

**A successful organizing project solves a community problem, creates new community capacity, and develops new community leadership. Organizing as an approach is most effective in addressing problems of power: enabling people to mobilize the power they need to solve their problems by working together or by challenging others who hold power over them. An organizing project requires (a) mobilizing a constituency to (b) collaborate with each other, to (c) achieve a real change. Please find below an example from our class last year.**

## **Safe Homes Campaign, Jabal Al-Natheef, Amman, Jordan**

**Dima Alashram**

---

***Who are your people: what is the community of people you will be working with to bring about change?***

I am working with 270 people from the Jabal Al-Natheef community in East Amman, Jordan. These people include mothers, fathers, youth, teachers, principals and community activists who reside in Jabal Al-Natheef and who represent 4 different neighborhoods. All these individuals have stories of physical, verbal and emotional abuse and they are tired of seeing their children go through the same cycle.

***What is the problem the above mentioned community is facing and what is the change that they want to see?***

The children in this community are exposed to physical, verbal and emotional abuse on a daily basis. The community wants this to stop. This abuse occurs in schools, homes and on the street. To aggravate matters, this abuse is being justified by using religious and cultural rhetoric that tries to categorize abuse by justifying some types as “disciplinary beating” (that parents use to discipline their children), and “harsh beating” (that are considered harmful and rejected by the community).

The community wants to see this change and have an environment that is free of all forms of abuse. They want to bring about a change in the perception that children need to be beaten and yelled upon to ensure proper upbringing.

***Who or what is preventing this change from happening now?***

The current belief system is preventing this change. The larger community believes that verbal and physical abuse is very deeply engrained in our culture and even if parents stop using a strong hand against their children, teachers in school will not be willing to do so.

***What did you think is required for this change to happen? Can your people (mentioned in Question 1) bring about this change?***

Our community believes that the people within the community need to change for us to achieve an abuse free society. If everyone learned about and implemented alternative non-abusive disciplining methods, became active in preventing abuse, spoke up against it, shared their personal narratives and are able to create a neighborhood watch committee, abuse will stop within our community.

Towards this end, we are organizing 270 people to create 1500 homes safe from physical abuse in Jabal Al-Natheef. We will achieve this through parents learning about alternative parenting methods, understanding the motives and reasons behind abuse, learning interventions to protect abused children and holding the abuser accountable through neighborhood accountability teams. We aim to achieve this in 18 months starting April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2012 and ending on September 2013”

**How did your campaign proceed?**

The 270 people created 7 teams representing 4 different neighborhoods. The community believes that by creating a geographical team structure, it will be able to create 1500 homes safe from abuse. All teams meet on a weekly basis. They are all learning and implementing alternative disciplining methods to rebuild the relationships with their children. They are using child development science, psychosocial support and children psychology to improve their tactics. The various tactics include:

- Family gatherings: a psychosocial support session facilitated by the parent(s) in which the child shares and reconstructs moments of pain that he/she felt when being abused.
- Read, learn and hold others accountable: reading about alternative parenting methods on a weekly basis for us to learn how to use non-abusive methods. In the weekly meetings, team members tell any story of abuse they have witnessed during the week and how they held the abuser accountable.
- Creating a neighborhood watch committee: made of parents, teachers and community activists to hold abusers accountable by talking to them, offering them professional help, and helping children cope.
- “The secret neighbor”: every family looks out for its neighbors who might have abuse in their homes. They reach out to them to offer support and help their neighbors control the factors that lead them to become abusive. They can help them by taking care of their children for some hours, or the abusing parent can call the secret neighbor for help if he/she thinks they are about to hurt someone.

***What outcome do you hope to achieve by the end of the class?***

The Safe Homes campaign aims to create 1500 homes in Jabal Al-Natheef free from all kinds of abuse by September 2013. By the end of class (May), I hope to be able to create the first tier of leadership, made of 50 committed community organizers, who are trained on community organizing. These 50 organizers will meet on a weekly basis and implement tactics in their homes. They will recruit the second tier of leadership in order to reach the 270 organizers target.