

TEACHING NOTE
FOR WORKSHOP
FACILITATORSFHAIDA'S JOURNEY: PROMOTING
POPULATION, HEALTH, AND
ENVIRONMENT INTERVENTIONS
IN A MUSLIM COMMUNITY

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| Key Issue | Case-Study Discussion Questions |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Advocacy strategies | 2–5, 7–9 |
| Religious and cultural barriers | 1, 6, 7, 10 |
| Gender roles | 1, 9, 10 |

Case-Study Synopsis

Development practitioners must often invent strategies to work within constraints posed by traditional and cultural beliefs that may affect the progress of community projects. This case study is a fictional story that synthesizes many of the challenges and obstacles that two actual development NGOs—the Tawi-Tawi Marine Research and Development Foundation and the Tarbilang Foundation—faced in mobilizing women to address PHE issues. The story demonstrates strategies that were used to advocate change, strategies that also respected the religious values of a Muslim community in the Philippines. While the events of this case study occur in a Muslim religious and cultural setting, the lessons the case study contains may be usefully applied in a variety of settings.

Teaching Tip

Some participants may feel uncomfortable or uncertain about discussing this case if they are not Muslim or are unfamiliar with Islam. Productive discussions can arise from this case, however, if participants are encouraged to reframe the questions as addressing any setting in which strong religious or cultural beliefs influence development programming.

Selected Learning Points

While this case study is a fictional story, it is based on the experiences of the two case-study authors, who have spent many years promoting development and conservation interventions in communities across their home province of

Tawi-Tawi. You may want to share some of their key lessons learned during the workshop discussion, including:

- ▶ **In the face of cultural barriers, advocacy strategies that target various social levels simultaneously may be most effective.** Fhaida's success was supported through her advocacy within her household, with friends, and within the larger community.
- ▶ **Traditional beliefs do not change quickly.** When faced with obstacles that are deeply rooted within culture and tradition, building support for your cause takes time, and victories are usually only incremental.
- ▶ **Developing personal relationships can help to pave the way for change.** Fhaida's willingness to engage in respectful dialogue with the *Aleema* (a female Muslim religious leader) and others in her community helped to establish relationships that allowed for nonthreatening discussions and the expansion of her network of allies.
- ▶ **Identifying influential members of the community and forming alliances with them is critical.** Fhaida succeeded in identifying the key people she could approach, and found intermediaries (her husband and her parents) who could approach influential people to whom she didn't have direct access.

Related Readings and Tools

- ▶ Farzaneh Roudi-Fahimi, *Islam and Family Planning* (Washington, DC: Population Reference Bureau, 2004), accessed online at www.prb.org, on July 11, 2006.
- ▶ Justine Sass, *Women, Men, and Environmental Change: The Gender Dimensions of Environmental Policies and Programs* (Washington, DC: Population Reference Bureau, 2002), accessed online at www.prb.org, on July 11, 2006.

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