success and usefulness?
- How should the Court evaluate its effectiveness? What indicators or criteria should it use?
- What role could technology play in the cross-national communications between the Arab Court's members?
- What are the elements of a successful organization? Which of these apply to the Arab Court?

Exercise: Building a Learning Organization (Part 2)

Allow approximately one hour for this exercise.

1. Rapporteurs from each team from Session 11 will report on their team's hypothetical organization. They should describe the organization's name, goals, structure, and activities, and the process by which the team came to its decisions. Before the first rapporteur begins, the facilitator or a volunteer should read the list of issues below for workshop members to consider when evaluating each team's organization:

- Is the organization practical?
- Are its structure and aims flexible enough for growth and adaptation to new situations?
- Does the organization capitalize on the strengths of its staff members and volunteers?
- Do its activities help achieve its goals?
- Does the organization meet its own criteria for success and/or effectiveness?
- Is it a learning organization? Why or why not?

2. In addition to discussing the different organizations' set up and activities, workshop participants should examine how each team came to its decisions. After each rapporteur has described her team's organization and it has been fully evaluated by the others in the workshop, the entire group should address the following questions:

- How did team members share responsibilities?
- How did team members come to their decisions?
- Did it seem as though most of the teams' members agreed about their choices and the reasons for them?
- What was most difficult about this exercise?
- What was enjoyable about this exercise?
- Is anyone in the group considering making any of the teams' hypothetical organizations, or aspects of them, a reality?

Workshop Evaluation Questions

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

- What did you achieve during the workshop sessions that you had hoped to achieve?
- Did you have objectives for your participation in the workshop that were not met? If so, what were they?
- Did it become easier to join in the discussions as the workshop sessions progressed? If so, why?
- What did you like or dislike about the structure of the sessions?
- What was the most interesting, inspirational, or enjoyable exercise, discussion, or experience during the past 12 sessions? Why?
- What specific lessons or ideas did you gain from the workshop sessions that you will try to incorporate into your own work? How will you change your own behavior, expectations, or choices in the future as a result of the workshop sessions?
- What changes would you suggest for future workshops?