

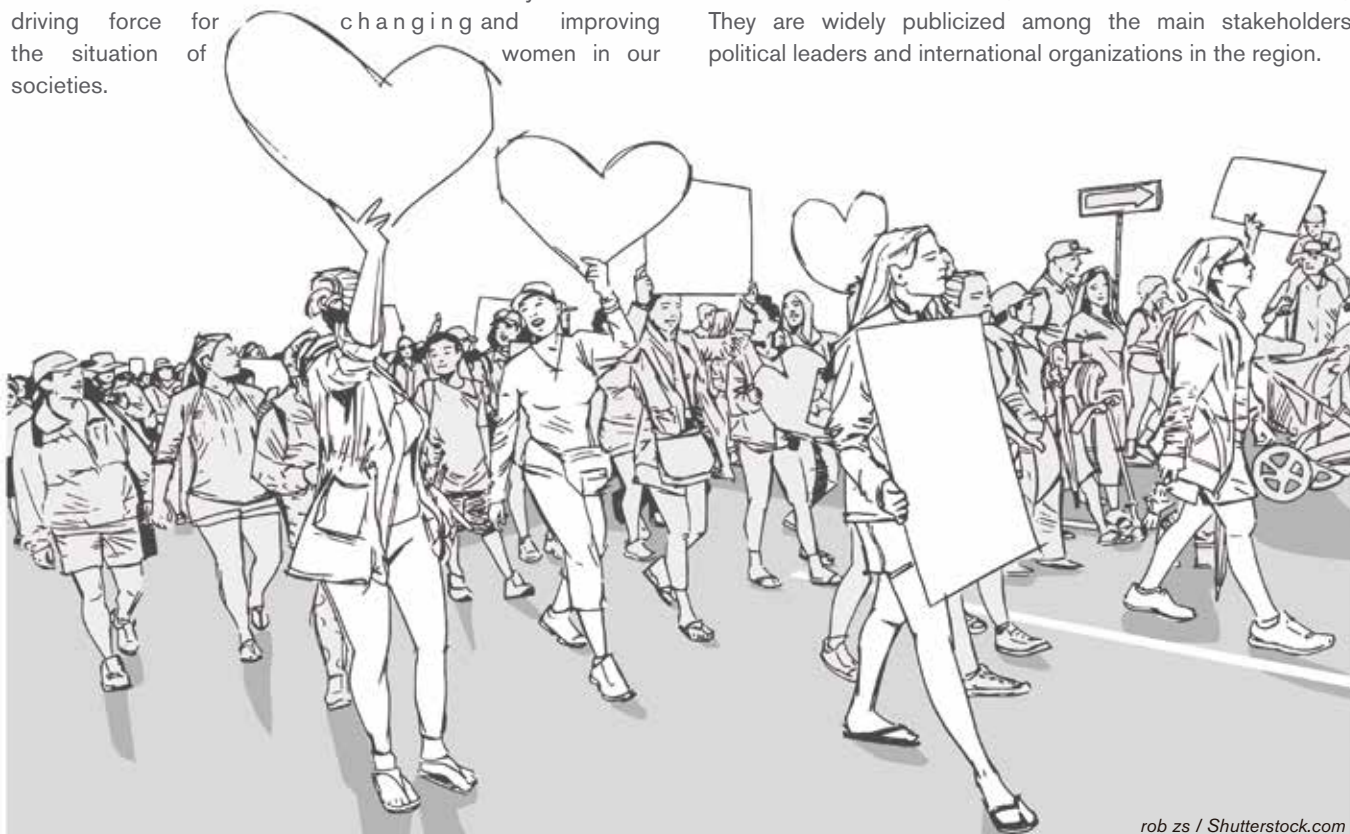


## MULTI-ACTOR MOBILIZATIONS in favour of gender equality in the southern Mediterranean

## ON THE GROUND

As part of its mission, the Euro-Mediterranean Women's Foundation uses consultation and dialogue to analyse the position of women and the public policies that concern them at local level. To do this, every year the Foundation establishes local clusters of gender equality actors in the following countries: Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia (1 per country). A **local cluster of gender equality actors**© is led by an association that coordinates all its actions, as the Foundation considers that civil society is the true driving force for changing and improving the situation of women in our societies.

The local cluster approach is an innovative, participatory step which encourages networking and sharing of successful practices to promote gender equality at a decentralized level encouraging the emergence of projects rooted in their local areas. The Foundation systemizes the results obtained by the actions of the local clusters and passes them on to the political leaders of Euro-Mediterranean countries. The diagnoses produced by the local centres are available on the Foundation's website ([www.euromedwomen.foundation](http://www.euromedwomen.foundation)). They are widely publicized among the main stakeholders, political leaders and international organizations in the region.



Each local cluster of gender equality actors© consists of at least five actors working for gender equality in a particular region: associations, research or educational organizations; local or regional groups or government services responsible for protecting women's rights; businesses, trade unions and media. Each local cluster chooses a target territory, which might be a region, province or the metropolitan area of a large city. Then the members of the local cluster determine a theme linked to gender equality considered to be a priority in their territory.

The mission of each cluster is to implement a **pilot action to mobilize gender equality actors** through discussion groups and exchanges of experiences between the different types of equality actor in order to analyse the situation with regard to the chosen theme and to monitor public policies carried out in this area. This bottom-up approach leads to the production of an on-the-ground diagnosis highlighting the main obstacles to gender equality, and then the creation of a project intended to overcome the obstacles identified by the diagnosis. Finally, the leader of the local cluster takes charge of implementing the project drawn up as part of a collective, participatory approach.

To date, the local clusters consist of Oran and Algiers (Algeria); Giza and Luxor (Egypt); Irbid and Zarqaa (Jordan); in the eastern suburbs of Beirut and Mount Lebanon (Lebanon); Marrakesh-Safi and Souss-Massa (Morocco); the West Bank – Ramallah, Bethlehem, El Khalil/Hebron – (Palestine); and Monastir, Sousse and Douar Hicher (Tunisia). These clusters focus on the participation of women in public and political life, the achievement of economic empowerment for women and the fight against violence affecting women. This document presents the diagnoses resulting from the pilot actions undertaken in 2017.

## Gender equality in participation in political life in Douar Hicher (Tunisia)

Although women represent 49% of the population of Douar Hicher, their presence in decision-making posts is slight. With individual and collective interviews and a seminar, the association **Le Chemin de la Dignité** has looked in depth at the cultural and socio-economic factors standing in the way of women's involvement in political and social action.

### Main findings:

- Family commitments and the division of gender roles: the private, internal space is for women and the public, while outdoor space is monopolized by men.
- The absence of awareness-raising within political parties, which wait for election time to identify women candidates instead of targeting women who are active in associations and often highly competent at an early stage.
- Some women prefer being active in political life a long way from Douar Hicher so they can get away from the pressure of family and neighbours and avoid being disturbed in their election campaigns.

- Lack of venues for women to meet; low levels of confidence in them; and lack of knowledge of their full rights and duties as citizens.
- Women rarely appear on television programmes dealing with important problems in the country.
- Poverty and unemployment affect women a great deal, forcing them to prioritize finding a decent job and somewhere to live before they can devote themselves to activism and political life.

The project undertaken by **Le Chemin de la Dignité** supports women of Douar Hicher as candidates for the 2018 municipal elections by making travel and communication easier and training them in media skills for the election campaign. The aim is to ensure the women have an active political presence by guaranteeing the fulfilment of the vertical and horizontal parity established in municipal election law.



## Prostitution and trafficking in women in an eastern suburb of Beirut (Lebanon)



Lebanon provides a refuge for many women and teenagers from neighbouring countries (Iraq, Palestine, Syria, etc.) driven away by wars and conflicts, as well as thousands of women and girls who have come from poorer countries to work. These women are targeted by trafficking and prostitution networks. Thanks to interviews with local associations, journalists and other partners, the **League for Lebanese Women's Rights (LLWR)** has studied the phenomenon of prostitution in social life, particularly in the town of Sin-EI-Fil.

### Main findings:

- Unemployment and insecurity affect young people and women a great deal. As the State is often absent, the context

encourages violence against women.

- Although few statistics on trafficking in women are available, the number of crimes relevant to trafficking in women brought before the courts is constantly increasing.
- Many local associations are concerned with domestic violence, but there are very few fighting against trafficking in women.
- The Lebanese security forces and other bodies do not take effective measures to prevent trafficking. As for the municipal governments, they feel detached from the problem.
- The different ministries responsible for applying the People Trafficking Act (164) do not work in a coordinated way (Ministry of Education, Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry for the Condition of Women, etc.).
- The media rarely deal with the subject of trafficking in women because of what they say is an absence of information and because it is a taboo subject.

The project of the LLWR is intended to strengthen the prevention of trafficking in schools, to raise media awareness and to promote partnerships between NGOs, the municipal authorities and the State to make it easier to detect cases of trafficking and take responsibility for victims.

## Women's access to decision-making positions in the Souss-Massa region (Morocco)

Although women's participation is decisive for economic and social progress in Morocco, their presence in the public sphere is always a problem. There are many structural obstacles preventing women having access to decision-making positions. Thanks to workshops with the representatives of associations (10), trade unions (4) and political parties (4), the **Mouvement pour le partage du pouvoir, des richesses et des valeurs (Tamaynut)** has studied the factors affecting access to positions of responsibility in civil society and political organizations.

### Main findings:

- Predominance of a traditional concept of gender roles spread by the Islamic religion.
- Illiteracy, educational discrimination in favour of boys and the low position of women within the family.
- Excessive workloads for women (housework, agriculture, offices, associations).
- Verbal, psychological, physical and sexual harassment of women.
- Negative impacts of trade union work on the image of women (rebellious, demanding, strikers).
- Absence of gender parity and equality issues in the statutes of trade unions and the employment code.
- Lack of knowledge among women of legal and regulatory texts.

- The social and cultural status of women generates a lack of confidence among them in their capacity to occupy decision-making positions.



The project carried out by Tamaynut aims at reinforcing the skills of 25 women leaders of associations, trade unions and political parties concerning women's rights. Through training, advocacy and communication actions, the project attempts to remove certain obstacles to women's access to leadership.



## The presence of women and young people in the Palestinian political system (Palestine)

The under-representation of women and young people in decision-making positions affects their capacity to play an important role in the development of Palestinian society. **The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy (MIFTAH)** has met trade unions and national political parties, such as the General Union of Palestinian Women, as well as young leaders to study the reasons limiting the access of women and young people to decision-making positions.

### Main findings:

- Absence of discriminatory references with regard to women in terms of representation, rights and duties in the texts of laws.
- Despite this, weak presence of women in management posts in the structure of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and in all its sub-organizations: political factions, popular trade unions and the Palestinian National Council (PNC).
- Persistence of a stereotype according to which women are very sensitive and incapable of withstanding the pressure of political life.

- Lack of transparency in the choice of leaders of PLO organizations and the absence of democratic elections overseen by reliable bodies.
- Rivalries between parties encouraging cronyism and agreements between factions rather than the choice of people depending on their competences.
- Failure to renew the political class and irregular meetings of PNC bodies.

**The project carried out by MIFTAH promotes the equal representation of women in the different PLO bodies thanks to advocacy actions and the reform of internal regulations. The aim is to establish and apply quotas of 30% of women and 30% of young people aged under 40 in political parties, trade unions and PNC bodies.**



## Gender equality in local councils in Luxor (Egypt)

Egyptian women living in rural areas face huge challenges in entering the political arena. Although the current Egyptian constitution establishes that a quarter of seats on local councils should be allocated to women, after the 2008 elections they occupy just 4.7% of the seats. **The National Association for the Defense of Rights and Freedoms (NADRF)** has collected ideas from local authorities, religious figures and associations in Zeinya, Armant, Esna, Aqalta and Elmares to encourage women to stand in the next local elections. More than 30 women have also benefited from training on running election campaigns.

### Main findings:

- Stereotyped perceptions and customs underestimate women's capabilities and discourage them from getting involved in public affairs.
- Lack of awareness-raising of the general public on the importance of accepting that women can be elected and play a role in their community.
- The school curriculum and religious discourses put across a conservative image of women.

- Insecure conditions force girls to leave school to marry, reducing their chances of becoming interested in political life.
- The media rarely show portraits of women leaders or figures from the feminist movement.
- Sexual harassment and the absence of gender mixed environments hamper women's engagement in the public sphere.
- The political parties must be encouraged to include women at the top of their electoral lists.

**The NADRF project promotes more effective participation of women in local government thanks to meetings with political parties, media training activities and awareness-raising among the general public to publicize electoral law and what is at stake in implementing quotas for women.**

## Female entrepreneurship in Alger Centre and Bouzaréah (Algeria)



In Algeria, there are few studies on female entrepreneurs at local level. The **Association des femmes en économie verte (AFEV)** has analysed the work of local institutions (district people's assembly, associations, chamber of industry and commerce, etc.) in promoting female entrepreneurship. Using questionnaires and a discussion group, the AFEV has questioned many women on the obstacles to launching and developing their businesses, as well as women who have never set up businesses, to discover their expectations.

### Main findings:

- Women lack information about opportunities in the social economy and solidarity sector. The main sectors of activity

where they are involved in business are personal services (fashion, hairdressing, catering, etc.) and the sale of wellness products and jewellery.

- Social pressure, traditional stereotypes and cultural constraints do not encourage the development of female entrepreneurs.
- Access to finance and the lack of family support are important challenges to setting up a business.
- Discriminatory practices against women entrepreneurs (harassment, symbolic violence, etc.) have been reported.
- Women do not receive enough support or information about policies and support mechanisms for entrepreneurs.
- Many women entrepreneurs have financial difficulties due to guarantee requirements and the interest rates imposed.
- Successful women entrepreneurs are not often seen in the media.

The project carried out by the AFEV is aimed at supporting the women entrepreneurs of Bouzaréah through training in leadership, marketing, etc. Thanks to networking between women entrepreneurs, the project is intended to consolidate the profitability and durability of their initiatives.

## Improving working conditions for women in Zarqaa (Jordan)

There are many aspects to gender inequality in Zarqaa that affect the professional development of women and their engagement in economic activities. The **Jordan Forum for Business and Professional Women (JFBPW)** has visited many factories (food, clothes, electronics and tobacco) to collect employees' opinions on their working conditions and the views of the factory owners. Meetings with the trade unions have also helped develop strategies for promoting the rights of female workers.

### Main findings:

- The employees suffer from inadequate wages and a lack of safety in the factory working environment.
- The factory owners generally prefer to hire men rather than women, particularly if the men are foreigners, because they tend to accept longer working hours and low wages.
- Female workers bemoan the lack of transport to get to the factories – often a long way from their homes – threatening their security and discouraging them from going to work.
- Intimidation and sexual harassment of women are frequent.
- The absence of nurseries forces some women to give up their jobs.
- Women are weak in professional skills and have a limited knowledge of employment law and regulations.

The JFBPW is carrying out a project to promote professional equality and better working conditions for women in the factories. To achieve this goal, the project has established advocacy actions in favour of gender policies in factories and training and workshops on the right to work and on the strengthening of female workers' professional skills.





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 with the objectives of the UfM. It also endeavours to foster the gradual construction of an area of peace and stability, shared prosperity and dialogue between the civilizations and cultures in the Mediterranean basin. Since 2014, the IEMed is the headquarters of the Euro-Mediterranean Women's Foundation and hosts its secretariat.

The Euro-Mediterranean Women's Foundation (EMWF) is a non-profit independent organization launched in 2014. It is structured as a network of networks gathering all types of gender equality actors in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

The Foundation's objectives are: to make progress in the common fight for equal rights for women and men to participate in political, economic, civil and social life; to eradicate all forms of violence and discrimination against women and girls; and to encourage a change in attitude and behaviour for gender equality.

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 Europe and Foreign Affairs (MEAE), as part 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 Women's Rights Leagues (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) with their label.

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Heads of the local clusters of gender equality actors©



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