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## Advocacy case studies

# PROTECTING WOMEN FROM ABUSE IN EGYPT

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<b>COUNTRY:</b>	<b>Egypt</b>
<b>THEMES:</b>	<b>Human rights; sexual abuse and pornography</b>
<b>ADVOCACY APPROACHES:</b>	<b>Educating community members; government officials; educating; mobilising people and campaigning; using the media</b>

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Tearfund partner Council of Services for Development (CSD) works on the issue of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in Egypt. The issue is a serious one in this country, particularly since the Arab Spring. Many women and girls – both nationals and foreigners – experience daily harassment in many different forms, including verbal, physical, emotional and sexual abuse.

CSD decided to take action. It ran a two-week summer school to support women and girls who had suffered SGBV and were traumatised by their experiences. It aimed to increase awareness of the issue, and provide advice and information about self-protection from abuse and harassment. It also offered psycho-social support to the women and girls, some of whom were suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

The summer school was very well received. It led to the launch of an advocacy campaign around these issues, targeting the Ministry of Social and Internal Affairs which oversees policing and security. CSD's campaign won the support of cinema and television producers, writers, journalists, human rights activists and others; one Christian television producer was particularly instrumental in helping them to get their message out. They produced short films to share the testimonies of survivors, with the aim of building awareness of SGBV and bringing about behaviour change. They wanted to influence Egyptian law to ensure there were more serious consequences for the perpetrators in abuse cases.

CSD also trained up 40 Christian leaders who went on to play a prominent role in the campaign and in sharing its key message that women have the same rights as men, rather than being the property of men. They wanted to challenge attitudes to Sharia law and the role of women in society.

All CSD's work paid off and things began to change. A new police department, run by women, was set up, with the specific aim of protecting women. (All the women are, however, accompanied by men, as stipulated by Sharia law.) There has also been a gradual shift in public opinion, with a corresponding change in behaviour, especially during feasts and festivals.

CDS is now working towards ensuring a minimum three-year prison sentence is given to the perpetrators of abuse or harassment, and that this punishment is uniformly applied, without being undermined by police bribery. Progress is slow, but CSD is persisting in its efforts.