

Engaging Religious Leaders to Address Violence Against Women in a Religiously-Fragmented Society



What is ABAAD?

- “Dimensions”
- A leading resource center on gender equality & GBV in MENA
- A non-profit, non-politically affiliated, non-religious civil society organization working toward gender equality as an essential condition to sustainable social & economic development
- A dynamic team of activists, lawyers, social workers, researchers
- And me?



Why a campaign with religious leaders?

- In Lebanon – & region – religion carries great weight
- Lebanon has 19 religious sects
- 15-year civil war fueled by religious divisions – tensions remain
- Religious jurisdiction not only spiritual – also extends to issues of law & state



Why did ABAAD take on this challenge?

- Tensions between religious institutions & civil society
- ABAAD as new organization – opportunity to build good relationship
- First step to rebuilding trust between religious institutions & women’s organizations
- Belief that religious leaders can be allies
- Bridging divide is vital to influence policy & legislative changes for women



What does this mean in Lebanon?

- A major obstacle to passing Protection of Women from Family Violence Bill is lack of endorsement from religious leaders
- Resulted in decreased awareness & attention to women's human rights overall
- Bill waiting for vote in Parliament – but changes introduced



What were the dimensions of the campaign?

- Nation-wide campaign “We Believe... Partners to End Violence Against Women”
- Launched for 16 Days in 2012
- Leaders of 4 largest religious groups in Lebanon – Maronite, Orthodox, Sunni, Shiite
- Messages based on religious text & belief, endorsing human rights & condemning VAW
- Leaders issued own statements – using religious texts to support their decree
- Leaders committed to join ABAAD to end VAW in Lebanon
- The bottom line: all women are entitled to a life of dignity free from violence – & all religions agree on this



What is significant about this?

- First of its kind in Lebanon & MENA – despite fragmented history & lingering religious tensions
- New campaign – no formal evaluation but shows potential for good practice
- Case study in social messaging for prevention, changing social norms & engaging challenging group in violence-prevention
- Message to reject VAW brings together otherwise-opposed religious groups under a shared agenda



What else...?

- Religious leaders agreed to become voices for Lebanese women of all faiths
- Religious leaders as catalysts for positive change – civil society needs to work with them as allies & partners
- Message resonates with men who might not otherwise be listening
- Conveying message through religious institutions demonstrates weight of issue – & demonstrates that it is NOT accepted by any religion, under any circumstance



How was the campaign launched?

- Regional roundtable discussion on role of religion in ending VAW
- Official visits to religious leaders for approval & endorsement
- Messages prepared together with leaders
- Campaign initiated with discussions on VAW in prayer services - both Christian & Muslim



How was potential resistance addressed?

- Potential resistance:
 - ... to addressing VAW
 - ... to working with ABAAD/civil society
 - ... to working with each other
- Extensive background work on leaders – their platforms & perspectives
- Discussions to ensure buy-in & prevent resistance
- Familiarity with ABAAD
- Clarifying definitions & terms – reaching agreement



“We Believe...Partners to End Violence Against Women and Girls”

The International 16 Days to End Violence Against Women & Girls Campaign

Campaign TV ad:

[http://](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Lv32De0UjA&list=PLvPajAM6tiFhXwju6vohv57Ohs2MZNZ6)

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Lv32De0UjA&](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Lv32De0UjA&list=PLvPajAM6tiFhXwju6vohv57Ohs2MZNZ6)

[list=PLvPajAM6tiFhXwju6vohv57Ohs2MZNZ6](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Lv32De0UjA&list=PLvPajAM6tiFhXwju6vohv57Ohs2MZNZ6)

We reached out to new dimensions...

Social Media:

- YouTube/ad: 20,524 views (41% female & 59% male)
- Facebook: 6908 new fans (58% female & 62% male) - new total: 25,312 fans
- Both YouTube & Facebook social media are reaching more men than women - ABAAD is using the right message - & men are paying attention!
- Reaching Lebanese diaspora



We expanded media dimensions...

Print & Electronic Media:

- 35 print & online articles
- 22 banners in all major newspapers
- Press release to global networks – 16 Days, UNiTE, AWiD, etc.
- Mass emails – 10,000 recipients
- Documentary – ABAAD YouTube page

Television:

- Ads 6-7 times/day for 16 Days on 11 local & regional channels

The screenshot shows the homepage of L'Orient LE JOUR.com. At the top, there is a navigation bar with categories like ACTUALITÉS, LOISIRS, DÉBATS, CARNET, PETITES ANNONCES, MULTIMÉDIA, SERVICES, ÉDITORIAL, CHRONIQUE, and PLUMES. A search bar and a subscription link are also visible. The main content area features a large advertisement for 'Appartements de 160 m2 à Mar Roukoz, Liban, à partir de \$240,000' by SAYFCO. Below this, there is a video player showing a man speaking, with the title 'La Palestine État observateur à l'ONU : l'histoire en marche'. To the right, there is a 'SPÉCIAL : IMMOBILIER' section with a list of news items. At the bottom, there is a 'Printemps cocu' article and a 'Egypte : le projet de Constitution adopté, prochain référendum' article. A 's'abonner' button is located in the bottom right corner.



Radio:

- Ads 6 times/day on 11 local stations
- 7 radio interviews

Billboard:

- 430 billboards for 16 Days
- 44 unipoles - still there!

Mobile Media:

- 3 trucks with LED screens showed images of the campaign for 16 Days



We created dimensions of solidarity...

- Donors/partners: 14 donors/partners engaged
- Corporate sponsors: Delta Group staff (400) wore ABAAD campaign pins saying *United Against VAW* for 16 Days
- Increased volunteers: 41 youth expressed interest in volunteering at ABAAD for the campaign - & beyond
- Youth engagement: Youth outreach program underway
- Tools development: Regional tools to engage religious leaders
- Campaign in numbers:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PA54t0fYKyo&list=PLyPaiAM6tjFhXwju6yohy57Ohs2MZNZ6Y>



We built dimensions of support...

- Campaign as first step
- Ongoing dialogue with religious leaders to keep them engaged
- Leaders commit their institutions to follow-up actions – to keep the campaign alive



Why is it important to emphasize positive dimensions?

- Innovative use of multi-dimensional strategy using positive psychology
- Engaging men as partners, champions, supporters is crucial component to end VAW
- Working with religious leaders to reach men - & women
- In line with ABAAD's philosophy to inspire change & instigate action
- Raising awareness for social justice & respect for human rights for ALL



Where does this campaign fit?

- Part of a larger strategy - ABAAD's long-term vision for working with men & boys
- Addressing multiple layers of violence:
 - Regional – national – community – individual
- Engaging various groups:
 - Leaders: policy makers & legislators (religious leaders & politicians)
 - Survivors: male survivors of SV – part of Syria response
 - Perpetrators: Men's Center/clinic
 - Youth: awareness/prevention – engaging the changemakers



The future of the movement...

- Young men produced & acted in advertisements
- Aired on Lebanese national television as part of 16 Days
- “Beating is... “
- Divorce:
[http://
www.youtube.com/watch?v=L6AfE-g98pY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L6AfE-g98pY)
- Young champions = key driving force for all aspects of this strategy



THANK YOU!

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**... Expanding dimensions of gender equality
& ending GBV**

