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Learning Agenda Mini-case #6

Morocco

LDDF – Democratic League of the rights of Women, Rabat

The LDDF was founded in 1993. There now have 14 centers, with their headquarters in Casablanca. According to someone we met who knows the organization well, the founder is very much a ‘control’ person, and as a result there are tensions with some of the regional centers that have to do with the feeling that she manipulates information and communication – The director apparently wants to be at the center of things, and when for example a training is offered by a donor, it is she who usually attends, even though she has little to do with the day to day operations.

Violence against women is the foremost issue for them and they focus on getting the laws enforced, etc. In their view, the problem is getting worse, especially with the trend towards more conservative Islam. They say that men and even young men are now approaching women in the streets and saying “cover up.” Women’s position in many homes in some ways has taken a step backwards, they feel. And this despite the new laws that the king has promulgated in recent years giving women new rights.

The organization runs a woman’s shelter in Casablanca, has a center in Rabat, and has for years been doing “caravans,” a sort of mobile one stop shop concept of health and legal services where they stop in a town, set up for a week or more, talk to people, work with local authorities and renew contacts with small Community based organizations. This is very much an outreach program. They say their underlying goal is to make their work of much more wider appeal than other such organizations, they want very much to reach all women, and make a point of saying they are not ‘elitist.’ Indeed the women who run the Rabat center are themselves lower middle class women, many of whom are unmarried or divorced. They want to focus both on changing mentalities, and providing services to women who need them. To do the first, they say they work to get the laws adopted and enforced.

They do workshops, training, have 6 modules in a sort of school of “equality and citizenship.” Their trainings run for 6 weekends and involve 25-30 people at a time.

They have been connected to efforts and seminars in Tunisia and Denma

Their relations with donors have been bumpy. They had three successive grants from Spanish Oxfam beginning in 2001. One of these was a project which ran from 2003-2007 to disseminate legal rights information. Then in 2007-2011 they took on a new larger project which became a serious challenge for them – they realize now they were too ambitious; because the grant was unusually large for them, they bought a small building,

rented two more, and basically took on too much. There were Human Resource problems, budget management problems, and no clear lines of authority. They admit they couldn't handle it and were overwhelmed. One of their lessons they learned from the experience was to put specialists in each thematic area and let them do their work and no more. Plus the project had too many "cooks" - there were partner associations in the project and two donors (both Spanish). And when they ran into some financial problems and asked for more money they were refused.

Their biggest need now is help on fundraising – they don't have the time or the knowledge. As for the INDH (the government program) they say that if you are not in the right party forget it – and they want to stay un-affiliated. Finally, they add, as government ministers change, so do their emphases and pet projects. Now they are struggling, running out of money, but have to continue, keep to their engagements. They are however at the moment engaged in discussions with Finland about some core funding, but don't know if they'll succeed.