

Combating violence against women in Algeria with the Wilaya of Oran as a case study



Violence against women (VAW) is a pervasive problem that occurs both inside the home and in the public sphere. However, the issue remains largely invisible due to social taboos around violence and the lack of sufficient institutional response and support for survivors of violence. **The local cluster analysed the status of gender equality in Algeria and identified the following obstacles to decrease VAW:**

- Lack of severity in the application of laws in favor of equality;
- Lack of juridical protection and financial means to prevent VAW and protect women;

Gender-based violence in the area of Marrakech-Safi in Morocco

The local cluster scrutinized the effectiveness of gender equality mechanisms and procedures in Morocco with a focus on the region of Marrakech. Gender-based violence (GBV) was examined with regard to early marriage and the different parties involved in perpetuating the problem. The diagnosis gives an overview of women's access to their rights, especially in faraway and vulnerable areas. It shows that **the progress realized in terms of women's rights is at theory level but not in practice due to prevailing challenges:**

- Domestic violence is generally accepted and there is a fear of the juridical system whose attitudes are commonly uncertain;
- There is no law that criminalizes GBV;
- In recent years, the number of applications for marriages involving underage girls that obtain positive ruling is increasing in the area;



- The rates of marriages below the age of 15 without the judge's authorization is increasing in Marrakech-Safi;
- GBV affects women's safety, their dignity and hinder their participation in public life.

The local cluster's leader **Federation of women's rights leagues of Marrakech** is conducting a project in order to get detailed data that can raise awareness and mobilize policy makers on the dramatic consequences of VAW and the dangers of child marriage. Through research and information activities in schools and villages, the project aims to reach the general public but also local stakeholders to take measures and action plans to reduce child marriage and VAW.

The local cluster leader **Femmes en communication section Oran**, designed a project that will consist of awareness-raising, advocacy and training activities addressed to the journalists, public administrations and local actors and enterprises. **The project's objective is to obtain the stakeholders' commitment to establish a structure for women victims of violence such as a reception and accommodation centre in Oran and to raise public awareness of the reality of violence.**

The local clusters of gender equality actors are framed within the project "Strengthening the capacities of actors working for gender equality" funded by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development (MAEDI) in the framework of Axis 1 of the Priority Solidarity Fund's project "Women of the Future in the Mediterranean".

This project is led by the European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed), in partnership with the Center of Arab Women for Research and Training (CAWTAR), the Federation of the democratic league of women's rights (FLDDF), the Forum Femmes Méditerranée (FFM), the Euro-Mediterranean Academic and Scientific Network on Women and Gender (RUSEMEG) and the French State. The project is part of the mission of the Euro-Mediterranean Women's Foundation whose role has been officially acknowledged by the states of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) thanks to their labelling.

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The European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed), founded in 1989, hosts actions as well as projects contributing to mutual awareness, exchange and cooperation between different Mediterranean countries, their societies and cultures, in keeping with the Barcelona Process (Euro-Mediterranean Partnership) and now with the objectives of the UfM. IEMed also endeavours to foster the gradual construction of an area of peace and stability, shared prosperity and dialogue between the civilisations and cultures in the Mediterranean basin.



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Euro-Mediterranean Women's Foundation
Fondation des Femmes de l'Euro-Méditerranée

The Euro-Mediterranean Women's Foundation (EMWF) is a non-profit independent organisation launched in 2014. It is structured as a network of networks gathering all types of actors working for gender equality in the Euro-Mediterranean region. The Foundation's objectives are: advancing in the common fight for equal rights of women and men to participate in political, economic, civil and social life; eradicating all forms of violence and discrimination against women and girls, and encouraging a change in attitude and behaviour for gender equality.

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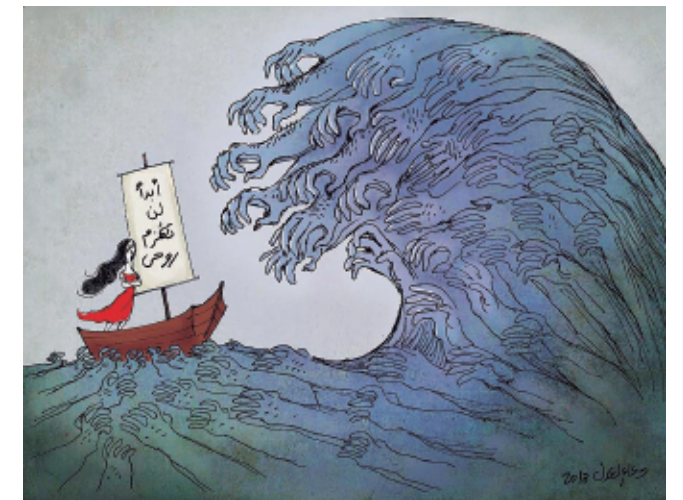


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Euro-Mediterranean Women's Foundation Gender equality in the Mediterranean: local perspectives from the South

According to its mandate, **the Euro-Mediterranean Women's Foundation** (hereafter, the Foundation) analyses women's local realities and public policies through consultations and dialogues at a grass-roots level. Concretely, the Foundation sets up local clusters of gender equality actors[©] every year, in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia (1 per country). A local cluster of gender equality actors[©] is coordinated by an association which leaders all its actions as the Foundation recognises that civil society is the real motor of change in our societies to improve women's conditions.

The local cluster approach is an innovative and multi-actor perspective, which supports networking and sharing of good practices in favour of gender equality at a decentralized level and promotes the emergence of projects rooted in the territory. The Foundation systematizes the results and outcomes obtained through the local clusters' actions and transfers them to the policy-makers in the Euro-Mediterranean countries. The diagnoses produced by the local clusters are published in the Foundation's reports*. **All the information related to the local**



clusters' results is available on the Foundation's website (www.euromedwomen.foundation) and widely disseminated across the Region among key stakeholders, policy-makers and international organisations.

*A first report entitled "Women in the Mediterranean: The Euro-Mediterranean Women's Foundation's first report of the Ministerial Conferences" was produced in 2015 with reference to the commitments of the Union for the Mediterranean states in the field of strengthening the role of women in society.

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A local cluster of gender equality actors[®] is made up of a maximum of 5 actors working in favour of gender equality in a specific territory: associations; research or education institutions; local or regional authorities or ministerial departments in charge of advocating for women's rights; enterprises, trade unions or media. The local cluster chooses a target territory that can be a region or province or a metropolitan area of a large city. Subsequently, the local cluster's members define a topic of interest related to gender equality that they consider a priority in their territory.

The local cluster is in charge of implementing a *pilot mobilization action of gender equality actors* through data collection, discussions and exchange of experiences between different types of gender equality actors with the aim to analyse the situation related to the target topic and to follow-up public policies in this field. This bottom-up approach leads to produce a diagnosis of the situation that highlights the main obstacles to achieving gender equality, and to design a concrete project to address those barriers identified throughout the diagnosis. Lately, the local cluster leader is responsible for implementing the project formulated collectively and in a participatory manner.

So far, the local clusters are set in Oran (Algeria), Giza (Egypt), Irbid (Jordan), Mount Lebanon (Lebanon), Marrakech - Safi (Morocco), West Bank (Palestine), Sousse and Monastir (Tunisia). They focus on the political participation of women, women's role in society and combating violence against women. This document presents the diagnoses and some of their findings and conclusions.

Tunisian women's participation in politics: monographic in the governorates of Sousse and Monastir



Although Tunisian women have been always active in political life, their representation at the decision-making level and in leadership positions is yet to reflect such an active participation. Traditional views of women and their roles as secondary subjects is one of the pertinent obstacles that prevent women's presence in legislative and executive authorities, in political parties and unions.

The local cluster collected information on women's weak presence in Sousse and Monastir's municipal councils and brought out the challenges to achieve women's full engagement in politics:

- Women's multifaceted burden as they are wives, mothers and workers and lack of family support;
- Women political activists are targets of Gender Based Violence (GBV);

- Masculine mentality and gender biased policies of unionists and politicians;
- Women's lack of self-confidence.

The local cluster's leader **Voix de la Femme à Jemmel** is developing a project in order to strengthen women's capacities to have an active role in political life and to become leaders at local level. This will be possible through raising-awareness and training activities, advertising on the radio to alert the general public and promoting exchanges between longstanding women activists and future female leaders.

Women's political participation in Egypt: perspectives from Giza

The low number of women in high positions of political institutions, demonstrates that their voices and influence in policy-making are still very limited. **The local cluster looked into women's participation in the elections and referendums and analysed the obstacles hindering women from effective involvement in political life, political parties and trade union:**

- Social customs and patriarchal traditions: in the district of Giza, family or clans have the choice over women's participation in public life, even their choice of voting to a particular candidate;
- Financial inability of women to assume the costs of a possible candidacy at the elections;
- The media are superficial when tackling women's issues and ignore the role of rural and countryside women in the inclusive development;
- Lack of political awareness, training and preparation among women in local communities;

- Inadequate legislation that does not encourage women's presence in politics;
- Negative attitudes towards women's political participation and reproduction of masculine practices in the political parties.



In order to face this situation, the local cluster's leader **Appropriate Communication Techniques for Development** is conducting a project which promotes women's efficient political participation within their community through training and raising awareness activities involving community based organizations, media and local authorities. Furthermore, several activities directed to men are meant to encourage them in supporting women's political participation.

Women's participation in city councils in Liwa Al Koura (Irbid, Jordan)



Women's participation in leadership positions in Jordan is still low. Whereas the majority of studies and projects neglect remote regions, the local cluster focused on women's participation in the decision-making process in Liwa Al Koura in Irbid governorate. **Among the obstacles preventing women's participation in city councils are:**

- The patriarchal system emphasizes protecting women and keeping them away from public life;
- Lack of support to women from political parties and of female's support to women candidates;

- Limited interests in politics among women and lack of capacity building programs to empower rural women and women outside of Amman in engaging in politics;
- Lack of financial means to support women's candidates;
- Lack of awareness of the public about the importance of women's political participation and inadequate perceptions about women's capacities to reach leadership positions in city councils.

In the context of the upcoming municipal elections expected in 2017, the local cluster's leader **Building Bridges Association** designed a project in order to allow women to play a more effective role in the society's development. Through empowering activities and community initiatives engaging women activists, youth, and municipalities' members, the project will create a supportive environment for women's access to municipal councils. In addition to that, the private sector and media representatives will be actively involved in order to provide support to the community initiatives.

Women's political participation in Lebanon with a focus on Mount Lebanon



Lebanese women are still excluded from decision-making positions in both public and private sectors. The local cluster collected data on women's participation in the municipalities in the Mount Lebanon. However, the diagnosis covers Lebanon as a whole, as the parliamentary election is a national one. **Several levels of challenges are facing the development of women's representation in political institutions and elected bodies:**

- The social and economic status of women, including factors related to electoral campaigns and women's financial dependence;
- Prevailing political regime based on tribal, family and sectarian structures and limited ability of civil society to influence policy makers in a confessional system;
- The personal status laws as well as the absence of quota;
- Lack of knowledge of women's rights and the laws that discriminate against them;
- Lack of capacities of the gender equality actors;

- The educational curriculums and the media reproduce stereotyped images and conservative attitudes towards the role of both women and men in the society.

The local cluster's leader **Committee for the Follow-Up on Women's Issues** defined a policy-dialogue project with the aim to push the Parliament's members representing Mount Lebanon to amend the municipal elections' law and adopt the quota's draft law in synergy with the efforts of the National Commission for Lebanese Women. The project will also advocate among policy-makers, media and NGOs for modifying the election's law in partnership with other women's organizations and civil society movements.

The situation of Palestinian women regarding political participation: an insight in the West Bank

Women's active political participation in the national struggle – against British army and more recently against the Israeli occupation – is not reflected in the rate of their presence or representation in the political sphere. The local cluster examined the factors that hinder women's full engagement in political activism and decision-making processes. **Through establishing committees in the north and south regions of the West Bank, the local cluster identified the constraints that impede women from playing effective roles in their**

communities. These challenges include social, legal and political factors:

- Some laws related to women's everyday lives remained without any amendments or legislative reforms such as the Penal Code and the Personal Status Law (family law);
- Limited capacity of women to participate effectively in politics;
- The political parties do not recognize the role of women in politics and their effective place in the Palestinian's future.

The consultations emphasized the importance of building partnerships between social and political activists and local communities to better include gender equality issues and women's rights in the political agenda. Thus, the local cluster's leader **Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling**, will realize a project consisting of awareness-raising sessions with members of political parties and unions in Bethlehem and Hebron. The project's objective is to reinforce women's leadership capabilities and to increase the number of men who can be catalysts for social change in the future.