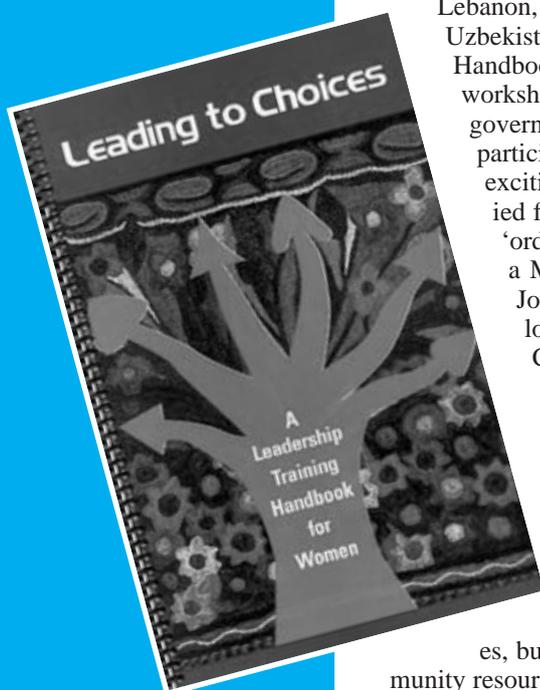


# Leading to Choices: A Leadership Training Handbook for Women



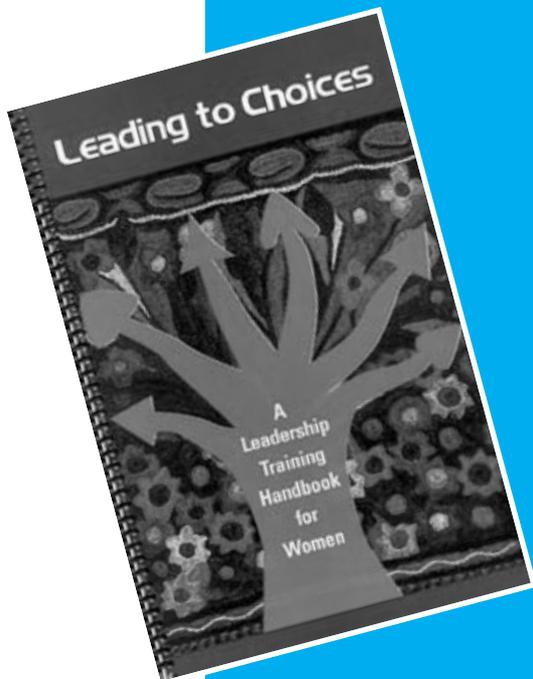
Over 1,000 activists (mostly women) in Afghanistan, Cameroon, Lebanon, Jordan, Morocco, Nigeria, Palestine, Pakistan and Uzbekistan are using *Leading to Choices: A Leadership Training Handbook for Women* during leadership training workshops. These workshops are designed to promote and enhance women's voices in government, community and household decision making. "I have participated in other workshops before, but none as intensive or exciting as this one," said a Cameroon women's activist who studied from this manual. "I have now come to understand that even 'ordinary' women can be leaders, and this is very empowering," a Moroccan literary teacher said after using this handbook. A Jordanian workshop facilitator attributes her nomination to a local council seat to the lessons she learned from *Leading to Choices* and to the friends she made during the training workshop. The women who use **Leading to Choices** are realizing that they have skills they never knew they had.

**Leading to Choices** is a timely and significant contribution to training resources designed to enable women to effectively contribute to important public and private decision making processes. The handbook is different from other resources in that it guides the participant not just through personal development and confidence building exercises, but also through activities that help women to build upon community resources and act as effective facilitators and motivators of individuals and groups. "A good leader", the handbook states, is a leader who "can capitalize on the ideas and skills of as many individuals as possible." She must be a good communicator and use her personal skills to "listen, build consensus, create shared meaning and foster learning partnerships at work, at home and in her community."

The handbook is divided into 12 workshop sessions. These sessions move the participant: from self investigation, developing the self for leadership; to best ways of communicating and motivating others, communicating with others; to building successful organizations that have strong relationships with other NGOs, creating learning partnerships. Each session includes stories of individuals or groups that have succeeded or failed in some way to draw upon collective input, communicate ideas effectively and build upon lessons learned. Workshop participants are asked to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of these different approaches. The sessions also include group activities, evaluation exercises and thought provoking questions for individuals and groups to answer. Workshop participants conclude many sessions by designing action plans that address the issues raised and

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Soon to be available in Arabic,  
French, Hausa, Persian and  
Russian

# Book Review



investigated during the discussions. The handbook includes tips for facilitators on building consensus among participants, directing conversation, stimulating discussions and leading group activities. Portions of the handbook can be extracted and adapted, depending on the goal of the users, or the entire handbook could be used from start to finish in a 5 day or 36 hour training workshop. The handbook is equipped with evaluation forms, case studies and a list of leadership training resources and organizations from around the world.

Women's Learning Partnership, a creator of this handbook, is working with NGOs in different countries to customize *Leading to Choices* to relate to their particular community needs and challenges. They are adapting the handbook to include culture-specific scenarios that reflect local concerns and priorities and translating the handbook from English into local languages such as Arabic, French, Hausa, Persian, Russian and Uzbek. Some groups are also using the handbook to inform male NGO heads about effective ways to lead and to develop a well-functioning and successful organization.

Facilitators in workshops in Nigeria noted that after using **Leading to Choices**, participants gained mutual respect for each other's opinions. Facilitators in Pakistan reported that women had learned to think of themselves as leaders and were eager to put into practice the information and skills they had acquired through the workshop. At a leadership workshop in Jordan, participants discussed the many obstacles that women face in achieving leadership positions, such as unequal opportunities with men, lack of support and encouragement from their communities, and the stereotype that women are incapable of maintaining a leadership role. The women at this workshop identified possible solutions to these obstacles and emphasized that women are qualified to occupy leadership positions if they have equal opportunities.

Just as **Leading to Choices** promotes a collaborative leadership style, the handbook was produced in a collaborative way. Women's Learning Partnership for Rights, Development, and Peace (WLP), an NGO based in the United States that works to empower women and girls in the Global South to re-imagine and restructure their roles in their families, communities and societies led the initiative in cooperation with: l'Association Democratique des Femmes du Maroc (ADFM), one of the largest NGOs in Morocco that works to defend and promote the human rights of women, and to foster equitable policies and social practices; the BAOBAB for Women's Human Rights (BAOBAB) in Nigeria that promotes human rights and legal rights for women under religious, statutory and customary laws; and the Women's Affairs Technical Committee (WATC), a coalition of women leaders and groups in Palestine that works to eliminate discrimination against women and to promote a democratic society.

To empower women is to increase their control over the decisions that affect their lives both within and outside the household. There is no single or right path to women's empowerment or development as leaders, but using **Leading to Choices: A Leadership Training Handbook for Women** is one important way to achieve these goals.

If you are interested in receiving a copy and/or using this handbook for workshops, please contact: Women's Learning Partnership for Rights, Development, and Peace (WLP), 4343 Montgomery Avenue, Suite 201, Bethesda, MD 20814, USA, Phone: 1-301-654-2774/Fax: 1-301-654-2775, Email: [wlp@learningpartnership.org](mailto:wlp@learningpartnership.org), Web: [www.learningpartnership.org](http://www.learningpartnership.org).