



SUCCESS STORY

Women Form School Council

Women learn new skills and begin to have a say in schools



Photo: USAID

The mother's council meets at the local Sheikh's house.

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Al-Hussein Bin Ali School lies three kilometers north of Al-Qimah village in Amran, at the foot of Thula Mountain, Yemen. People in the village have lived in closely grouped houses since long before Hajj Al-Rowni was born. Al-Rowni is a 70-year-old Sheikh, and it was with his help that USAID brought change to the school.

The idea of forming a school mothers' council was totally new — it had never been done. When USAID-funded education experts approached Al-Rowni with the idea, he immediately recognized its benefits. Moreover, he thought that forming a mothers' council and organizing for women's activities would not conflict with Yemeni culture or religion. He agreed enthusiastically to help, and even encouraged his own daughters to accompany the experts as they visited each village woman at her home. The presence of his daughters indicated that Al-Rowni approved of the project, and the women began to accept the idea. The first mothers' meeting was conducted at Al-Rowni's house.

The women voted and formed a women's council. They held regular meetings at the sheikh's house, where they expressed a need for activities to help them in their everyday life, such as learning how to read, cook, and sew. But the schools were not yet ready to accept the idea of a mother's council. So the women waited. In the meantime, they asked USAID's project to help them form a summer camp. Sheikh Al-Rowni convinced the community that the camp would be beneficial. Similar support came from the imams of the mosques, who stressed that such camps would help women and girls to learn new skills.

About 85 girls and 15 mothers participated in the three-week camp. Most of the women did not know how to sew, even though many actually owned a sewing machine. After three weeks, they had learned to sew, make handicrafts, and provide first-aid in emergencies. They also learned about health issues, like hygiene. Most of the women found that the first-aid and health information helped a lot, as there are no health clinics near the village. The camp's success paved the way for the women's council to begin collaborating with the school. The school accepted the idea of a mothers' council, forging new bonds between the school and the community.