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WOMEN'S ACCESS TO POSITIONS OF RESPONSIBILITY IN THE REGION OF SOUSS-MASSA

MOROCCO

While the participation of women is decisive for the economic and social development of Morocco, their presence in decision-making positions remains weak. This diagnosis focuses on the legal, socio-economic, cultural and individual factors that impede women's access to leadership positions. It is based on consultations with representatives of civil society organizations, trade unions and political parties.



The diagnosis was made by Tamaynut in partnership with the South Center for Studies and Research. Local and regional media, the Federation of Labor and the government of Souss-Massa have also been associated. © Mjgraphics / Shutterstock.com



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- 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;
- Encouraging a change in attitude and behaviour for gender equality.

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Field diagnosis: Women's access to positions of responsibility in the region of Souss-Massa

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Local clusters of gender equality actors© mobilized since 2017



- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| A Souss-Massa Region (Morocco) | D Luxor Governorate (Egypt) | F Zarqaa Governorate (Jordan) |
| B Wilaya of Algiers (Algeria) | E Ramallah and Al Bireh Governorate (Palestine) | G Eastern suburbs of Beirut (Lebanon) |
| C Douar Hicher Delegation (Tunisia) | | |

The Euro-Mediterranean Women's Foundation sets up local clusters of gender equality actors coordinated by associations every year, in the following countries: Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia (1 per country).

Each local cluster of gender equality actors© chooses a target territory that can be a region or a 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 this target territory.

Each local cluster is made up of 5 actors working in favour of gender equality in the target territory: associations; research or education institutions; local or regional authorities or ministerial departments in charge of advocating for women's rights; media; enterprises and trade unions. Their mission is to mobilize the gender equality actors through data collection, consultations and exchange of experiences. Thus, they analyse the situation related to the target topic and they follow-up the effectiveness of public policies in this area with a collective and participatory approach.

This bottom-up approach leads to produce a diagnosis of the situation that highlights the main obstacles to achieve gender equality, and to design a collaborative and replicable field project to address those obstacles. To date, local clusters were set in Algiers and Oran (Algeria); Giza and Luxor (Egypt); Irbid and Zarqaa (Jordan); the eastern suburbs of Beirut and Mount Lebanon (Lebanon); Marrakesh-Safi and Souss-Massa (Morocco); Ramallah-Al Bireh, Bethlehem and El Khalil/Hebron Governorates (Palestine); and Douar Hicher, Monastir and Sousse (Tunisia). These clusters focus on women's access to political decision-making and high-level positions, women's economic empowerment and professional inequalities and violence against women. This document presents the diagnosis which was conducted in the region Souss-Massa.

A. CONTEXT OF THE DIAGNOSIS

This diagnosis has been coordinated by the Movement for sharing power, wealth and values - Tamaynut, as part of a pilot action for mobilising gender equality actors at local level in the Souss-Massa region (Morocco) in 2017. The diagnosis has been made by the South Centre for Research and Studies (Centre Sud de Recherches et Études).

1. National context

The geographical location of Morocco at the junction between Africa and Europe puts it in an important position on the international economic, political and social chessboard. The fact that Morocco is part of the Greater Maghreb gives it political and cultural dimensions with great influence over its experience and its relations.

In foreign affairs, Morocco enjoys the trust of international and regional authorities as well as most countries in the world. Its political and economic stability and security, its openness, and its participation in the great international issues (human rights, economic investments, fight against global warming, fight against terrorism, etc.) mean it holds quite a strong reputation.

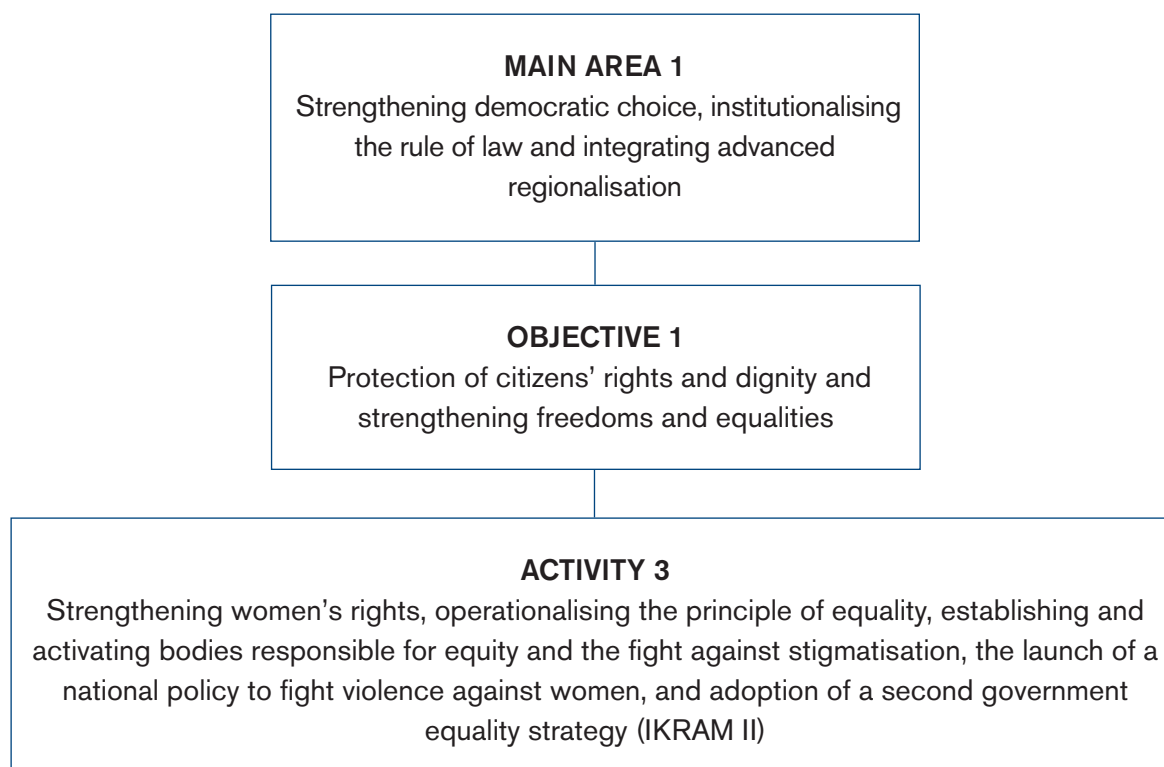
Under this foreign impulse, for about 15 years Morocco has been undertaking great reforms to modernise political, economic and social affairs (new constitution in 2011, new law on finance, reform of the family code, reform of the nationality code, etc.).

Despite all this progress, deficiencies persist associated with the system of government, accountability, policy development and implementation, and service delivery. They have been most visible at the regional, provincial and local levels. The implementation of the principles of advanced regionalization as a lever for development encounters difficulties inherent in the legal arsenal, which remains limited as regards the powers devolved on elected representatives of regional, provincial and communal territories, and their competences in the elaboration and the implementation of the action plans of development of their respective territories.

Currently, governed by a second Islamist government¹, Morocco continues with structural reform initiative and is planning to do so through five main areas in the five-year period from 2017 to

¹ The party of Justice and Development, party with Islamist tendency, won for the first time in 2011 the parliamentary elections by which the parliament and, de facto, the Moroccan government, are constituted. The 2016 elections consecrated this party the winner for the second time in a row.

2021. The third activity in the first objective associated with the first main area seems to be relevant to our diagnosis:



2. Overview of the Souss-Massa region

According to the 2015 report of the Regional Office of the High Commissioner for Planning in the Souss-Massa region, the population of the Souss-Massa region is 2,717,403, representing around 7.9% of the total population of the Kingdom. More than 51% of the people are women. The annual population growth rate is 1.4%, above the national rate of 1.25%. The distribution of the population by environment shows that 1,547,182 inhabitants live in urban surroundings while 1,170,221 live in rural environments, representing an urbanisation rate of 57%. The spatial distribution of the population is characterised by the concentration of almost 68% of the urban population in the two prefectures of Agadir-Ida Outanane and Inezgane-Ait Melloul. This is particularly explained by the economic and urban dynamic of these prefectures.

By contrast, the other provinces are still marked by a predominance of the rural environment, notably the province of Taroudant, which contains half (50.4%) of the region's rural population.

A study of the age structure of the population shows that the 15-59 age band represents around 64.9% of the total population, while the total fertility rate is estimated at two children per woman. The socio-economic figures, according to the same report of the Regional Office of the High Commissioner for Planning, show several characteristics shaping the profile of the Souss-Massa region. School enrolment for children from 7 to 12 is around 95.7%, which is above the national rate of 94.7%.

The illiteracy rate is estimated at 34% compared to 32% at national level. This rate peaks among women, at 45.7%. The Amazigh-speaking proportion of the population is around 72%.

The Souss-Massa region has an unemployment rate of 13.9%, predominantly in the urban environment, where it represents 15.6% of the population, and an activity rate of 44.2%, of which women make up 23%. About 4.1% of people in the region have some kind of disability (4.2% among women).

Concerning access to electricity and drinking water, 80.3% of the population of the Souss-Massa region has access to the drinking water network, compared to around 72.9% nationally. However, only 57.3% of the rural population has access to this network. Alongside this, 92.5% of the population is connected to the electricity network.

A mosaic of wealth makes Souss-Massa as a whole an economic driving force. The region basically lives from agriculture, tourism, manufacturing industry and fishing.

B. ISSUES AT STAKE

DIHYA ("beautiful" in Amazigh), nicknamed KAHINA (Witch in Arabic), was the queen of the Amazigh in the Maghreb in the 7th century². From beautiful creature to devil, the invading leaders replaced the human with the diabolical out of fear of beauty and immediately shut Muslim, Arab and, unfortunately, Amazigh women away in backwardness for 15 centuries.

² In general, the status of women throughout the world and the history of humanity has progressed a lot in the direction of fulfillment. The opposite has happened in the Amazigh countries. Women have seen their status go from the highest consideration (Queen) to a diabolical status (Witch). This is deliberately desired by an arbitrary authority that consecrates male hegemony. See also JURQUET-BOUHOUNE Baya., JURQUET Jacques: "Algerian women: from Kahina to the Family Code: wars-traditions", Page 26, 2007

Major reforms have taken place in Morocco concerning the promotion of women's rights, notably through the vote on the Family Code in 2004. This enshrined in law the principle of equality and shared responsibility between women and men for the first time. Reform of the Nationality Code, giving women the right to transmit their nationality automatically to their children, even those with foreign fathers, should also be mentioned. The country is currently looking to undertake a new generation of reforms, drawing up a "National strategy for equity and equality between the sexes by integrating the gender approach into development policies and programmes" based on a cross-disciplinary approach³. This strategy is working towards the main aim of reducing the disparities between the two sexes both in terms of rights, access to resources and economic opportunities, and in terms of political influence. It systematically takes into account gender relations in all areas of action of public policies and at all stages and levels of these policies (design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation).

However, equality and parity between men and women are far from being achieved. According to the Global Gender Gap Report⁴ Morocco is placed 133rd, below Tunisia (123rd), Algeria (126th) and Egypt (129th). These disparities, notably between men and women, cutting across all other categories of age and geographical and social environment, bring poverty and exclusion and have considerable negative impacts on women enjoying their newly recognised constitutional rights and on society as a whole⁵.

Moreover, a contextual analysis shows that, despite the efforts made, inequalities and discrimination are real everyday situations for women at different levels: illiteracy, difficulties of access to health care and to resources (water, education, loans, etc.) and weak political and public representation⁶.

The report from the Economic, Social and Environmental Council⁷ also stressed the weakness of women's participation in decision-making and leadership associated with economic life. Women occupy only 12% of management posts and 15% of positions of responsibility, while

³ ZERARI Hayat: "Femmes du Maroc entre hier et aujourd'hui: quels changements?" (Women of Morocco between yesterday and today: what changes?), *Recherches internationales*, n° 77, 3 - 2006, pp. 65-80.

⁴ World Economic Forum, 2014, <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2014>.

⁵ NACIRI Rabéa: "Genre, pouvoir et prise de la décision au Maroc" (Gender, power and decision-making in Morocco), Mohammed V University, Rabat, 2015.

⁶ ZERARI, 2010

⁷ ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL (CESE): "Discrimination against Women in Economic Life: Realities and Recommendations", Report of the Economic, Social and Environmental Council, Morocco, 2014.



Focus groups revealed that the traditional conception of gender roles conveyed by religion leads to a lack of women's self-confidence in their abilities.
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representing almost 40% of the workforce of public employees. The feminisation rate for Secretary General and Director posts is no higher than 6% and 11% respectively. In fact, “out of 300 appointments to top jobs, there are only 38 women”, a figure of 12.6%, a long way from the aim of parity stipulated in the Constitution. The situation is more alarming in the private sector: less than 1% of women (0.1%) occupy positions of responsibility in private businesses operating in commerce, industry and services.

Based on inspections carried out by the Ministry of Employment, through its territorial departments, in workplaces at the level of private enterprises, during the first half of 2013, the presence of women is also quite low in employee representation and trade union activities. Less than 1% (0.38%) of chief executives are women. Women's representation in professional chambers, associations and federations remains very weak, despite their recent development. In professional chambers, the rate reaches 5%.

According to another report from the Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs, dating from 2011, in the public and the private sector women run into the “glass ceiling”, which is defined as a set of “artificial (invisible) barriers created by behavioural or organisational prejudices preventing qualified individuals progressing within their organisation”.

Although women in Morocco represent a quarter of the active population, and their participation is increasingly acknowledged as decisive for the social and economic recovery of the country, their presence in public spaces and decision-making spheres still seems to be a problem⁸. We are therefore faced with a crisis in women's access to decision-making posts. All measures prove insufficient without adequate support in terms of strengthening skills and competences. This support can take the form of training activities, awareness-raising to promote a positive image of women occupying positions of responsibility, and the creation of female networks⁹.

C. METHODOLOGY

1. Objectives of the diagnosis

In general, the diagnosis is intended to describe the situation of female leadership in the Souss-Massa region and the factors affecting women's access to positions of responsibility in civil society and political organisations. The diagnosis' specific objectives are:

1. To identify the main obstacles to women's access to decision-making posts;
2. To extract the contextual and individual factors associated with each obstacle;
3. To find out the different routes likely to remove these obstacles;
4. To allow participants to freely express themselves on the subject of female leadership;
5. To allow participants to share their experiences in the area of women's rights.

2. Nature and target region of diagnosis

This diagnosis is qualitative and exploratory. Its qualitative nature is based on studying women's own conception of their positioning in decision-making spheres. This perception is itself subject to a large set of complex contextual and individual variables.

The place of the diagnosis is the administrative region occupying the territory of Souss-Mass, with the demographic, and socio-economic characteristics given above.

3. Target population and sample

The target population for the diagnosis consists of three categories:

⁸ NACIRI, 2015.

⁹ RAJAA Mohamed, MULAYALI Salima, ESSOUISSI Omar: "Absence de la femme dans les postes de responsabilité: analyse des transformations vitales" (Absence of women in positions of responsibility: analysis of vital transformations), Abdelmalek Essaïdi University, Tétouan, Morocco, Revista Internacional de Culturas & Literaturas, 2015. ISSN: 1885-3625.



The workshops involved 117 people and highlighted the need to strengthen women's capacity to analyze legal texts. © Tamaynut

- a. Women who are members of civil society associations established in the Souss-Massa region. Ten associations have been chosen, represented by 50 people.
- b. Women members of the civil service trade unions established in the region. Four trade union branches were selected, represented by 35 members.
- c. Women members of political parties operating in the region. Four political parties were chosen, with one representative per party.

The selective approach is dictated by the fact that the diagnosis is qualitative. The aim is to examine the way these women see their situation with regard to decision-making in associations, trade unions and political parties. The depth of the qualitative approach makes up for the lack of generalisation of the quantitative approach.

4. Data collection and analysis method

The technique used to collect data is the focus group¹⁰. This technique makes it possible to identify and understand the beliefs, convictions, opinions and behaviour of a human group in relation to a subject.

¹⁰ CATTERALL Miriam, MACLARAN Pauline: "Focus group data and qualitative analysis programs", Sociological Research Online, vol. 2, n°1, 1997.

Methodologically, three workshops were organised at different times in different places. The first workshop brought together the members of the civil associations invited to participate, divided into three focus groups (11 March 2017 at the headquarters of the Iligh association in Agadir). The second consisted of trade union members developed around three focus groups (1 April 2017 at the Teldi hotel in Agadir). The third workshop brought together the representatives of the four political parties and the representatives of associations and trade unions (total of 28 participants), organised in the form of a debate between the different groups (8 April 2017 at the Argana hotel in Agadir).

The protocol for developing the focus groups consists of guidelines with three questions to extract three variables influencing the positioning of women with regard to decision-making. These are:

The regulatory variables:

1. What are the regulatory texts linked to the positioning of women?
2. How do these rules encourage or inhibit women seeking decision-making posts?
3. What would you suggest to improve these legal instruments?

The social, economic and cultural variables:

1. How does the current social position of women limit or boost their fulfilment in terms of decision-making?
2. How can the economic situation of women affect their links with decision-making?
3. How does Moroccan culture help or hinder women in terms of their participation in decision-making?

Individual variables linked to women:

1. How can women's physical and morphological characteristics affect their links with decision-making?
2. How can women's intellectual characteristics affect their links with decision-making?
3. How can women's self-esteem affect their links with decision-making?

Each focus group was led by a moderator, helping with skills involving reflection and stimulating the meetings. The moderator was helped by an observer/reporter, whose main purpose was to make a written transcript of the oral contributions of each member of the focus group. Each of these lasted an hour and a half, and the workshop ended with a presentation and discussion of the summary for each group.

The analysis of the transcripts of the recorded words of the participants was carried out in accordance with the principle of breaking down, classifying, comparing and labelling the verbatim reports. They were then assembled into “instances”, grouped in turn into concepts formulated as ideas.

5. Ethical considerations

Before the launch of each focus group:

- Participants in the diagnosis have been informed of its purpose and of their rights to freely decide whether or not to take part and to withdraw at any time, without any prejudice to them.
- Participants have been informed of the conditions of respect and confidentiality and anonymity of their responses.
- The participants were notified that all their collected data would be used exclusively for the purposes of this diagnosis.

6. Limits of the diagnosis

- The diagnosis was carried out with ten associations from civil society, four trade unions and four political parties. The analysis units should have been enlarged further to make the results obtained more representative.
- A parallel quantitative study would be in a better position to compare the results and achieve greater academic visibility for dimensions which certain participants may have hidden in their expressions in the focus groups.
- The participants' ideas and opinions in the focus groups were transcribed in writing.

D. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

1.Results of the first workshop: Civil society associations (N = 50)

First focus group: factors linked to legal instruments (N = 12)

Dimensions	Frequency and repetition
Incompetence concerning regulations (reading and analysing the texts)	11/12
Failure to apply existing laws	10/12
Poor knowledge of legal tools	10/12

Failure to integrate Moroccan customs into the laws	09/12
Obsolete existing legal tools	08/12
Failure to cover multiple aspects of women's lives	06/12
Formulation of existing laws unfavourable to the emancipation of women	06/12
Regulations imported from abroad	04/12
Non-operationalisation of international conventions	03/12

It can be seen from these results that women are badly positioned with respect to the legal and regulatory instruments governing their actions and their lives. Poor knowledge of the majority of regulations and the non-application of the laws they know (10/12) are the striking characteristics affecting women members of civil society associations. If we add incompetence in analysing and understanding the legal jargon of the texts (11/12) they have read, we begin to understand the position of weakness women are in regarding this factor.

Regulatory texts (*dahirs*, decrees, orders) are published in official journals. These documents are not available at the points of sale of newspapers and magazines accessible to everyone. A subscription must be paid in order to receive them. Moreover, with the digital revolution this country is undergoing (Internet, telephone), the documents are accessible on the website of the general secretariat of the government, but they are rarely consulted. In fact, this phenomenon is the result of another more serious one concerning the lack of a culture of reading. This is only aggravated by the growing dematerialisation of information and the move towards a society with a graphic memory.

Second focus group: socio-economic and cultural factors (N =20)

Dimensions	Frequency and repetition
Women = weak creatures	20/20
Hegemony of the religious conception of women	20/20
Illiteracy and/or poor level of education for women	18/20
Male domination	18/20
Low position of women within the family	17/20
Women = evil creature	17/20
Underestimation of women's work	16/20

Economic dependence	15/20
Difficult access to jobs	14/20

The hegemony of the Islamic religion's conception of women is mentioned as the main factor preventing women accessing positions of responsibility. All other ways in which women are classed as weak, subordinate, evil, underestimated, uneducated creatures derive from this, negatively affecting their social position and even their financial and economic autonomy.

The amalgam between Islam, as a monotheistic religion, and Arabians as the ethnic group bringing this religion is something that cannot be ignored, and it deserves considerably deeper academic study. This reference to the reductionist conception of women in the Islamic religion very probably conceals or acts as a vehicle for the way Arabs see women yesterday and today.

Third focus group: factors linked to female leadership (N = 18)

Dimensions	Frequency and repetition
Overwork (housework, agriculture, offices, associations)	18/18
Verbal, psychological, physical and sexual harassment	17/18
Doubts about all women's activities	17/18
Lack of awareness of skills	16/18
Incapability of speaking in public	15/18
Women's submission to men	14/18
Lack of self-confidence	14/18
Exaggerated shyness (hchouma)	12/18
Women's underestimation of themselves	10/18

With regard to the factors affecting women themselves, two dimensions are mentioned as inhibiting their leadership. The first is women's conception of themselves, formulated in terms of lack of self-confidence, unawareness of their own skills, inability to express themselves in front of others and overwork. The second relates to their conception of the image others have of them resulting from the fact that they are subject to harassment, underestimation, shyness and submission.

These women’s conceptions may arise from their social and cultural status already mentioned above. In fact, behaviours and beliefs limiting women are merely the result of a systematic coercion from childhood by their families, environments and society in general.

2. Results of the second workshop: trade unions (N =35)

First focus group: factors linked to the legal arsenal (N = 35)

Dimensions	Frequency and repetition
Absence of female parity in trade union statutes	35/35
Discrimination against women through the jurisdictional system	30/35
Employment Code working against women	27/35
Poor knowledge of regulatory tools	24/35

As well as conceptions already mentioned by the members of civil society associations, women in trade unions also suffer from the absence of parity in trade union statutes and favouritism in the jurisdictional system which helps men access positions of responsibility. The employment code, as applied, also constitutes an obstacle to women accessing decision-making posts.

This could be explained by the deliberate absence of the issue of parity and equality between men and women when it comes to drawing up trade union statutes and the employment code.

Second focus group: socio-economic and cultural factors (N =35)

Dimensions	Frequency and repetition
Male-dominated organisational culture	35/35
Lack of framework and training for working women and female civil servants	34/35
Unsuitability of working systems for women	32/35
Educational discrimination in favour of boys	26/35
Embryonic feminist movement	20/35

With regard to socio-economic and cultural factors, the lack of a structure or training for working women and female civil servants concerning their rights and the mechanisms for ensuring they are applied is the outstanding factor. This is probably due to the lack of legislation making it compulsory to implement continuous training programmes for working women and female civil servants.

Third focus group: factors linked to female leadership (N = 35)

Dimensions	Frequency and repetition
Negative impacts of trade union work on the image of women (rebellious, demanding, strikers)	35/35
Weak skills in advocacy and negotiation techniques	33/35
Failure to consider proposals from women trade unionists	29/35
Passivity of decisions made	18/35
Resistance of husbands	17/35

The result of this analysis, as well as other individual conceptions, shows that trade union work by women has a negative impact on them, as they are labelled rebellious. This stereotype goes against the status of the Arab-Muslim woman, already mentioned above, as sensitive, docile and submissive. This is the origin of the resistance of husbands, if the woman trade unionist is married, and of the failure to consider their proposals.

3. Results of the third workshop: Political parties (N =32)

This workshop saw a debate between three women with respectable political careers and women members of associations and trade unions. The participants stressed the huge progress made in the condition of women in Morocco in terms of individual, social, economic and political freedoms.

The main obstacles preventing women from accessing positions of responsibility are linked to individual and socio-cultural factors. In fact, participants have stressed the fact that even women do not have great belief in their skills and, for example, rule out putting themselves forward for a particular post if there is competition with a man. Another striking individual fact is that when a woman comes to political and / or union elections and tries to convince the voters of her project, they criticise her, referring to the failures of male candidates. This phenomenon is related to women's self-perception, considering themselves inferior to men. The difficulty in balancing political, family and work activities is also an obstacle to positioning women in decision-making spheres.

The debate was also rich concerning discrimination against women in the case of candidatures for positions of responsibility. Such appointments are also seen as being made regardless of competences acquired and required, often based on gender differentiation.

E. RECOMMENDATIONS

At the end of this diagnosis and in view of the results obtained with respect to the objectives set, a general statement can be made: the women of the Souss-Massa region are a long way from accessing positions of responsibility and decision-making. And this is because they are different from men, not because they lack the necessary skills to access these positions.

The question is to work out the strategies to be adopted to remove or at least reduce the obstacles hindering them. The undertaking is quite a difficult one, particularly because most of the obstacles are the result of structural variables involving many institutional and individual actors and changing these will require a great deal of time.

The proposals will therefore take into account this difficulty and they must achieve synergy, cut across disciplines and, above all, be realistic and feasible.

To achieve this, we recommend:

1. Setting up a nucleus of female leaders trained in self-esteem, analysing regulatory texts, and means of institutional advocacy. These women will boost real projects within civil society associations, trade unions and political parties in order to overcome the regulatory and individual obstacles preventing access to positions of responsibility.
2. Advocating the removal of obstacles to women accessing decision-making posts within political parties, the Moroccan government, the Moroccan parliament and judicial institutions.
3. Developing a large-scale communication strategy using the new communication and information technologies (internet, mobile phones, etc.) concerning women's rights in general.
4. Developing a strategy for supporting regional and local associations and trade unions through meetings and themed conferences.

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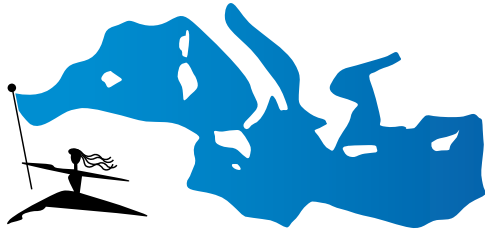
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Euro-Mediterranean Women's Foundation
Fondation des Femmes de l'Euro-Méditerranée

According to its mandate, the **Euro-Mediterranean Women's Foundation (FFEM)** 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 the following countries: Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia (1 per country).

Each local cluster of gender equality actors© is coordinated by an association as the Foundation recognises that civil society is the real motor of change in our societies to improve women's conditions.

The local clusters' approach is an innovative and participatory process, 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 obtained through the local clusters and transfers them to the policy-makers in the Region's countries and at the Euro-Mediterranean level. 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.

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