



# WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN EGYPT: PERSPECTIVES FROM GIZA

EGYPT

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This diagnosis identifies Egyptian women's hopes and ambitions in the domain of politics. Through a participative survey in Giza, it brings out the main challenges to enhance Egyptian women's engagement in the public sphere, in elected assemblies as well as in political parties and trade unions.



Appropriate Communication Techniques for Development (ACT) calls political parties and trade unions to develop an awareness-raising and training strategy in order to increase women's political activity. © Thomas Koch/Shutterstock.com



The Euro-Mediterranean Women's Foundation (EMWF) is a non-profit independent organisation launched in 2013. It is structured as a Network of networks bringing different kinds of gender equality actors in the Euro-Mediterranean area with the aim of:

- 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 political participation in Egypt: perspectives from Giza

Text: Appropriate Communication Techniques for Development (ACT), coordinator of the local cluster of gender equality actors©

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# WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN EGYPT: PERSPECTIVES FROM GIZA

EGYPT



## Local clusters of gender equality actors<sup>©</sup> mobilized since 2016



- A** Region of Marrakech - Safi (Morocco)
- B** Wilaya of Oran (Algeria)
- C** Governorates of Monastir and Sousse (Tunisia)
- D** South of Giza District (Egypt)
- E** Southern part of the West Bank (Palestine)
- F** Governorate of Irbid (Jordan)
- G** Mount Lebanon Governorate (Lebanon)

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<sup>©</sup> 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 and 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. A first call for proposals was launched and local clusters were set in Oran (Algeria), Giza (Egypt), Irbid (Jordan), Mount Lebanon (Lebanon), Marrakech - Safi (Morocco), West Bank (Palestine), Monastir and Sousse (Tunisia). These local clusters focus on two main issues: women's participation in political life and combating violence against women. This document presents the diagnosis with regard to Giza.

## A. INTRODUCTION

In Egypt, women represent half of the population. However, as in many developing societies, they face a number of challenges in relation to education, healthcare and participation, which in turn has an impact on their rights awareness and limits their capacities and capabilities. Throughout history, women in Egypt have fought to take part in and contribute to public and political life. They started by claiming their right to education, which was crucial in opening the door towards all other rights. As a result of women's active advocacy and activism, they managed to gain substantial rights at the level of participation and membership in trade unions and the right to engage in political and social participation.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was ratified in 1981, with reservation made to four articles: Article 2 regarding equality between men and women, Article 16 regarding family rights, Article 29B regarding complaints, and Article 9 regarding nationality. However, with the changes to nationality law, Egypt has lifted its reservation to Article 9.

Family law has undertaken some changes over the last few decades. The changes made to the Custody Law 25 of 1929 (amended by Law 4 of 2005) grants divorced mothers the right to keep the custody of their children until the age of 15, instead of 10 for a son and 12 for a daughter. In Article 31, the age of marriage was raised to 18 for both men and women instead of 18 for men and 16 for women. Women can add certain legal conditions to be entered into the marriage contract, including a right to attain a divorce if their future husbands have attempted to stop them from exercising certain rights, such as education and work. Polygyny is permissible with notification of the existing wives. The existing wife may ask for divorce under the grounds of material or moral harm on the period of one year since she knows about the new marriage. Egyptian men have an autonomous and absolute right to divorce without resorting to legal proceedings.

In June 2008, the Egyptian Parliament agreed to criminalise female genital mutilation (FGM) in its Penal Code, establishing a minimum custodial sentence of three months and a maximum of two years or an alternative minimum penalty of 1,000 Egyptian pounds (LE) and a maximum of LE 5,000.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND (UNDP). "National Legislation, Decrees and Statements Banning FGM/C", 2009. Available at: [http://egypt.unfpa.org/english/fgmStaticpages/3f54a0c6-f088-4bec-8671-5e9421d2adee/National\\_Legislations\\_Decrees\\_and\\_Statements\\_banning\\_fgm.aspx](http://egypt.unfpa.org/english/fgmStaticpages/3f54a0c6-f088-4bec-8671-5e9421d2adee/National_Legislations_Decrees_and_Statements_banning_fgm.aspx)

The high illiteracy rate among women (37.5%) and poverty are two of the main reasons that constrain the majority of women from accessing and having control over resources. Egypt has yet to achieve the third Millennium Development Goal: “Promote gender equality and the empowerment of women”. This is particularly necessary in areas related to women’s education, paid employment and political participation.

While women's representation in local councils was 5% in 2008, it increased to a fourth of the council seats in the new Constitution. Thus, 13,000 women are expected to be in the local councils in the next elections. The representation of women in senior management jobs in the government sector was 31.2% in 2010/2011 but decreased to 22.6% in 2013. In the Government Cabinet, women represent 3.6% and, in 2010-2011, 0.6% of Deputy Ministers.

The rate of women members of professional associations was 31% in 2010. The highest representation of women was in the Nursing Association (2009) with 92%. Women were less represented in the Practitioners Union (2009) with 5%.<sup>2</sup> The low number of women in the high positions of state administration, and other political institutions, demonstrates that the representation of women and, indeed, their voices and influence in the public arena and policy-making are still very limited.

On the other hand, lack of awareness and interests among political parties towards women’s participation as well as the reproduction of masculine practices are among the greatest challenges not only in achieving gender equality but also in moving towards a democratic Egyptian state.

Since the outset of the 2011 revolution, women have contributed greatly, standing shoulder to shoulder with men. This was not a new phenomenon, as Egyptian women throughout history have been active participants in revolutions, including the nationalist movement and the struggle for independence. Despite their struggle and participation, women have historically been underrepresented in Egyptian political life. After the 2011 revolution, women had very high expectations that the revolution would bring about some changes to their political and economic representations.

The latest changes to the Constitution in 2013 included progressive amendments. In Article 11, the Constitution states that Egyptian men and women are equal in civil, social, cultural and economic rights. The Constitution also ensures that women have the right to be protected from all

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<sup>2</sup> CAMAS, 2010, 2011 and 2012 yearbooks.

types of violence. It also guarantees the rights of women equally with men to pass their nationalities on to their husbands and children (Article 6). In Article 180, the Constitution grants women a quarter of the seats in the local councils (13,000 seats). It also grants equal opportunities without any discrimination for all citizens in Article 9. Nevertheless, the country's first free parliamentary elections (in 2011/2012) resulted in a noticeable regression: women won only 8 out of the 508 seats in parliament. This result was a decrease from around 60 seats compared to the 2010 parliamentary elections when a quota for women was in place.

Despite all the impediments and challenges, Egyptian women continued mobilising to ensure that the revolution provides them with all social and political rights. They have also insisted on constitutional reforms that safeguard equality and justice. However, the Constitution Committee established in 2011 to revise the Constitution merely consisted of male members. This was certainly an indicator for women's groups that the change, if it happened, would be inadequate.

## **B. DIAGNOSIS OF WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION**

The Appropriate Communication Techniques for Development Center (ACT) has undertaken a survey in the framework of its diagnosis of the current situation of Egyptian women's participation in political life. The purpose of this survey is to highlight women's effective participation in the democratic transformation within the social and political turmoil in Egypt, following the revolution of 25 January. Additionally, the intent is to contribute to the adoption and creation of political parties and unions on democratic bases, in respect of human rights and specific and general freedoms, in compliance with the principles of human rights and social justice and gender equality. The resulting diagnosis looks into women's participation in the elections and referendum and/or involvement in political parties and trade unions. It also analyses various obstacles and challenges hindering women from effective participation and from reaching decision-making positions. The diagnosis offers recommendations on the ways women's political roles, which have recently undergone remarkable downward trends, can be enhanced and promoted.

Through this diagnosis, ACT made knowledge available for political parties and trade unions about how to change and reform, including in terms of structure, to obtain an effective political participation of women. It also provides inputs to the civil society and the media in order to take on more productive policies and programmes and develop a discourse that promotes women and supports their engagement in political life.

Furthermore, the diagnosis identifies the main existing obstacles, which still represent a challenge before Egyptian women's participation in political life.

### **The Appropriate Communication Techniques for Development Center (ACT)**

ACT mission is to improve skills of communication in the field of development work , help societal groups to get organized, seek networking with other development groups in Egypt and the Arab world. Other objectives are to provide an information database for the different educational resources, build the capacities of women groups and marginalized groups, and activate the political and societal participation for the different population groups. Achieving gender equality is one of ACT's main goals as well as reinforcing women's rights.

ACT has also implemented several projects with the purpose of monitoring and changing the image of women as handled in media, with a vision to create a society where media value justice, equality and human rights, and represent women as a competent citizen. It carries projects to fight violence against women wich include activities such as awareness raising, teaching skills needed for listening centres staff, and seminars and press conferences on the issue, and on the International Women's Day.

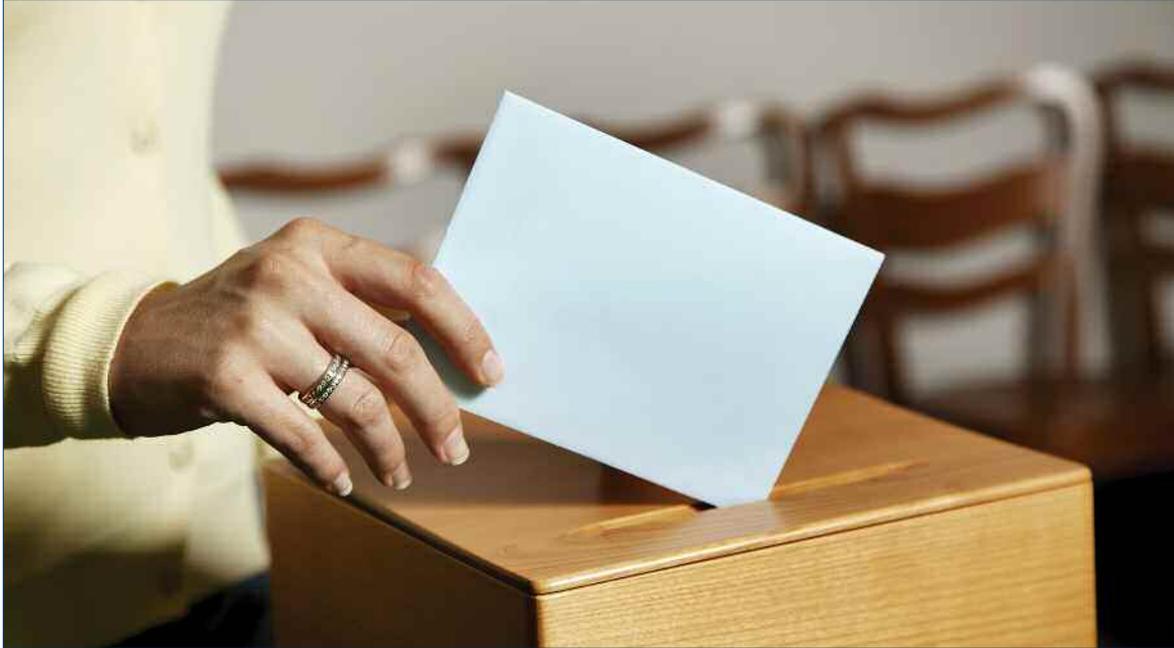
#### **1. Objectives of the Diagnosis**

The overall goal of the diagnosis is to assess and define women's involvement and participation in political life from a gender equality perspective. Other objectives included:

- Identify women's participation in political life in Egyptian society;
- Identify the reasons for women's success in the previous elections in Egypt;
- Identify the factors that positively or negatively impact women's ambitions to reach decision-making positions in Egyptian society;
- Identify how women evaluate their involvement in the public sphere and political parties;
- Identify women's hopes and ambitions in terms of politics;
- Identify the obstacles that hinder Egyptian women in terms of their political rights;
- Identify women's recommendations to gain back their political rights in Egyptian society.

#### **2. Methodological Framework of the Diagnosis**

The diagnosis adopted the survey method to analyse women's political participation aimed at providing a holistic understanding of the situation. It identified the main challenges; gaps in relation to policy and law; and social barriers and perceptions related to women's political engagement. The diagnosis is a descriptive analytical study. The main method of the study used



Through workshops and roundtables, 120 people from local communities gave ideas on how to improve women's participation in political life.  
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social polls as a sample in order to describe the situation and generate data related to women's political situation quantitatively, which was then analysed thoroughly.

The major activities conducted were:

- Introductory workshop with partners to define each one's roles and responsibilities.
- Participatory and rapid assessment of women's political participation in the target communities.
- Four roundtables with partners to discuss the research outcomes and develop recommendations.
- Final conference to present the research study results.

The diagnosis aimed to introduce:

- Preliminary data that describes the reality of women's participation in the political sphere in Egypt;
- Factors impacting women's abilities to reach decision-making positions;
- Women's vision of their own representation in political parties;
- Women's expectations and aspirations in terms of politics;
- Obstacles hindering women in accessing their political rights;
- Recommendations for women to gain back their political rights.

All women surveyed were over the age of 18 years. The survey was conducted by ACT and in four different geographical areas. ACT has collaborated with four local organisations to implement the activities of the diagnosis:

1. Social Care Association at Manil Chiha, Giza
2. Services to Worker's Association at Hawamdia, Giza
3. Societal Development Association at Azaizia, Giza
4. Kamel Ramzi Association at Marej, Cairo

The reason for choosing these associations to collaborate in conducting the diagnosis is that they are among the most active in the areas of women's development in local communities. This is in addition to their extensive work in development and the willingness of the management boards to cooperate and implement the survey within their associations.

### **3. Conceptual and Terminology Considerations**

Political participation for the survey refers to the processes through which individuals choose their representatives and leaders as well as the participation in the decision-making processes directly or indirectly. Hence, political participation does not only consist of voting in particular elections but rather a general engagement and a comprehensive involvement on the part of citizens in the political decision-making process through active participation. In the present diagnosis, Egyptian women's participation refers to "women's role in parliamentary life as voters, candidates and members, as well as their role in professional unions and political parties."

## **C. FINDINGS OF THE DIAGNOSIS**

### **1. Characteristics of the Areas Selected for the Survey:**

- The father, or any other male family member, is the main breadwinner for the family;
- A large number of families are unable to balance the large gap between expenses and earnings as most of them work in marginalised jobs within the informal sector - very often for long hours;
- Some women work in jobs such as domestic work, commerce or factories to help fill the income gap. However, their work is still seen as insignificant;
- Illiteracy among young girls and women in these areas is very high. Most of them drop out

of school at a very early age;

- Early marriage is a significant problem in these areas;
- The deteriorating of the education drives away pupils and students (girls and boys) from school at different levels.

Even though women and young girls are present in big numbers at the base in these societies, they are rarely in the public sphere. Furthermore, when they get involved, they take on traditional roles, such as voting in the elections, and are influenced by the head of the family, habits and traditions in usage, which confines women to household activities (housework and children's education).

## **2. Women's Participation in Political Life in the Post-Revolution**

The commission in charge of making amendments to the Constitution, which was the object of the referendum on 19 March 2011, first included only male members, thereby excluding women's opinions and perspectives. As a result, the amended Constitution did not address women's issues and demands. On the contrary, it represented a step back in respect to women's political participation. For example, Article 74 of the Constitution assumed the candidate to the presidency to be only a man. It stipulated that the candidate should not be married to a "foreign woman". This was subject to a huge debate as the article clearly implied that women could not stand as candidates to the presidency.<sup>3</sup> Due to this, the Constitution's gendered-biased language and provisions deprived women from having any aspiration to reach a high position in the country, and established a division of roles between men and women.

Prior to the conservative government established in August 2011, expectations were that there would be a woman at the head of a governorate, but these expectations have not been realised. The Minister of Local Development explained that women's exclusion from the conservative movement is due to the lack of security in the country, insisting that "women are not able to face disorder in the street, at least at the present time." Instead of establishing security in the country and protecting citizens, the government, with such a statement, allowed for more deprivation and exclusion of women.

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<sup>3</sup> NATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR THE DEFENSE OF RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS. "Situation of Egyptian women following the revolution of January 25. More marginalization and abuse".

Table (1) shows the decrease of women's political participation in the government following the revolution of 2011:

	<b>Governments following the revolution of 25 January</b>	<b>Total number of ministries</b>	<b>Number of women ministers</b>	<b>Rate of women ministers (%)</b>	<b>Ranking of women's participation</b>
1	Ahmed Chafik	31	5	16%	1
2	Ahmed Chafik February 2011	33	3	9%	6
3	Issam Charaf (1)	26	1	3.8%	11
4	Issam Charaf (2)	28	1	3.5%	12
5	Kamal Jenzaoui (1)	30	3	10%	3
6	Kamal Jenzaoui (2)	30	3	10%	4
7	Hicham Kandil (1)	36	2	5.5%	10
8	Hicham Kandil (2, modification, January 2013)	36	2	5.5%	9
9	Hicham Kandil (3, May 2013)	36	2	5.5%	8
10	Hazem Bablaoui	39	3	7.6%	7
11	Ibrahim Mahlab (1)	31	4	12%	2
12	Ibrahim Mahlab (2)	34	4	9.3%	5

In the following section, the diagnosis will compare the participation of women in parliament from 2005 to 2012 in order to show how women's political participation was compromised and challenged after the revolution of 2011.

#### *a. The 2005 Parliament*

Out of nine women candidates in the elections, only four were successful. Five other women were appointed to achieve the 1.9% of allocated positions.

#### *b. The 2010 Parliament*

The parliamentary elections in 2010 represented an important milestone with the implementation of the quota system for the first time, after the abrogation of Law No. 38 of 1972, related to the People's Assembly, which issued a new division of the election districts. 64 seats were reserved

for women, according to two articles. Hence, two members are elected for each district with at least one member representing the workers and the farmers. Under the law of reserved seats, women participated in large numbers. In this way, the total number of candidates among women competing within the quota system reached 1,047 candidates from the various political parties (the National Party, the Union, Al Wafd, Brothers and Annaciri).

The Elections High Commission announced the results related to the elections of the People's Assembly (lower House which does not currently exist) in December 2010: two women succeeded through appointment in the governorates of October and Beni Souef. Therefore, the total number of candidates through the quota system was 378 throughout the governorates in the country. 65 women succeeded and won seats: 56 who were part of political parties, 8 as independent representatives and one was appointed (the journalist Amina Chafik).

### *c. The 2012 Parliament*

Women were victims of attacks in their offices in protest at the laws in their favour in the previous years for two reasons. The first was because it was said these were "women's laws", and the second appeared with the rise of the Islamic movements in the political sphere, which aimed at exaggerating "women's role in general, particularly in terms of political participation." Indeed, some considered that women's access to parliament was a kind of corruption. Even though most political parties ignored the existence of women on their lists, women's engagement with the revolution drove them in large numbers towards intending to participate in the new parliament. The number of women candidates reached 984 representatives, 633 of them on the lists and 351 as independents. This is the highest rate for women in Egypt since 1956, the date when women gained their political rights.

A report from the Egyptian Centre for Women's Rights shows that the highest number of candidates to the parliamentary elections was in the southern governorates: Al Aksar and Al Said, and the border tribal governorates: Al Wadi Al Jadid and North Sinai, where the rates reached 28%. In Cairo and Giza, the rate of candidates among women did not exceed 13%. The presence of women in the elections for parliament after the revolution was remarkable if we consider candidates and voters. However, the results were very much below expectations as the rate of women's presence in the parliament stood at 2% (eight women gained seats through election, and there were five women out of the ten members appointed). This low rate does not correspond to the situation of women in Egypt.

Regarding the Consultative Council, the number of women candidates increased by about 22% in comparison to the previous election. There were 196 women candidates with a rate of 7.2% of the total number of candidates: 128 among them on political party lists and 68 for independent seats. Women gained four seats out of 180, a rate of 2%.

### Report about Women Candidates on the Political Party Lists for Parliamentary Elections 2012

Table 2: Women's Participation in Political Parties

	<b>Names of political parties represented</b>	<b>Total number of candidates at country level</b>	<b>Total number of women at country level</b>	<b>Rate of women on lists of political parties</b>
1	Al Ghad	116	15	12.90%
2	Al Wafd	284	39	13.70%
3	Freedom and Justice	314	43	13.60%
4	Reform and Development	279	44	15.70%
5	The conservatives	220	33	15%
6	New Center	300	44	14.60%
7	Annour	316	42	13.20%
8	Democracy and Peace	124	25	20%
9	Revolt Egypt	56	6	10.70%
10	The Egyptian Revolution	77	13	16.80%
11	Freedom	250	36	14.40%
12	Egypt National	114	18	15.70%
13	Continued Revolution	106	33	16%
14	The Egyptian Alliance	290	46	15.80%
15	Arab for Justice and Equality	46	8	17.30%
16	New Independent	56	11	19.60%
17	Egypt Justice and Development	8	2	25%
18	Arab Egyptian Union	80	22	27.50%
19	Arab Democratic Nasserist	100	13	13%
20	Free Social Constitution	26	3	11.50%
21	Modern Egypt	101	6	5.90%
22	Egyptian Liberation	22	3	13.60%

23	Democratic Front	58	8	13.70%
24	The Union	104	10	9.60%
25	The Nation	8	1	12.50%
26	Justice	140	7	5%
27	Awareness	14	2	14.20%
28	Social Peace	14	2	14.20%
29	The Free	4	1	25%
30	Voice of Egypt	10	1	10%
31	Free Socialist	4	1	25%
32	Egypt Social Democratic	8	1	12.50%
33	The Revolution Guardians	12	1	8.30%
34	Democratic Population	4	1	25%
35	Egyptian Citizen	135	8	5.90%
36	Human Rights and Citizenship	10	3	30.00%
37	Popular Socialist Alliance	16	3	18.70%

The table above shows that the rate of women's representation ranges between 13.2% and 15.8% in relation to the total number of candidates from political parties.

### 3. Challenges to Women's Political Participation

Egyptian women face many challenges, which impede their participation in politics. In light of the diagnosis, the following are the challenges, listed according to their importance:

- a. **Social, cultural and political factors** are very important and have an impact on women's engagement with politics. In the areas studied, family or clans decide on women's participation in public life, even on voting for a particular candidate. Furthermore, there is a notable weakness in the political parties themselves, with low participation of women and low representation of women in decision-making positions;
- b. **Economic factors** stem from the high cost of the election campaigns in addition to everyday burdens, low incomes and financial dependence on men, hindering women from being candidates;

**c. Role of the media:** the factors related to the media have a great impact on women's political participation, as the media ignores the role of rural women and focuses only on urban areas. In addition to this, the media is superficial when tackling women's issues, only focusing on them during the elections.

#### 4. Legislations and Policy-Making

The laws do not guarantee the achievement of equality in rights and duties for men and women. In an attempt to alleviate the obstacles, the Law on the House of Representatives includes articles aiming at the reinforcement of women's participation. Article 6 states that "women only lose their seat as representatives if their status at the time of their election changed as members of political parties or as independents."

Article 27 states that "The President of the Republic may appoint to the House a number of members not exceeding 5% of the number of elected members, half of whom at least shall be Women, in order to represent experts and holders of scientific and professional achievements in different fields, as well as the groups which the President considers for representation under the provisions of articles 243 and 244 of the Constitution, in light of nominations from the National Councils, the Supreme Council of Universities, scientific research institutes, professional syndicates and labor unions, and other bodies."



The Euro-Mediterranean Women's Foundation promotes coordinated actions among associations, trade unions and media to engage women in the public sphere.

Furthermore, the law specifies the number of the council members at 567; 540 of them are elected and 27 are appointed by the President, provided half of the members appointed are women. The High Commission for the Elections also decided to increase the rate of women so that they have seven seats on the list (which includes 15 seats) and the total number of seats for women rises within the district division of the lists to eight, with 56 seats out of 120 seats reserved for the lists.

On the other hand, the Egyptian Constitution established a quota system for women in the local elected councils, which is equivalent to one quarter of the seats. This is a positive step towards achieving women's representation in parliament and changing the stereotyped image of women in society, which has been raised as an obstacle to women's political participation.

#### **5. Summary of Results:**

The diagnosis of Egyptian women's participation in political life yielded the following results:

- Women's participation in the referendum and in the elections generally decreased drastically in the numerous elections held in Egypt in the past four years;
- There is a lack of political awareness among women in local communities as their votes for a candidate (man or woman) are still based on the good qualities of the candidate or on services rendered to the family or the group in general, without any consideration of the programme or ideas;
- The main reason for women's failure in the elections refers to the community views of them and their stereotypical role. Another factor is women's perceived lack of experience in relation to public work and their failure in managing election campaigns, probably because of their lack of political training and preparation;
- There are other obstacles that prevent women from reaching decision-making positions, such as economic factors. Indeed, the cost of the election campaigns added to everyday living expenses, decreasing revenues and their financial dependence on men represent an obstacle to their progress. The media also has a great impact by neglecting the role of rural women, focusing superficially on women's issues without integrating them into the society's development process and focusing on them only during election periods;
- Despite the modification and enforcement of many laws, women's participation in political parties remains low. This is probably because political parties in Egypt generally do not have an important role;
- Considering women's participation in political parties on various levels in terms of accomplishing party duties, enjoying the rights included in the internal rules, their effective

participation and their level of presence in high authorities reveals that women's participation is remarkable.

## 6. Main Challenges as Identified by the Diagnosis

**a. Lack of capacities in mobilising people:** women have lower capacities to mobilise people in the election campaigns than men, despite their ability to tackle topics and issues affecting women.

**b. Lack of financial support:** during the election campaigns, in order to mobilise people, women must have important financial support and backing from some businesspeople, in addition to government support.

**c. Women's lack of interest in politics:** a large number of women have no political ambitions but some women do have political hopes and ambitions, such as accessing government positions like President or Prime Minister. Furthermore, they have hopes of taking high positions like men without recourse to relations as well as opportunities to take political positions.

To gain back their political rights, women involved in the survey suggested increasing awareness among women, such as informing them about their rights, capacities and potentials and training them in terms of leadership skills, management, decision-making, planning, negotiations, communication and the art of discourse and the capacity to influence others. So far, women are only encouraged to set up non-governmental and development organisations to increase their participation in sustainable development. Furthermore, it is necessary to review the laws in order to modify, erase or add articles that guarantee the achievement of equality in rights and duties for both men and women in private and public life.

**d. Laws and regulations do not encourage women or facilitate their presence in politics adequately:** despite changes in the law, there is still inadequate legislation that discriminates against women in relation to their political rights and engagement.

**e. Negative attitudes towards women's political participation:** there is the problem of the negative reductive opinion about women, their rights and their important role in addition to the spread of the male political culture and using religion as a weapon against women.

## 7. Recommendations

In light of the results of the diagnosis relating to the identification of women's situation in terms of political participation and the obstacles to this, research reveals the need for a strategy or

action plan to improve the qualitative level of women's political activity in Egypt. This strategy aims to enhance awareness so that women can participate in a more sustainable and effective way in political life, within the following sectors:

*a. To the Local Community*

The local community is a major obstacle to women's participation in political life, which is related to a misunderstanding of women, rooted within the local Egyptian community, and to the uselessness of their participation in the political sphere, despite the two revolutions that occurred in Egypt in the last four years and women's remarkable involvement. However, this misunderstanding has not changed sufficiently. Therefore, one of the best strategies that could have an impact in this sector is:

- Endorsing a cultural information programme within the framework of a national initiative to create a positive image of women's important role in the political sphere. This would highlight the importance of the language and form of the discourse, which is appropriate to target the following categories: women with low or medium levels of education as well as those who are illiterate and, at the same time, focus not on addressing men alone but also other family members.

*b. To Political Parties*

Given that Egyptian political parties lack a sense of social equality gender, this sector urgently needs to:

- Review the fundamentals of its programmes in order to create an effective action plan that deals with training party executives among women from different age groups, in terms of professional tools and strategies needed to engage in the election arena at different levels, most particularly, the parliamentary elections. This could be in the form of a "political party nursery", for which the party would develop a long-term strategy and provide technical support (theoretical and practical) aimed at political executives among young girls and women so that they are trained for parliamentary and local elections, or trade and student union elections;
- Rewrite the internal rules of the political parties, specifying the procedures with the obligation of electing women for leadership positions. This includes internal activities aimed particularly at men in small cities and areas as well as villages in order to raise awareness of the parties' members on the importance of women's participation at community level development. This will help spread the equality culture and create supporters of women among men instead of opponents.

*c. To the Media*

- In general, the media plays an important role in the dissemination of a culture of equality and the fight against the stereotyped image of women's role and their situation.
- Capacity-building for journalists, to ensure that men and women are on an equal footing by means of training programmes in terms of human rights, culture and to be able to deal with issues related to women's participation in political life effectively.

*d. To Associations Involved in Women's Rights*

- Carry out activities meant to promote and support women's rights. It is important for women to participate in politics so that they can enjoy the rights included in the international conventions related to human rights and women's rights and the measures provided to achieve equality;
- Organise promotion campaigns to modify existing legislation and create new laws in order to practise the principle of equality and equal chances in society as well as fighting against violence and segregation based on social gender;
- Compile the best women's practices within political parties and trade unions and publish them so that they can be a model and promote women's engagement;
- Reinforce awareness about social gender among the community categories through conferences and training programmes. The aim is to inform women about their rights as well as making men and women aware that women's participation is a contribution to achieving development of human resources in the whole country;
- Promote awareness-raising plans for women that include everyday empowerment tools (economic empowerment/fighting illiteracy/improving education level, etc.) in addition to political awareness-raising activities. These activities targeting women who live in disadvantaged areas should clarify the strong link between their votes and the elections, and between the economic and social factors governing their everyday family life and themselves. Indeed, the sound participation of these women in politics is considered to be one of the most important guarantees of sustainability for any gains achieved by Egyptian women;
- Foster women executives at the local level, which will help women to progress and reach decision-making positions so that political parties can have competitive candidates for the election race;
- Develop a strategy in partnership with the media, in all its forms and tools, to promote a new idea of women in society in general and improve women's image in the media.

*e. To Professional and Workers' Trade Unions*

- Organise awareness-raising campaigns about the importance of trade union work and the necessity of involvement and membership aimed mainly at women and young people to recruit them within unions;
- Review the labour law so as to eliminate all forms of segregation against working women, which represents an obstacle to accessing political and union work for women;
- Increase training related to capacity-building among women leaders in trade unions in terms of communication, negotiations and meeting discussions.

Implementing these recommendations, if used properly, could increase the current participation in political life among Egyptian women in addition to the opportunities below:

- An unprecedented representation rate in the parliament in 2015 (87 women out of 596 members);
- The articles of the Egyptian Constitution for 2014, which stipulates citizenship in Article 1, equal opportunities and equality in Article 9, and the need to take measures to guarantee women's representativeness properly in the elected councils in Article 11;
- The opportunity offered to women in city councils, in which they will have a high level of representation, following the provision in the Egyptian Constitution adopted in 2014 for a quota of a quarter of the seats within local elected councils.



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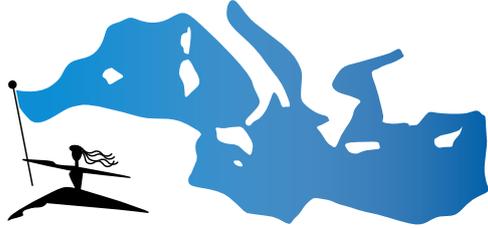
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According to its mandate, the **Euro-Mediterranean Women's Foundation (EMWF)** analyses women's local realities and public policies through consultations and dialogues at a grass-roots level. Concretely, the Foundation sets up **local clusters of gender equality actors**® every year, in the following countries: Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia (1 per country).

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