



# HIV AND VIOLENCE IN THE MENA REGION

Luisa Orza, 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2019, SVRI Forum



**“I do not think I would have contracted HIV if I had lived without violence”**

**Algerian woman, LEARN MENA**



# Acknowledgements

LEARN MENA is indebted to the courage and commitment of the women who participated in the community dialogues in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Sudan, and Tunisia and the many stakeholders who supported the process.

LEARN MENA was implemented in 2018 by MENA Rosa, the International HIV/AIDS Alliance, and UNAIDS MENA regional support team. It was supported by USAID.

- Association el Hayet des Personnes Vivant avec le VIH
- Association de Lutte Contre le SIDA (ALCS), Association Tunisienne de Prévention
- Positive (ATP+), Forearms of Change Center to Enable Community (FOCCEC)
- Sudanese PLHIV Care
- Association, Shehab Institution for Promotion and Comprehensive Development, Vivre Positif
- Salamander Trust
- UNAIDS Country Offices in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Sudan and Tunisia

**“Even if a woman  
reaches Mars, her place  
is in the kitchen”**

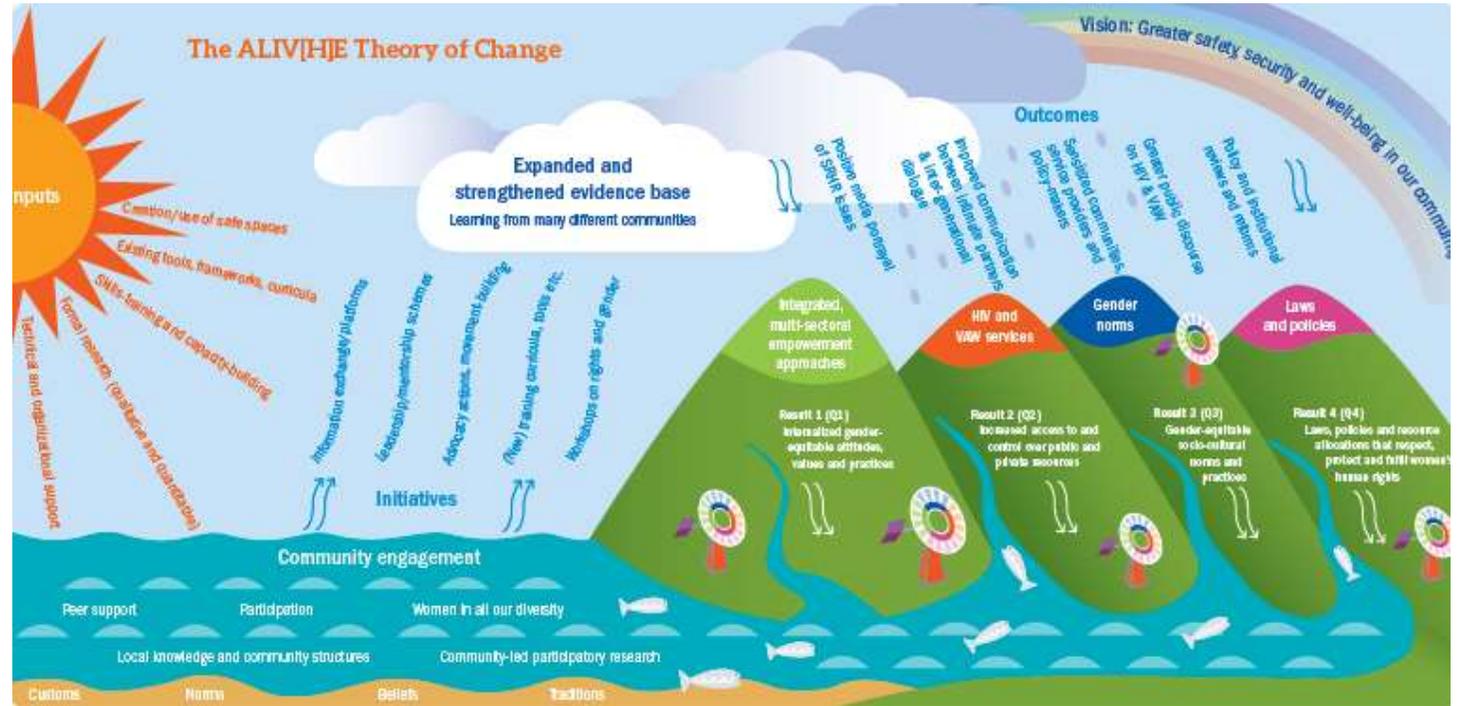
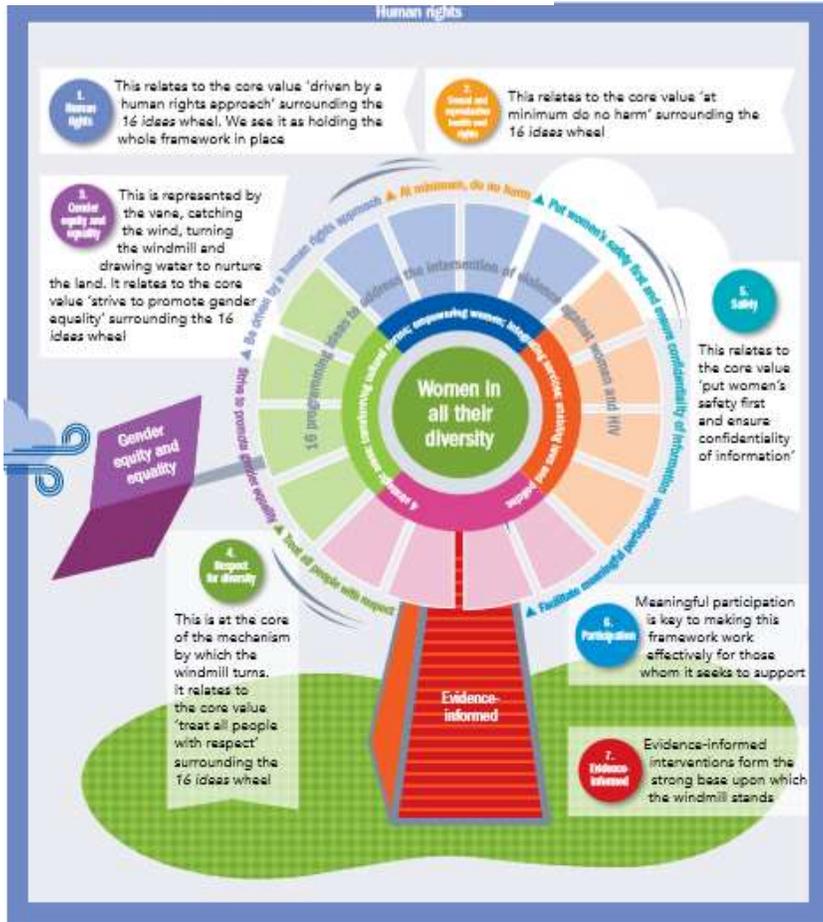
Saying from Jordan



# ALIV[H]E

Action Linking Initiatives on Violence Against Women and HIV Everywhere

## framework



# Women at the centre

## Meaningful engagement of women in their diversity

- LEARN RRG

## Contextual analysis

- Pre- consultation
- Stakeholder mapping

## Skills building

- ALIV[H]E orientation workshops

## Community leadership

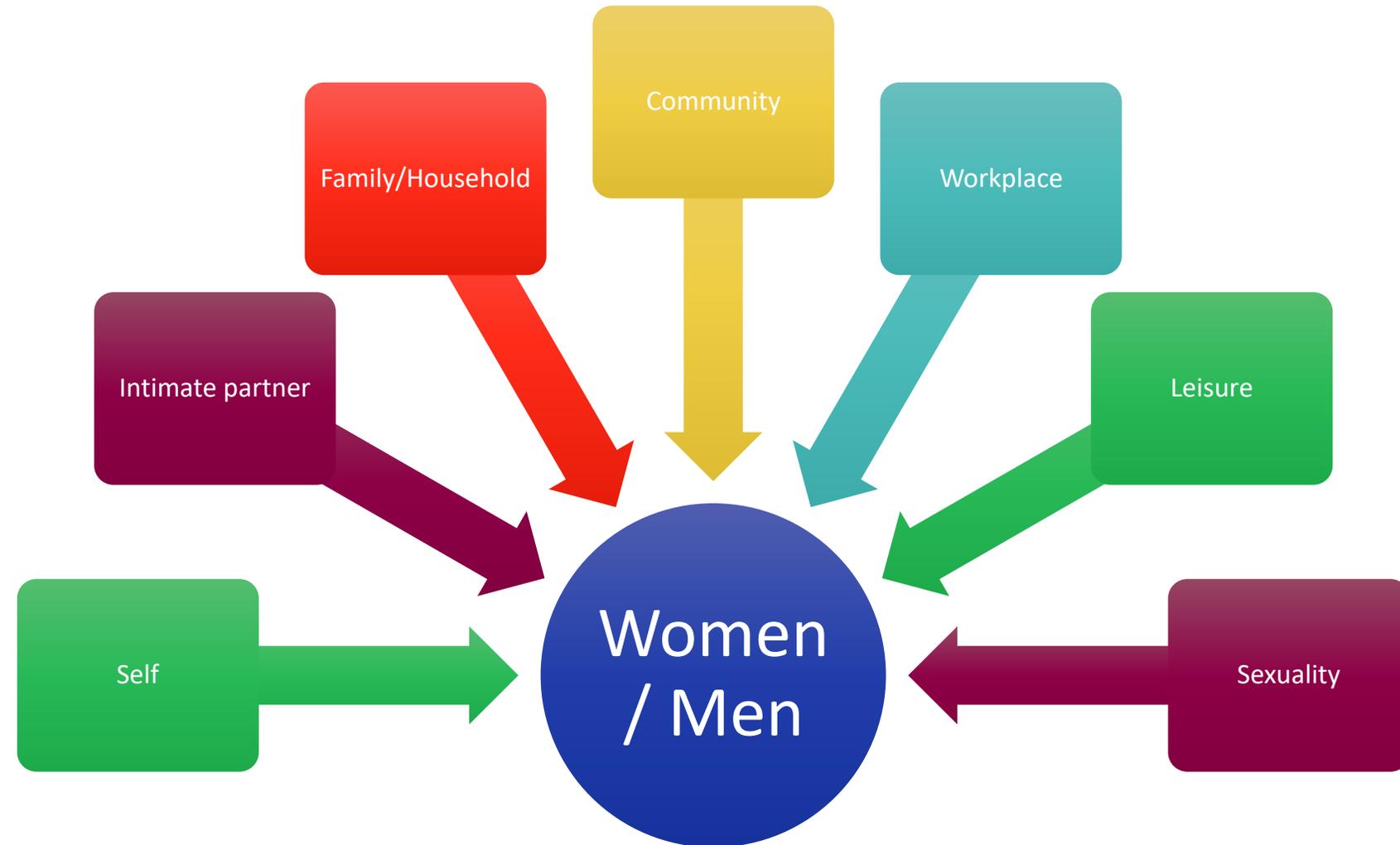
- Community and stakeholder dialogues

At a project level the meaningful involvement of women most affected by HIV in the project:

1. ensured that skills, knowledge and learning from the project are locked into WLHIV networks to build leadership and advocacy;
2. situated the research in the lived realities of the most affected women
3. ensured the process reached women in all their diversity; and,
4. generated socially and culturally acceptable responses to address GBV-HIV linkages.

# Pre-consultation on gender norms

- Grounded the project in gender expectations, roles and stereotypes, and lived realities
- Looked out how both conforming and not conforming to gender norms can increase women's exposure to both HIV and violence



# LEARN overview

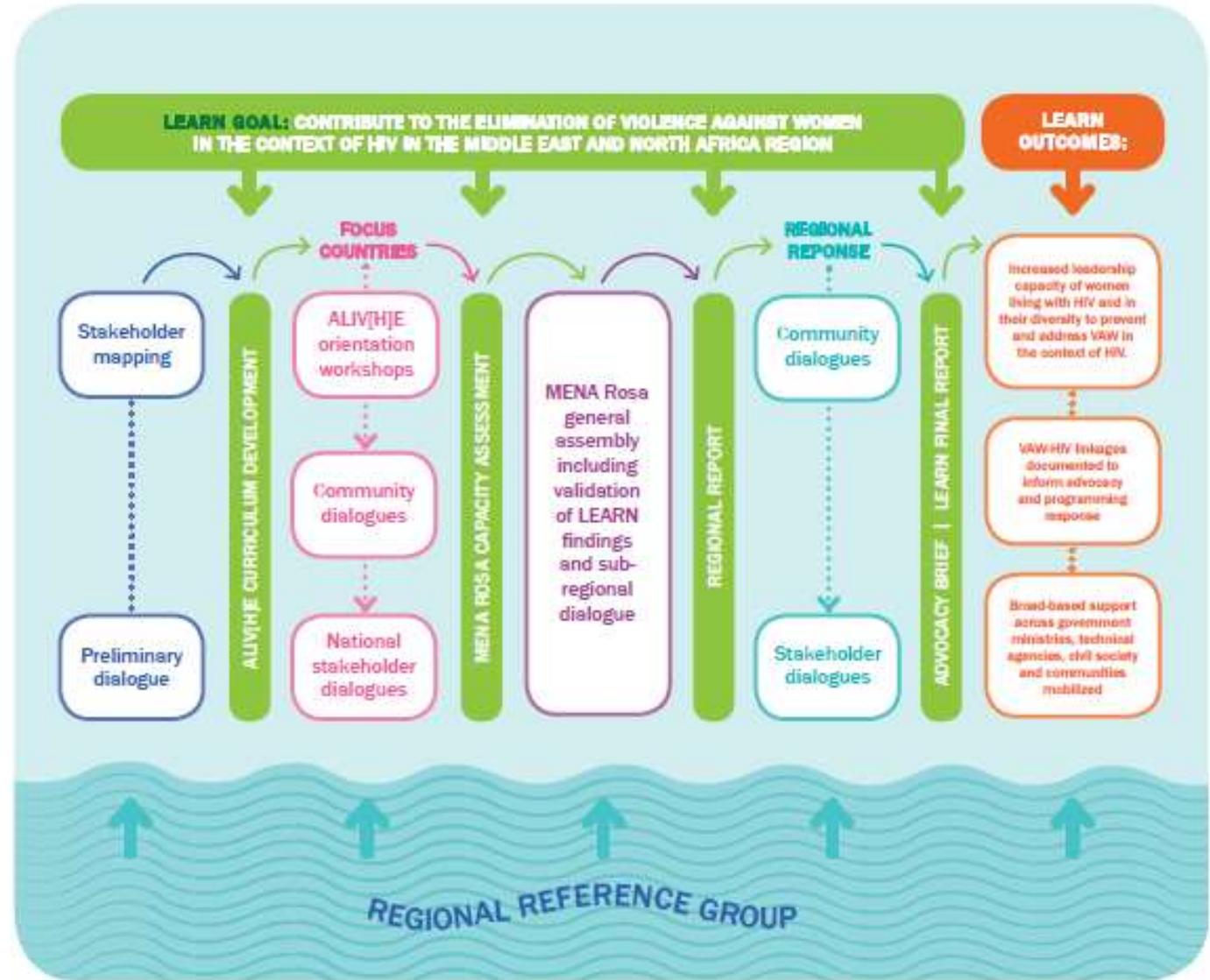
**16** women joined the regional reference group

**51** women took part in a pre-consultation

**3** Country Orientation workshops

**256** women took part in **28** community dialogues

**100+** stakeholders participated in **7** stakeholder dialogues



LEARN MENA project structure and process

**“Violence is everywhere. Over time, and as you get older, you come to see it as normal.”**

Algerian woman, LEARN MENA



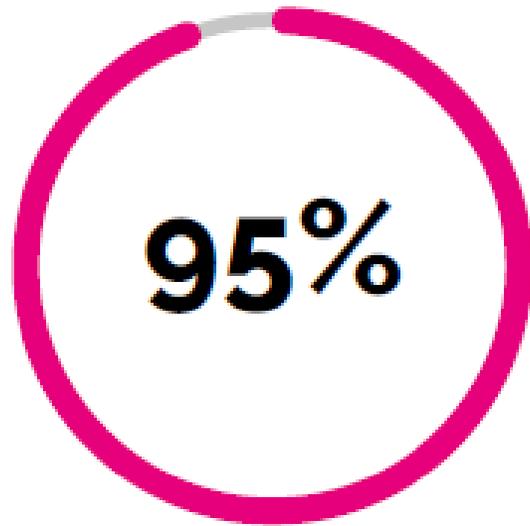
# HIV-GBV linkages

## GBV → HIV → GBV

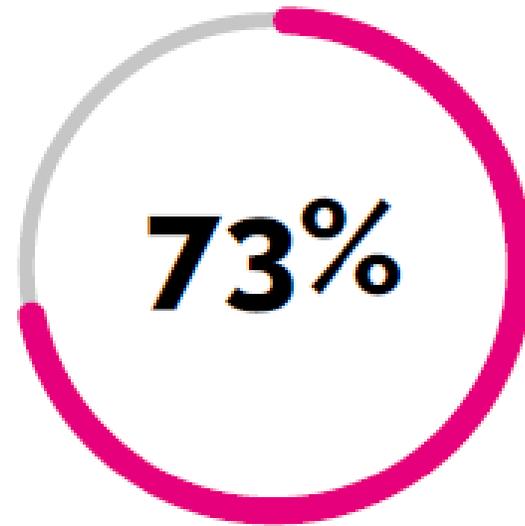
1. Gender inequality as a common determinant of VAW and HIV.
2. VAW as an indirect factor for increased HIV risk and a barrier to uptake of HIV services, poor treatment adherence and response.
3. Sexual violence as a direct risk factor for HIV transmission.
4. Violence as an outcome of HIV status and disclosure.
5. **‘Compound’ violence**



# Types and experiences of violence



95% of the women in the dialogues had experienced violence in their lifetime



73% in the last 12 months

Among women who experienced any violence, nearly all of them (84%) reported experiencing violence in at least two settings, 69% in three or more.

## Violence from intimate partners



74% of the women in the dialogues had experienced violence from their husbands or intimate partners

I'm sometimes physically and mentally tired, and despite that he wants to have sex with me even if I'm worn out. If this is considered as a duty, I personally consider it rape.  
(Jordan)



I was abused on the day of my marriage, my husband beat me right after the first time we had sex (wedding night) bearing in mind that this first act was very violent having caused a cataclysmic haemorrhage. At 3 months pregnant, my husband continued to beat me and sow doubt about my virginity and the legitimacy of the baby.  
(Algeria)



# Violence from family members



58% of women in the dialogues experienced violence or abuse at the hands of their neighbours and family members

I live with a family ... They avoid me ... I do not eat with them ... I always have a separate plate. I'm afraid of finding myself on the street. (Tunisia)



I was forced to marry someone who was also forced to marry me. After marriage he treated me badly, beat me and insulted me. He also betrayed me ... When I complained to his mother she encouraged him to betray me saying the man is free and he can do whatever he likes. (Sudan)



# Violence in the community



71% said they had experienced violence in public spaces and restrictions on where they can go in the community

Society considers that the person living with HIV is outcast, he is disgraceful and doesn't deserve to live among them ... as they know only one means of HIV transmission: that is sex. Discrimination is even much harder on women living with HIV. (Jordan)

In the street, the children throw stones at us ... They say we are apes. Strangely, adults do not react. (Migrant woman, Tunisia)

# Violence in service settings



41%

41% of women had experienced violence in healthcare settings



66%

this figure rises to 66% among women living with HIV

In the hospital, I was not respected. I was abused during my delivery. They took a picture of me and they posted my picture saying that I am HIV positive... They asked the other mothers not to use the same toilet I use. I went through hell after giving birth. (Tunisia)



# Violence from police in the military, and in detention centres



33% of women in the dialogues had experienced violence from law enforcement agents

If I am walking in the street and a man bothers me, I can't fend him off alone, and I can't complain because I would be afraid of the police in the first place. Most of the time, they would tell you it's your fault. (Sex worker, Algeria)



**“Ah, you are the strong  
woman I read about.”**

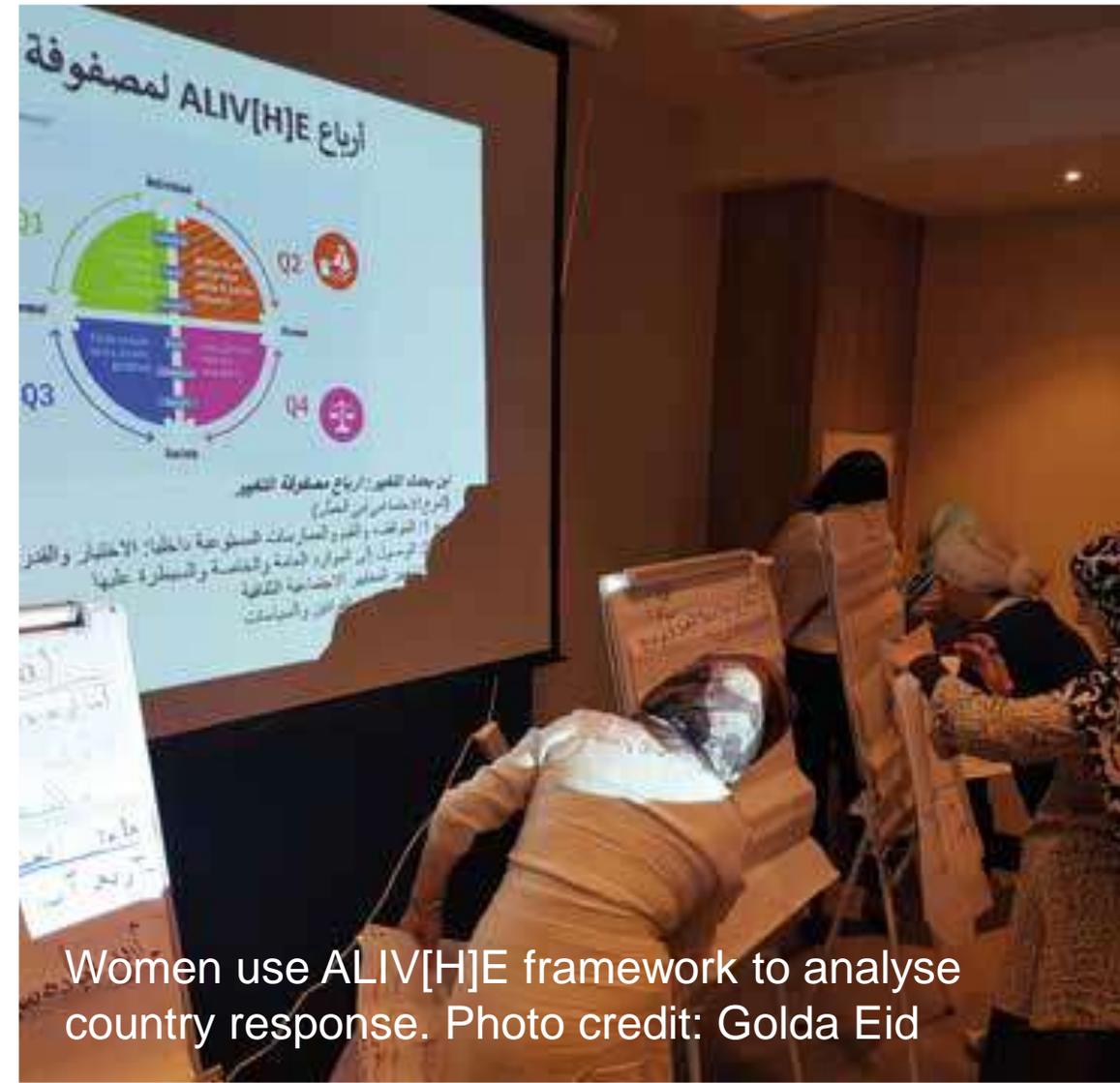
**Moroccan woman, LEARN MENA**



# Support | resilience | safety



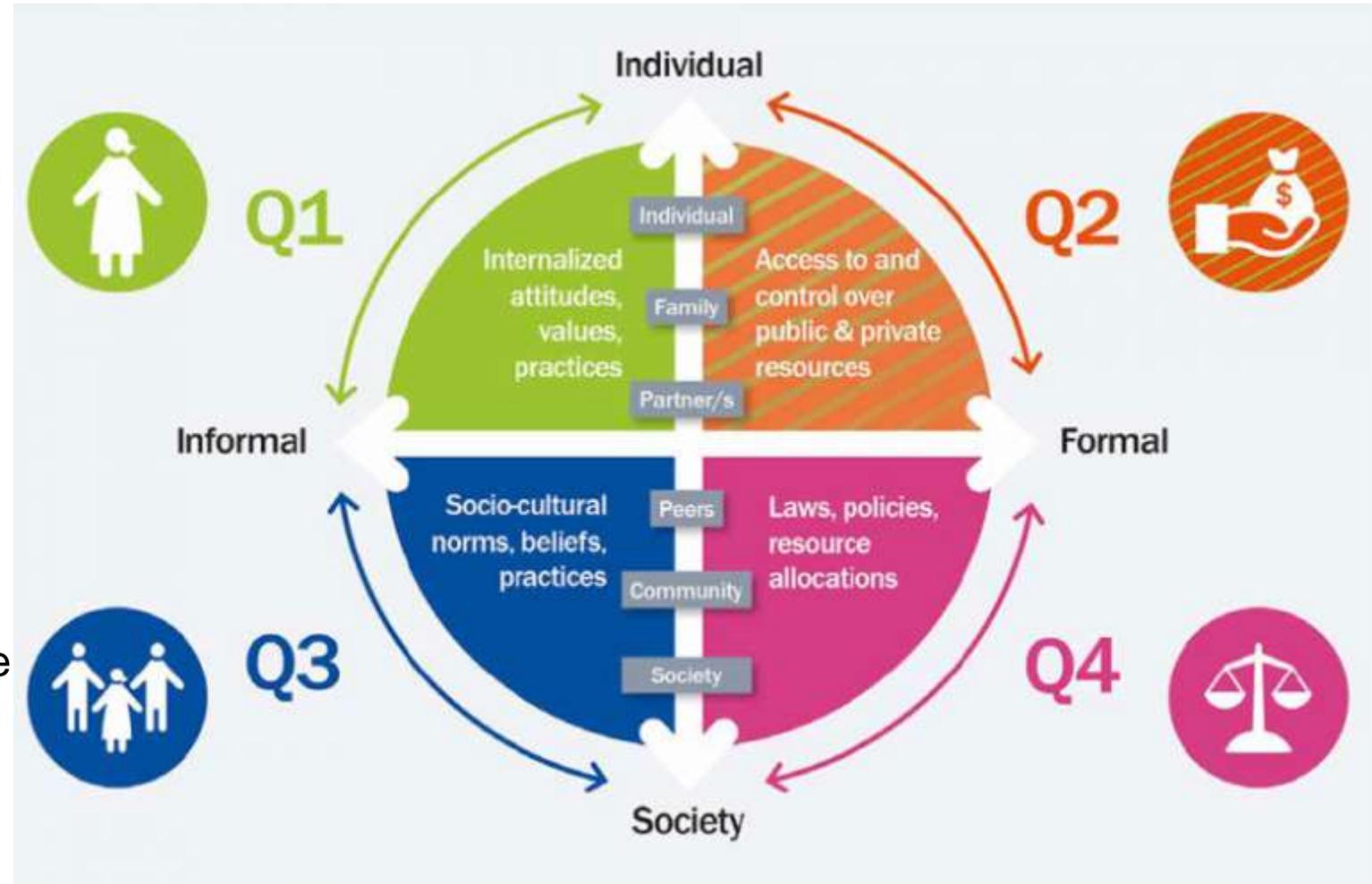
62% of women in the dialogues said they had received at least some support for violence



Women use ALIV[H]E framework to analyse country response. Photo credit: Golda Eid

# Priorities

1. Investment in community responses and women's leadership
2. Special attention to most marginalised women in:
  - policy
  - programming
  - resource allocation
3. Combination approaches to bring about change across the ALIV[H]E results matrix



## Next steps

“MENA Rosa leaders have learned through this often painful process that violence against us should be denounced and not brushed under the carpet. Gender equality starts at home, grows in the society and blossoms in the legal environment. The road is long, but we have taken the first steps. Kudos ladies.”

Rita Wahab, Regional  
Coordinator, MENA Rosa



**FRONTLINE  
AIDS** 

**JOIN US.  
END IT.**

