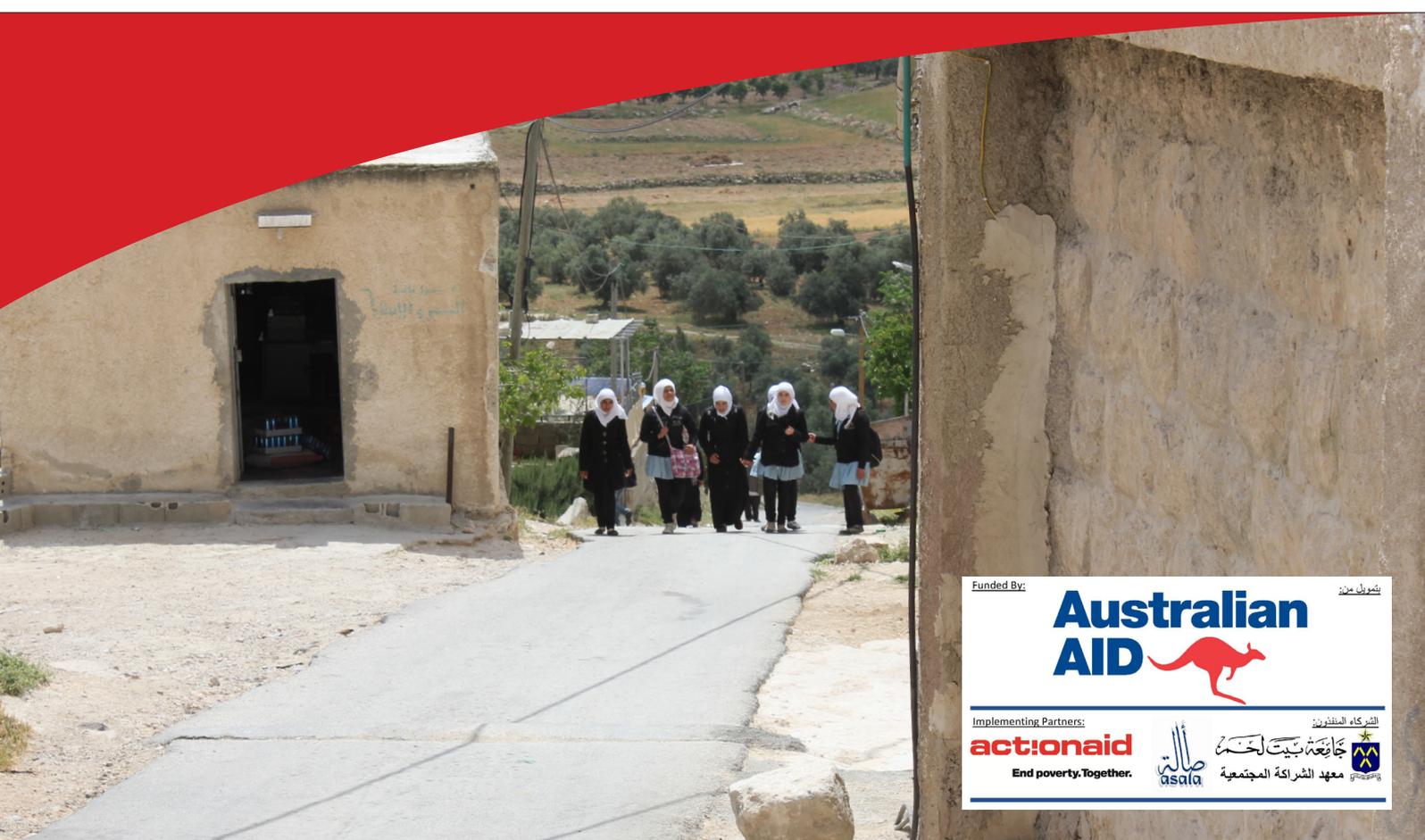




# NEIGHBOURHOOD CORNERS Case studies

June 2013

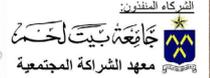


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Implementing Partners:



الشركاء المنفذون



Case Study - June 2013

# NEIGHBOURHOOD CORNERS : EMPOWERING WOMEN

## Component 1 – Reducing Vulnerability

Outcome: Increased resilience and well-being through improved livelihoods and empowered households

### Outline

Lamia's story shows how economic empowerment, together with space and resources for women to learn, share and work together – through CBOs – can transform women's capacity, social standing, confidence and satisfaction, and strengthens community resilience.

Lamia Jawa'da is a rights bearer in the Neighbourhood Corners program, which supports vulnerable communities in the Southern West Bank to strengthen their resilience through the empowerment of women, and stronger civil society. Lamia's experience validates the hypothesis that women's empowerment is achievable when the myriad of rights that women are denied are addressed.

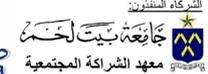
For Lamia, economic empowerment was the foundation of social empowerment. Once her financial situation stabilized and her confidence grew, she decided to become a more active member of the community and contribute to the empowerment of other women through a local CBO supported by the Program. The recognition she received has strengthened her status, and improved recognition and respect for women in the community, as well as for herself.

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# NEIGHBOURHOOD CORNERS : EMPOWERING WOMEN



Lamia Jawa'da, a woman borrower from Sikka Community

Lamia is a 50 year old resident of Sikka village and a member of the Sikka Women's Forum Charitable Society. She says, "Many people in the community are now pushing me to run in the next Board of Directors' elections at the Society".

At time of writing, Lamia had just run and been elected. Hebron is a very patriarchal province, and in villages like Sikka this is tangible. Yet Lamia boasts that men now "wave their hands at me and say hello". She is acknowledged as a woman and as a human being. Her efforts and journey have placed her strongly in her community, and her pride radiates. Lamia's social empowerment started with her economic empowerment.

Another Neighbourhood Corners participant explained: "People feel small when their financial situation is insufficient. But now that I am earning and controlling my own income, I can stand proud amongst my neighbors and participate in community activities".



Since 2009, Asala has provided 370 loans; 288 in Hebron and 82 throughout the rest of the West Bank.

# NEIGHBOURHOOD CORNERS : EMPOWERING WOMEN

The journey for Lamia began when she decided to change the harsh economic reality she and her family were enduring. With her family of eight crammed into a two-bedroom home, and her elderly husband unable to work, Lamia took the step of accessing financial services through ASALA Palestinian Businesswomen's Association (Neighbourhood Corners' implementing partner) in November 2011. She took a loan for USD 1,500 and, because her situation classified her as extremely vulnerable, she was also eligible for a matching USD 1,500 grant. She used this money to establish a sheep-rearing project. Lamia paid back her loan according to schedule in 18 months. During this time she worked hard and used her profits to educate her children. She has two daughters who have graduated from well-reputed universities in the West Bank, a son who is benefitting from ActionAid's vocational training program at the Palestinian Polytechnic University in Hebron, and two children in high school. Lamia also has a son that is disabled and is now confident that she can secure his needs.

As well as receiving capital, Lamia participated in capacity building courses provided by ASA-

LA. These include Gender Concepts Training; Get Ahead Training (an International Labor Organization curriculum); Advocacy and Lobbying Training; and Food Processing Training. Together with her daughter, Lamia also took Business Management Training and Beauty Care Training.

Lamia's profits have enabled her to add a kitchen and bathroom to her home. Lamia also established a day care centre under her house. She also notes that this business makes it possible for other women to work while generating a bit of extra income.

As an active woman – she says, “a choice women make” – Lamia joined the Sikka Women's Forum to use its services and as a way to participate in the community. At that time (2004) Lamia says, “the CBO was blind”. It had no resources, no clear mandate to support women's empowerment, and few services. The CBO was linked to a political faction, which reportedly paid the nominal fees for all community members as a means of securing allegiance. The result was that there was no motivation for the CBO to seek members' support, but there was also little genuine community interest in or respect for the organisation.



# NEIGHBOURHOOD CORNERS : EMPOWERING WOMEN

The Neighbourhood Corners Program has strengthened the governance and improved the reputation of CBOs in 9 communities in Hebron. The objective is to support CBOs to provide services that respond to community needs, and to develop the CBOs' potential as centres for the community and civil society. Lamia and women like her benefit from the greater transparency and responsiveness of CBOs by using their services, and by taking advantage of the opportunities to meet, share knowledge and enjoy freedom beyond the home. "Being a hard-working woman, don't I need to have a

space to talk to other women and have some fun?" demands Lamia.

Through Neighbourhood Corners, Sikka Women's Forum received a new building, and the management was trained in participatory planning practices to assist them to engage with the community, and develop a strategy that would better meet community needs. Annual plans and services are now developed in consultation with members and the community groups and volunteers

Sikka is a community of 855 inhabitants.

The Sikka Women's Forum premises were built through Neighbourhood Corners in 2011.

7 Directors (all women) were trained on governance, management and finances.

The CBO counts 57 women General Assembly members, 23 trained on advocacy and participatory rural appraisal skills.

Through Neighbourhood Corners, the CBO has secured an annual income of over 20,000 USD.

# NEIGHBOURHOOD CORNERS : EMPOWERING WOMEN



**45% of ASALA loans are for new businesses and provide new employment for unemployed women (165 of 370 loans).**

With the support of the Neighbourhood Corners implementing partner ICP, the CBO established an economic unit, where Lamia and eight other women received training in business skills and supported each other through sharing their knowledge. Through the economic unit Lamia has become a mentor for women in her community and boasts that “women consult me in regards to their sheep projects. And men too! They ask me how to solve problems and tell me their concerns”.

Lamia also participated in a study tour to Jordan hosted by ASALA. She understands that geographically it was a short journey, but the knowledge and experience she gained was immense. She notes that she has never left her community or been on such a trip and says: ‘no husband, brother or son ever took me on a trip. It was my hard work and my active involvement in the women’s economic unit earned me a place on this trip and opened the door to my freedom.’

In the past twelve months, Neighbourhood Corners has also supported the CBO to establish its first income-generating activity – a medical herb garden. Lamia and the other members of the economic unit have trained in herb cultivation, and have studied management, budgeting, packaging and labelling to strengthen their capacities to run

the business. The women will receive a percentage of the profits, while the rest will go to the CBO to contribute to its financial sustainability.

Apart from the economic benefit participation in the project will bring, Lamia is convinced of the other benefits the women will gain through the project, particularly the women she says are least confident. When they come together on a joint project, as well as receiving the formal training offered through the economic unit, the women will build each other’s capacity through sharing knowledge, and supporting each other to overcome problems and succeed.

For Lamia, the support she received through the micro-finance and the CBO enabled her to use her capacities to benefit herself and others. She is satisfied that in many ways she is an empowered woman. As she and other women in the CBO describe it, an empowered woman is one who depends on herself and is able to prove her role in the community, a woman who is able to achieve results affecting her life and her family’s life; a woman who has the courage to overcome challenges and to negotiate, manage a project, and have a level of freedom in taking control of decisions and money.

**“Empowered women are the ones who are deeply rooted in the community as very strong, willing and confident women,” says Lamia.**

# NEIGHBOURHOOD CORNERS : EMPOWERING WOMEN

The impacts in terms of community resilience are also clear, with vulnerable women now enjoying access to training and support to increase their incomes, participation in community life alongside other women and confidence. Community bonds are stronger now that the organisation is functioning well and supporting 267 women, an outcome that is valued by men who see the value to their family in terms of happiness, relationships, opportunities, skills and income.

That is not to suggest that life is easy. In the context of the West Bank, Lamia needs all her skills to keep her children at university and food on the table. This week, she counts her ability to buy a two-month supply of wheat as a significant achievement.

Lamia draws strength and pleasure from supporting her family, and supporting other women to do the same. It is a huge achievement in the context of the West Bank. As seen in last year's Neighbourhood Corners case study,<sup>1</sup> women are drawing on each other's support to stand up and seek to increase control of their lives. However, true women's empowerment has a long way to go if women are to address deeper rights denials resulting from entrenched power imbalances between women and men.

In the final years of the project, Lamia will be actively involved in two major activities to address underlying obstacles to women's economic and social empowerment. The first is to work in cooperation with the Palestinian Federation of Chambers of Commerce to ensure registration of micro enterprises. Women will be encouraged to formally register their projects and thus access their economic rights, have a voice and presence, and be fully acknowledged. The second seeks to promote women's rights to inheritance. Religious leaders and representatives of the legal system will work with communities to promote this right, which is respected in theory, but frowned upon culturally and traditionally due to patriarchal dominance. Lamia is convinced the campaign will gain support even among conservative members of society. 'Anyone who believes in God will support this campaign,' she says.



**Lamia at the sheep farm she developed with the support of Neighbourhood Corners.**

<sup>1</sup> ActionAid: Case study - Empowerment of Palestinian Women through the AMENCA II Program in the West Bank, June 2012.

## NEIGHBOURHOOD CORNERS: COMMUNITIES SEEKING CHANGE

### Component 2 – Capacity Building

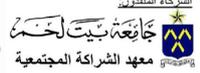
Outcome: Strengthened CBOs and NGOs to serve their communities to improve self- reliance and resilience; drive social and economic change (through a rights based approach).

Funded By:



تمويل من:

Implementing Partners:



الشركاء المنفذون:

### Outline

This case study focuses on work undertaken through two organisations in the community of Sureef, where community volunteers, including women, and community based organisation (CBO) management have undertaken joint campaigns to engage with local authorities and the wider community to effect change.

It validates the following hypothesis:

“Community level social change is possible through the leadership and agency of individuals and groups who have been supported to access resources, venues, information and tools that they can use to empower themselves.

## Addressing water and electricity theft, and a cause for conflict

Today, 26-year-old Reema stands outside the Sureef Rural Youth Enhancement Charitable Society (the Society) with pride. She is reflecting on the success of the public campaign she and 35 others (30 women and 5 men) organised through the Society, and the way it has reduced local conflict, and strengthened her own confidence and commitment to her community.

Sureef is a community of 18,000 inhabitants, close to the West Bank Separation Wall. The construction of the wall and the expansion of the nearby Gush Etzion Israeli settlement block have encroached on agricultural land and water sources. Until recently, frustration over the exorbitant price of water and electricity was pushing people to steal rather than pay unfair bills. Accusations flew around the theft of these basic utilities. Costs for householders grew, as did municipal debt, which ate into the ability to provide other local services. Local dissatisfaction and resentment was a fact of life, but with no avenue for community engagement, the issue was never identified as a priority for action.

As one participant explained: “all the community could do was complain randomly”.

### Access to Water in the West Bank: Key facts\*

1. Palestinians are dependent on Israel for their water needs as Israel extracts 86% of the sustainable yield of the West Bank mountain aquifer
2. Communities in Area C unconnected to the water network rely on trucked water, which can cost up to 400% more per litre
3. Unconnected communities have access to as little as 20 litres per capita/day – one fifth of the World Health Organisation's recommended standards



Sureef town - North Hebron Governorate

### Sources: Access to Water in the West Bank: Key Facts\*

1. UNOCHA, “The Humanitarian Impact of the Takeover of Palestinian Water Springs by Israeli Settlers”, March 2012, [http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha\\_opt\\_springs\\_factSheet\\_march\\_2012\\_english.pdf](http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_springs_factSheet_march_2012_english.pdf)
2. UNOCHA, “Humanitarian Factsheet on Area C of the West Bank”, December 2011, [http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha\\_opt\\_Area\\_C\\_Fact\\_Sheet\\_July\\_2011.pdf](http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_Area_C_Fact_Sheet_July_2011.pdf)
3. UNOCHA, “Area C of the West Bank: Key Humanitarian Concerns”, January 2013, [http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha\\_opt\\_area\\_c\\_factsheet\\_January\\_2013\\_english.pdf](http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_area_c_factsheet_January_2013_english.pdf)

# NEIGHBOURHOOD CORNERS: COMMUNITIES SEEKING CHANGE

In 2012, with the support of Neighbourhood Corners, the Sureef CBO and five other organisations embarked on a series of activities to engage their communities in identifying priorities and working together to address underlying causes of problems, rather than merely seeking goods and services that might provide a short-term fix.

Following lobbying and advocacy training by ActionAid and Neighbourhood Corners implementing partner ICP, Sureef's youth society chose the issue of water and electricity for their first attempt to demand accountability for service provision from the local authorities. Along with the other community volunteers, Reema responded to an invitation from the CBO to manage the project.

With support and coaching from ActionAid and ICP, a detailed campaign plan was developed: a campaign goal was formulated, activities developed, a budget identified. Volunteers formulated ideas for the campaign, mobilized the community, developed media materials. Reema wrote the press release which resulted in coverage for the community's campaign by the major national TV channel, Ma'an Network. The volunteers organised a community fun-run joined by 160 children to raise awareness and generate support. They had the opportunity to work with their Board of Directors, whose role was to meet with the deci-

sion-makers including the Red Crescent Society, municipality and police.

In March 2013, the Sureef Municipality agreed to act to address the problem of water and electricity theft, and introduced pre-pay cards to ensure everyone now pays the funds they owe. That month, the Municipality collected 570,000 ILS in unpaid water and electricity fees – a 700% increase over the previous year.



**160 children raising awareness – the fun-run**

## Addressing the need for better health care, and building better recognition and space for women

The women of the Sureef Women's Club are still fighting their battle for a health clinic for their community of 7,000 refugees. In a focus group discussion of 1 man and 6 women volunteers, the group explains that following training and support provided by ICP through Neighbourhood Corners, they identified UNRWA as the provider they need to target, and nominated a committee to continuously follow up their request at the head office there. While the clinic is not yet a reality, they have made other gains that they value highly.

The women say that men had previously resisted even the existence of the Women's Club. "I was going out of the house in secret, telling my husband that I am going to Al Arroub camp and in secret I came to the CBO", said one participant. The other women supported her to tell him what she was really doing, and convinced him to let her continue to participate.

During the recent campaign, men demonstrated that their attitudes had changed, not least through attendance at community meetings supporting the campaign. "During the meetings for the campaign, men were equal in presence to women, and they supported the initiative, which represents a big deal for women", one participant said. The women say that the CBO's effectiveness is behind this change.

They explain that if the clinic becomes a reality it will be "a great achievement in the community". This is particularly so for old people or those with

chronic conditions needing regular treatment, for whom the day-long round trip to the nearest public health centre in Al Arroub – geographically close but now difficult to access due to the presence of an Israeli tower – is difficult, frightening and expensive.

Another participant (Nadia) is now part of the committee following up UNRWA in Jerusalem. The first time Nadia went to UNRWA they refused even to provide her the statistics she needed to develop the request for the clinic. Since then the Women's Club volunteers and ICP worked together to develop a short film, and interviewed a 70-year-old woman about the challenges of accessing the centre.<sup>1</sup> They organised a conference for stakeholders and refugees through the mosque, the issue of the health centre was raised during Friday Prayers, and they secured the support of an UNRWA representative who guided them to develop their campaign strategy. They also secured radio coverage for the event.

"I never imagined myself going to officials asking for rights. I never have the capacity to speak in front of an audience and represent my cause (before)," Nadia says, explaining how participation in the activity has helped her personally. "We always wanted to do this, but we didn't know how".

1 See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7vgiXAwuqjA> (in Arabic).

# NEIGHBOURHOOD CORNERS: COMMUNITIES SEEKING CHANGE

The group explains that community mobilisation would be very difficult without the Women's Club as a platform for coordination and networking, as well as for developing their skills base and knowledge through training and information-sharing. "We have the skills, confidence and capacity to undertake another campaign. The end result is not achieved yet, but we are happy that we generated trust, community support and other officials' respect." The Sureef Women's Club is still waiting for UNRWA's decision on the health clinic, but the women state that the Club has demonstrated that it has an important role for the community and has earned respect for its members among the wider community, and that they will take on other issues in the same way.

## CBOs in the Neighbourhood Corners Program:

- 13 CBOs conducting annual planning with community participation
- 13 CBOs providing 142 services (87 targeting women) to 9 communities
- Community users of CBO services increased from 2,875 in 2009 to 30,817 in 2013
- 11 of 13 CBOs conducting regular Board of Directors elections and consistently reporting on activities and expenditures to communities through CBO General Assemblies

## Transformation of CBOs

Since 2009 the "Neighbourhood Corners in the West Bank" program – jointly implemented by ActionAid, the Palestinian Businesswomen's Association (ASALA) and the Institute for Community Partnership (ICP) – has worked with 13 community based organisations (CBOs) in the Hebron Governorate of the West Bank to improve their effectiveness and accountability to communities.

Through the support of Neighbourhood Corners, and the work of ICP, the Sureef CBOs and 11 others were supported to enhance their responsiveness to community needs by encouraging activity planning in consultation with communities; enhancing the internal governance of CBOs; developing and implementing transparency and accountability mechanisms; building the administrative and financial skills of CBO staff; enhancing the financial sustainability of CBOs through development of income generating activities. By building the legitimacy and accountability of CBOs, community membership in CBOs has been greatly enhanced, and community members report increasing levels of satisfaction with the role played by CBOs. CBOs participating in AMENCA now provide 142 different services to their communities, reaching out to 31,117 users from the nine targeted communities (total population 71,595).

# NEIGHBOURHOOD CORNERS: COMMUNITIES SEEKING CHANGE

Last year the build-up in skills and trust between CBOs and community members meant the CBOs were ready and able to offer a centre for the community to come together to work collectively to demand change from local authorities and duty-bearers such as UNRWA.

Reema and other community members recall that in 2009, the Society played a limited role in the community, largely dominated by men and strongly affiliated with a political party. Another volunteer, Halima, explains that she would not have joined the CBO previously, because she had perceived it to be strongly affiliated with a political party. “I don’t want to be categorised as a member of a party. That is part of my freedom,” she says.

The Sureef Women’s Club group also explains that the training from ICP has helped the CBO plan more effectively and spend the annual budget more wisely.



## “CBO Volunteer Units

- Since the beginning of the program, ICP has established volunteer units in each of the 13 partner CBOs.
- Volunteerism in CBOs has reached a new high in the last year – with 187 volunteers.
- CBO volunteers have been provided with training in advocacy, lobbying and media citizen skills

## Engagement with local authorities

A critical factor in these community actions is the engagement between the community and the local government. The Mayor of Sureef, Mohammad Lafi, had earlier raised the issue of community debt in Sureef at a large stakeholder meeting. When the community mobilised he saw the value of their participation. He spoke to the media to provide the local government perspective on the issue and supported the campaign. “It is unfair for the community when you find some people are committed to doing the right thing, while others are not,” he says.

# NEIGHBOURHOOD CORNERS: COMMUNITIES SEEKING CHANGE

Mayor Lafi stated that direct communication between community and municipal officials, and direct contributions from the community were extremely valuable in the Palestinian context, where government resources are limited.

In his view, the community campaigns mark a significant change. While it was common for the community to approach the municipality with requests for services such as a road or clinic, the community mobilisation reflected something new.

“This is the first time ever that wider community groups become aware of one of the issues and work jointly to advocate to change it. We consider

it as support for the Municipality not against us,” he said. “Many people have the will and spirit to express themselves, but the tools, knowledge and know-how is the question.”

“Through the support of the project, youth and women gained the opportunity to be active and to work for achieving rights”.

**“Through the support of the project, youth and women gained the opportunity to be active and to work for achieving rights.”**

## Future directions

This case demonstrates the impact Neighbourhood Corners is making related to AMENCA Outcome Statement 2: Strengthen the capacity of the participating civil society organisations to better address, advocate and respond to their constituent/community priorities and needs.

The examples above indicate the potential for young women and men volunteers to organise to address underlying causes of problems and strengthen community resilience.

In Years 5 and 6, Neighbourhood Corners will build on this energy by engaging wider groups of women and youth in identifying issues for community actions by establishing community groups beyond the CBO and linking with the formal municipal planning process, the Strategic Development and Investment Planning (SDIP) process, through the CBOs