

Social care house

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Women's shelter in Aden

Aden - Between 200 and 300 women are imprisoned in Yemen every year under critical conditions. A Social Care House for female ex-prisoners and victims of violence was established in Aden in order to enhance their conditions and to empower these women.

Since January 2004 the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) GmbH commissioned by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) is supporting the Social Care House in Aden.

It is the first women's shelter for former prisoners and victims of violence in Yemen and in the whole Arab world managed by a small number of distinguished women among which the executive directress Ms. Afra Al-Hariri is standing.

Project partner of GTZ is the Arab Foundation Supporting Women and Juveniles (AFSWJ), a non-governmental organization in Aden aiming to provide legal and judicial help for women and juveniles and to create new participation chances for women in economic and educational sectors.

“Resocialization” means to start from point 0

The aim of the Social Care House is to empower women and to reintegrate former female prisoners and victims of violence into society. The women who come to the Social Care House are usually in bad physical and psychological conditions because they suffered from maltreatments and abuses. Therefore, the House offers psychological and social counselling, medical care, educational services as well as accommodation to women in need. Female professionals and volunteers give literacy classes and handicraft lessons, e.g. weaving or sewing. In awareness classes lawyers inform the residents about their rights and duties and tell them about the opportunities they have to earn a new “legal and social living”.

The idea of a Social Care House for female prisoners

Afra Al-Hariri, lawyer and human rights activist, designed the project of a women's shelter after



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researching about the circumstances of imprisonment of women in Yemen. Al-Hariri found out that many women and girls after being released from prison cannot reintegrate into their families or generally into the Yemeni society. “Most of them try to earn a living illegally through begging or prostitution and end up again in prison,” said Al-Hariri. “In most cases these women don’t get any support from their families to retain a lawyer and, of course, do not have own funds to pay for legal consultations,” she said.

Violence against women: A social taboo



Domestic violence, early marriage, adultery or violation is in many cases the reason why young women flee from their families hoping to find a better life in a City like Aden. The conditions in prisons, especially the health care situation for prisoners and their imprisoned children are so bad, that women are even more traumatized when they leave the prison. Still it is difficult to find satisfactory support from the government, from the international development community and from other non-governmental organizations since the issues of female prisoners as well as

the legal and social needs for women are considered a taboo in the Yemeni society.

A story telling House

The Social Care House is housing the cruel and hurtful stories of Yemen’s reality for many women. From 2004 until today it has given home to more than 40 women who have been abandoned by their families and marginalised by society. Each of these women has suffered from rejection or unjust treatment because of the moral laws that attach a socially correct and conformist behaviour a higher value in Yemeni life than treatment in line with international human rights conventions. “The girls and women in the house, each with its special and unique character, have found again once more their will to continue living in a reasonable manner and have, just by the way, grown to strong personalities”, Al-Hariri said. “They have learned not to give up hope.” As the only Women’s Shelter in Yemen and a pilot project in the whole Arab world, the Social Care House achieved a big success in the last years, having helped discriminated and marginalised women to regain new hope and to start a new life. In order to let a huger number of women benefit from the successful approach of the Social Care House in Aden GTZ is planning a regional extension of the trainings and the support for female prisoners and victims of violence.