

MODULE 3:

STRENGTHENING WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION TO REINFORCE GOOD LOCAL GOVERNANCE



Outline

User's guide:

- Objectives
- Expected results
- Principles & Methods of Work
- Duration

1. Women and local governance

- 1/ About local governance
- 2/ What are the main actors for local governance?
- 3/ Importance of women's participation at local governance
- 4/ Importance of women's political participation at local level

2. Overview on Arab/African women participation in national/local elections

- 1/ Women's political participation: what does it mean?
- 2/ Factors that help improve women's participation in politics
 - A-The political will
 - B-Arab women's movement
 - C-International and regional Arab references and mechanisms
- 3/ Percentage of Arab&African women's representation at national and local levels

3. Mechanisms to address structural factors and support women political participation at local level

- 1/ Electoral gender quotas
- 2/ Electoral system

4. Obstacles to women political participation at local level

- 1/ Legal and political obstacles
- 2/ Cultural and psychological obstacles
- 3/ Social and economic obstacles

5. Strategies to improve elected women's contribution and local leadership

- 1/ Capacity building
- 2/ Political parties
- 3/ Political finance
- 4/ Coordination for better gender mainstreaming in local affairs
- 5/ Partnerships
- 6/ Safety measures

User's Guide:

1. Objectives

To provide knowledge and skills to local elected women to be able to extend their constituency outreach, to mainstream gender in local affairs and to make legal strategic choices as to women local representation.

2. Expected Results

1. Local elected women understand their roles and potentialities available to better respond to local needs through a gender based approach
2. Legal Knowledge to reinforce local representation in contexts of law reforms clarified and acquired.
3. Regional Knowledge on women's political participation at national/ local levels enhanced.

3. Principles & Methods of Work

- Participatory approach.
- Sharing knowledge, good practices and lessons learnt.
- Learning by doing.
- Building consensus.
- Presentation, brainstorming, discussion.
- Documentaries, role play.
- Working groups.

4. Duration: 3-4 days

1. Women and local governance

1/ About local governance

Local governance is governing at local level through interactions within and among existing central national institutions and the community at large (public, private or civic institutions).

Decentralization gives the local governance system the opportunity to become increasingly democratic.

Local governance is an instrument to:

1. Reinforce citizens' participation in government (local elections-elected local governments)
2. Make citizen and their elected leaders gain experience in the practice of democracy: creates more opportunities for public participation and input
3. Allow citizens to contribute more efficiently to local development by participating to the identification of community priorities and needs
4. Reinforce accountability, transparency and effectiveness: local leaders can be held increasingly accountable for decisions that affect citizen's lives, local government performance improves
5. Address the problems of under-representation and ineffective participation from the bottom up.

2/ What are the main actors for local governance?

There is no unique answer. The response is different from a context to another. Nevertheless, the main actors could be summarized as below:

- The state (government): Local authorities, local leaders, government institutions...
- Civil society organizations: NGOs, professional organizations
- Private sector: business associations, local entrepreneurs, ...

Without continuous communication, dialogue and a real partnership between these three levels, responsiveness to the community needs will not be fully ensured, and efficiency will be jeopardized by the new challenges and increased social and economic demand coming from various sectors of the local population.

3/ Importance of women's participation at local governance

«Incorporating women in Local Governance is key to maximizing the returns of local development and to furthering national economic growth and prosperity. In addition, the local level of affairs is perceived as a strategic springboard for addressing women's needs, fostering their empowerment and fulfilling their demands for an autonomous role in local development»¹.

Local government is the level of government where women can enter political life with relative ease, as **elections campaigns cost** is relatively low and issues at the local level tend to **motivate women** to enter politics. Moreover, local governments are good **training grounds** for women politicians who want to reach higher levels of elected or appointed offices in the government.

On another hand, many believe that the political participation of women should start with their participation in local politics, through the local representative/elective or administrative structures of the local administration, as this may represent the first level in the political pyramid.

4/ Importance of women's political participation at local level

Women's participation in local elections is importance at multiple levels:

- 1.** Numerically women represent half of local community and this means that the lack of contribution and participation of women in the legislative structures of the local administration will lead to the adoption of policies that are not gender-sensitive and do not respond to the needs and concerns of all community groups.
- 2.** The most important policies adopted at local, provincial and municipal levels are mainly related to education, housing, mobility, health, security and hygiene which are all areas that relates to the reproductive/ traditional roles of women. Women who are genuinely active in these areas, and who access the representative bodies at the levels mentioned can act as catalyst for identifying priorities influential in the development of the community and for achieving development.
- 3.** The participation of women in local representative structures offers women a first hand political experience and a chance to qualify for a political transition from the municipal or local or regional levels to the national level.
- 4.** Women's participation in the local representative structures gives the local community an opportunity to get used to the presence of

women in decision-making positions and to test their competence and abilities, which contributes to creating a friendly environment for women in politics.

Exercises and methodology: Working groups, presentations, use of CAWTAR/UN-INSTRAW documentaries

2. Overview on Arab/African women participation in national/local elections

1/ Women's political participation: what does it mean?

Women's political participation means:

- Women's **involvement** in national, local, regional and international **governance institutions**.
- Women's **contribution** to the defining of all state policies and priorities at all levels.
- Women's participation in the **decision-making** processes of policies and laws.

Consequently, women's political participation implies the latter are granted:

- The right to **be a member** of the legislative and executive power.
- The right **to participate** in the decision-making process and to take action in all spheres of public life and at all levels (national, local, regional and international).

Women's political participation is one of the most prominent

expressions of **women's participation in public life** (through their representation within political parties, trade unions and various civil society organizations ...) and reflects the State recognition of **women's «citizenship»** and the rights resulting from this status.

Women's political participation is one of the most important **conditions for equal representation and genuine democracy**.

Women's political participation involves the active presence **of women in all aspects of the political sphere**. Women's participation in politics refers, first of all, to the need for **women to be informed** of the political issues affecting their community and their country. In addition, women's participation in politics refers to their **participation in the election processes**, at the national and local level, as voters, having access to the necessary information, forming their own opinion and expressing their will freely, **and as candidates**, running for elected posts. Moreover, women's political participation refers to **women's role in political parties**, at all levels, as members and supporters and as leaders, participating in the process of defining the political programs and platforms. Furthermore, women's political participation refers to **leadership positions** held by women in all decision-making institutions: parliaments, consultative bodies, local councils and governments.

Exercise and methodology: Plenary presentation and brainstorming with the floor.

2/ Factors that help improve women's participation in politics

Over the last few decades There has been an increase in women's political participation globally and particularly in the Arab world. **The world average** percentage of women in Parliament **rose by approximately 30 per cent** in the last ten years. In the **Arab world** this percentage **more than doubled**; passing from 3.6 per cent in 1999 to 9.1 in 2009.

This improvement would not have happened if the Heads of most Arab States did not joined efforts with women's movements, and if the International and regional Arab references, mechanisms and strategies for the advancement of women were not put in place and implemented.

A- The political will

Political support to women's political participation differs between Arab countries, although there is consensus towards women's education, development, empowerment and strengthening of their contribution to public life.

In successive meetings of the Council of the League of Arab States at the summit level (Head of states) for the years 2004 (Tunisia), 2005 (Algeria), 2006 (Khartoum) and 2007 (Riyadh), closing statements and declarations emphasized the link between advancement of modernity and conditions of Arab women and the need to give this issue importance.

Leaders are committed to:

«Adopt initiatives, strategies and plans intended to achieve equality, increase awareness about basic Arab values and

principles that guarantee women's rights and women's role in society, pass the necessary laws for their protection, reject all forms of anti-woman discrimination and ensure their participation in the decision-making process on an equal footing with men in all social, political and economic activities...»

(paragraph 6 of the Final Declaration of Algiers, 2005)

B- Arab women's movement

Arab women's movements have not had the same success in the various Arab countries. The experiences were different from a country to another but they can be summarized as follow:

Stage1: Claiming certain rights and the recognition of women's role in human development (from the 19th century and still going in some Arab Countries)

Stage2: claiming full and complete equality of rights and duties between men and women. Many Arab countries succeeded in integrating in their constitutions and legislation the principle of equality between all citizens regardless of gender and legislations and recognized women's political rights.

Stage3: Claiming positive discrimination measures and empowerment of women. A number of Arab countries started implementing some positive discrimination measures.

C- International and regional Arab references and mechanisms

c.1 -International references and mechanisms

- **The Universal Declaration on Human Rights** (December 10, **1948**) provided for the non discrimination principle on any basis including gender, in terms of economic, social and political rights.

- **The Convention on the Political Rights of Women** (into force on July 7, **1954**): states: «Women shall be entitled to vote in all elections on equal terms with men, without any discrimination»; «women shall be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies, established by national law, on equal term with men, without any discrimination». It has been ratified among the 10 Arab and African countries by 5 countries: Tunisia, Mauritania, Morocco, Egypt, and Libya)².

- **The International Pact on Civil and Political Rights** (issued on 16 December **1966**) stipulates the right of every citizen to participate in public affairs, to run for and hold public posts in his/her country. Until 2009 second quarter, this Pact was ratified by 9 out of 10 Arab and African countries: Tunisia, Libya, Morocco, Egypt, Sudan, Algeria, Somalia, Djibouti, and Mauritania.

- **The first world women conference (1975 -Mexico City)**, focused on three major goals; equality, development and peace.

- **Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination³ -CEDAW- (1979)**: defined discrimination and acknowledged a series of rights in favor of women including political rights; it states in Article 7 that member countries shall take all appropriate measures to eradicate discrimination against women in the political and public life. The Convention particularly guarantees i/women's right to vote, ii/ women's right to stand for election, iii/women's right to contribute to political life, and to make and take decisions at all State levels on the same footing as men. CEDAW was ratified by all Arab countries except by SUDAN and SOMALIA.

- **The second world women conference (1980- Copenhagen)** focused on education, health and other social issues. The Conference adopted an action plan reflecting gaps between the Law and

2- As until the year 2000, available on http://www.unhcr.ch/french/html/menu3/b/treaty1e_fr.htm

3-Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination was designed and put to vote for adoption by decision of the U.N. general assembly n. 180/34 dated December 18, 1979 – Date of effect: September 3, 1981, according to provisions of Article 7-1. Arab countries not yet ratifying it are Sudan and Somalia.

women's fulfillment of their rights through different points including: lack of initiatives aimed at inciting men to contribute to the improvement of women's role in society and the limited number of women in decision making positions

- **The third world women conference (1985-Nairobi)** focused on equality and women's participation in decision-making.

- **The International Conference on Human Rights (1993-Vienna)** confirmed that women's rights are human rights.

- **The fourth world women conference (1995-Beijing)** launched the strategy of empowering women in all domains, including the political sphere. The fundamental transformation that took place in Beijing was the recognition of the need to shift the focus from women to the concept of gender, recognizing that the entire structure of society, and all relations between men and women within it, had to be re-evaluated. Only by such a fundamental restructuring of society and its institutions could women be fully empowered to take their rightful place as equal partners with men in all aspects of life. Participants agreed on Beijing declaration and plan of action focusing on 12 areas including Women in Power and Decision Making and Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women.

- **The Millennium Declaration (2000-NY) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs):** The Heads of States and Governments and other convening World leaders issued the United Nations Millennium Declaration which includes 8 topics and defining 7 goals. The Millennium Development Goals, adopted by 192 member states of the United Nations and at least 23 international organizations, constitute eight goals that they committed to achieve by 2015. These goals were inspired and designed based on the eight areas making up the United Nations Millennium Declaration.

Every Goal includes some objectives (8 goals and 18 objectives), and indicators were defined to measure the achievement progress of every objective.

The third Millennium Goal aims at «promoting gender equality and empowering women». One progress indicator for this goal is the «rate of seats held by women in national legislatures».

c.2 -Arab/African strategies for the advancement of women

Between the year 2002 and the year 2008 was launched the regional Arab process to strengthen Arab women's political participation at various levels in a way that suits the Arab region's specificities and meets the needs of Arab women in their countries

The main contributors are:

1- The League of Arab States:

The League of Arab States granted a lot of importance to the follow up and enforcement of Arab and international resolutions, through efforts taken by the Secretary General and specialized Arab organizations working under the auspices of the League.

Since the creation of the Arab Women Committee in 1971 and the Women Department within the League, efforts focused on reinforcing the role of Arab women and increasing Arab cooperation in the organization of women empowerment programs.

The Secretariat general (Department of Women) adopted the international objectives for the advancement of women and drafted strategies and action plans and programmes, including:

The Secretary General also adopted women development international goals and used them in the design of Arab strategies, programs and action plans, including:

- Arab Women Strategy until 2000: Arab countries adopted in 1998 the Arab women strategy to the year 2000, including objectives and principles to empower women in all domains according to the Arab region's characteristics and Arab women's needs on their countries.
- Arab women development plan 2005: which focused on Arab issues through nine major themes complying with the international action plan.

2- The Arab Women's Organization:

The AWO developed a strategy covering 7 areas that encompass the political sphere. The strategy states that the development of Arab women's conditions cannot be achieved simply by designing strategies; it must be accompanied by political will preaching reform, the availability of material and human resources, and legal frameworks reducing difficulties and constraints. The Strategy also states that global development cannot be achieved without the combination of all efforts: government, private sector and NGOs. The organization works in the political field based on its strategic goals to:

- Empower women politically by increasing their representation rate in legislatures, in political and elective councils and in decision making positions.
- Increase women's presence rates in parties, unions, professional associations, local councils and civil society groups.
- Increase the presence rate of Arab women in Arab, regional and international institutions.

Methodology: Plenary presentation

3/ Percentage of Arab & African women's representation at national and local levels

In Africa, there are 10 countries that are part of the League of Arab States. These Arab countries are:



REGIONAL AVERAGES

	Single House or lower House	Upper House or Senate	Both Houses combined
Nordic countries	41.6%		
Americas	23.1%	23.7%	23.2%
Europe - OSCE member countries including Nordic countries	21.9%	19.5%	21.4%
Europe - OSCE member countries excluding Nordic countries	20.1%	19.5%	19.9%
Asia	18.7%	17.0%	18.5%
Sub-Saharan Africa	18.3%	19.6%	18.5%
Pacific	12.6%	15.4%	12.6%
Arab States	12.4%	8.4%	11.6%

Regions are classified by descending order of the percentage of women in the lower or single House Women in national parliaments, situation as of 30 November 2010, <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm>

In general, **the representation of women in local administration is low, even lower than at the national level.**

Country	Percentage of women in parliament	Percentage of women in local representative structures
Algeria	6.43 % (2 houses combined)	0.73% (term 2007-2012)
Comoros	Unicameral 3.03% (1 out of 33) (term 2009-2014)	Not Available
Djibouti	Unicameral 13.85% (9 out of 65) (term 2008-2013)	2006 organized regional and communal elections % Not Available (But there are women)
Egypt	4.41% (2 houses combined) (before the last 2010 national elections because final results are not yet published)	2008 local elections 4.7% ⁴ 2002 local elections 1.68 % ⁵
Libya	Unicameral 7.69% (36 out of 468) (term 2009-1012)	% Not Available (But there are women)
Mauritania	18.2% (2 houses combined)	2006 municipal elections 30.33% ⁶
Morocco	6.34% (2 houses combined)	2009 local elections 12,3% ⁷
Somalia	Unicameral 6.78% (37 out of 546) (term 2004-2011)	2002 organized last municipal elections Not Available
Sudan	18,215% (2 houses combined)	Not Available
Tunisia	21,375% (2 houses combined)	33.6% (term 2010-2015)

4- Women political empowerment, GPPS&POGAR, Arab Parliaments: Women and Parliaments: Research & Publications, available on <http://www.arabparliaments.org/publications.asp?tid=6&sby=1>

5- Arab Women in Local Governance in Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Tunisia and Yemen, CAWTAR-MEPI project

6- "Municipal elections coincided with legislative elections on November 19, 2006 with a second round on December 3, 2006. A total of 1200 electoral lists contested the 219 municipal councils. These elections were contested by 25 political parties who fielded 888 lists, while independents fielded 312 lists. Total number of candidates was 20,667, including 3954 women. In the first round 3688 municipal council members were elected of whom 1120 were women. Thus women's share of municipal seats exceeded their pre-determined quota of 20% and climbed up to 30.33%". <http://www.pogar.org/countries/theme.aspx?f=6&cid=11>

7- « The latest local elections in Morocco were held on 12 June 2009 with a voter turnout of 52.4% or the equivalent of 7.5 million voters from a total of 13.36 million voters registered on the electoral lists. Eight political parties were able to secure 89.3% of the seats by winning 84% of the vote. The distribution of seats was as follows: The Originality and Modernness won 6015 seats or 21.69% of seats, followed by the Independence Party with 5292 seats or 19% and the National Rally of Liberals with 4112 seats or 14.8% of seats. The Socialist Union Party of Popular Forces obtained 3226 seats or 11.63%, the Popular Movement Party won

Rank	Country	Lower or single House				Upper House or Senate			
		Elections	Seats*	Women	% W	Elections	Seats*	Women	% W
31	Tunisia	10 2009	214	59	27.6%	8 2008	112	17	15.2%
37	Sudan	4 2010	446	114	25.6%	5 2010	46	5	10.9%
51	Mauritania	11 2006	95	21	22.1%	11 2009	56	8	14.3%
86	Djibouti	2 2008	65	9	13.8%	-----	---	---	-----
98	Morocco	9 2007	325	34	10.5%	10 2009	270	6	2.2%
115	Algeria	5 2007	389	30	7.7%	12 2009	136	7	5.1%
?	Libyan	3 2009	468	36	7.7%	-----	---	---	-----
119	Somalia	8 2004	546	37	6.8%	-----	---	---	-----
128	Comoros	12 2009	33	1	3.0%	-----	---	---	-----
?	Egypt	11 2010	518	?	?	6 2010	264	?	?

- Figures correspond to the number of seats currently filled in Parliament
- Women in national parliaments , situation as of 30 November 2010; <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>

2213 seats or 7.98%, the Justice and Development Party obtained 1513 seats or 5.45%, the Constitutional Union Party with 1307 seats or 4.7%, and the Party for Socialism and Progress with 1102 seats or 3.97% of seats. On the national level, women won 3406 seats or 12.3% of total seats", available on: <http://www.pogar.org/countries/theme.aspx?f=3&cid=12>

3. Mechanisms to address structural factors and support women political participation at local level

In 1995, at the Fourth World Conference on Women held in China, the «Beijing» Plan of Action called on states to increase women's participation in decision making and leadership and to ensure women's full participation in political life.

As shown in the tables above Arab and African women's political participation has increased, although it is still the world lowest. A number of Arab and African countries took some initiatives to improve women's political participation in national and local governance. Electoral gender quotas and certain electoral system have been the main legal mechanisms used to produce from a **numerical point of view tangible and easily measured quantitative results**.

1/ Electoral gender quotas

Electoral gender quotas imply setting a fixed goal for the recruitment of women into elective offices. They embody an **affirmative action policy** expected to rapidly change under representation of women and unwanted inequality. Today, women quota systems aim at ensuring that women are not only a few tokens in political life, but constitute at least a critical minority of 20%, 30% or 40 %.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) which was ratified by all the 10 Arab/African countries stipulates in its article 4 paragraph 1 “ 1. Adoption by States Parties of temporary special measures aimed at accelerating de facto equality between men and women shall not be considered discrimination as defined in the present Convention,

but shall in no way entail as a consequence the maintenance of unequal or separate standards; these measures shall be discontinued when the objectives of equality of opportunity and treatment have been achieved.

The fifth recommendation of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women urged states parties to make more use of temporary special measures such as positive action, preferential treatment or quota systems in representative bodies.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union and the United Nations Commission on the status of women state that 30% representation should be a minimum-critical mass- threshold for the quota of women in decision making positions.

There is no consensus on electoral gender quotas as mechanism to effectively combat inequality.

Opponents raised electoral gender quotas **violate the principle of equality** between citizens and the **principle of equal opportunities** since they give advantage to women over men based on gender and not qualification. They consider that this **mechanism is undemocratic** because it «imposes on voters to choose between women candidates only ... (moreover,) knowing the results of the election in advance, at least partially at the level of women representation, is contrary to democratic practice. Indeed, democracy requires candidates to compete at the level of programs and competence and not be imposed by any exceptional decisions and measures»⁸.

Many women also rejected the electoral gender quotas considering this mechanism would negatively affect their struggle to improve their status and enhance their participation in political life.

8- Idris Krini: «the quota system and women's representation in parliament: Approaches to Arab models» - paper presented at the conference on "Elections and democratization in the Arab world: a step forward or a step backwards which was organized by the Jerusalem Center for Political Studies, on 26-27 January 2008. Available at the following address: http://www.alqudscenter.org/arabic/pages.php?local_type=128&local_details=2&id*=696&menu_id=10&cat_id=13

The pros raised women have been worldwide excluded from the political arena and prevented from contributing to, and influencing, the decisions that relate to their communities; therefore they need temporary legal support mechanisms. The electoral gender quotas embody one of these mechanisms that would be applied until an adequate and gender friendly environment emerges and enables women to compete with men for political seats on an equal footing and based on objective criteria.

The pros advocated electoral gender quotas:

- are **temporary measure** to redress an existing and historical imbalance in women's representation at the level of representative bodies.
- **are not discriminatory measure against men**, they just redress the political discrimination women suffered from.
- allow **overcoming implicit and explicit barriers and obstacles**, and consent to **move from formal equality to effective equality**, i.e., equality of results.
- are closely **related to the principle of justice** which requires that half of the society be represented and that the society at large capitalize on women's accumulated political experience .

The 2005 Arab Human Development Report adopted this trend, stating «contrary to what some imagine, parliamentary quotas systems for women do not conflict with the principle of equality under law... however, even when Arab legislators have taken steps to establish gender equality in political participation under law, such formal equality and social environment inimical to women's acquisition and free exercise of their political rights. It follows, therefore, that affirmative legislative interventions to allocate a quota of parliamentary seats for women aims to help society make amends for its historical injustice against

women and to make up for lost time in giving effect to the principle of equal opportunity enshrined in many Arab constitutions»⁹.

Different types of **electoral gender quotas do exist**. They can be distinguished according 2 separate dimensions: **who has mandated** the quotas system, **what part** of the selection and nomination process the **quotas targets**.

As for the mandating, there are two types of electoral gender quotas:

- **The compulsory / legislated quotas** which are embedded into the constitution, the electoral law, the law on political parties or any other legal text. These are binding.
- **The optional / voluntary** quotas which are bases on the will of the party which makes a consensus decision to commit itself to presenting candidatures of a determined proportion or fixed number of women in electoral lists.

As for the **quotas targets**, electoral gender quotas may target:

- The first stage of the selection process: the stage of finding aspirants, e.g. those willing to be considered by nomination, either by a primary or by the nomination committee and other parts of the party organization. These are **aspirant quotas**.

Gender quotas at this stage are rules that require a certain number or percentage of women or either sex be represented in the pool of candidates that are up for discussion.

- The second stage is the nomination of candidates to be placed on the ballot by the party. These are the **candidate quotas** which may be legal or voluntary.
- The third stage refers to the elected candidates. It is decided by a legal text that a certain percentage or number among those elected must be women. These are the **reserved seats**.

Mandated by	At what level		
	Aspirant	Candidates	Elected
Legal quotas : (constitution or law)	Non applicable	Candidate quotas	Reserved seats
Voluntary party quotas	Aspirant quotas (short lists)	Candidate quotas	Reserved seats

Quotas work best with rank order rules specifying that women must be placed in winnable positions on a party list. There are many types of rank order regulations in force in the world (such as the zipper list where women and men must be alternated throughout a list, the top 2 candidates on any list cannot be of the same sex, the quota of 40/60 for every five posts on a list...).

The quota system has to be chosen in accordance with the electoral system and the local context. It has to be adequately supported by enforcement mechanisms (sanctions for non-compliance).

Quotas for national elections

Country	Gender electoral Quotas for national elections
Algeria	No
Comoros	No
Djibouti	Yes
Egypt	Yes
Libya	No
Mauritania	Yes
Morocco	Yes
Somalia	Not Available
Sudan	Yes
Tunisia	Yes

Quotas for local election

Country	Gender electoral Quotas for national elections	Types of quotas adapted
Algeria	No	Non applicable
Comoros	No	Non applicable
Djibouti	No	Non applicable
Egypt	No	Non applicable
Libya	No	Non applicable
Mauritania	Yes	Mandated by: Legal quotas Targets: candidate quotas + reserved seats
Morocco	Yes	Mandated by :Voluntary party quotas Targets: candidate quotas
Somalia	Not Available	Not Available
Sudan	Yes	Mandated by: Legal quotas Targets: candidate quotas + reserved seats
Tunisia	Yes	Mandated by: Voluntary party quotas Targets: candidate quotas

Exercise and methodology: Working groups, Presentations, Plenary presentation and brainstorming with the floor

2/ Electoral system

In the short term, changing a country's electoral system often represents a far more realistic goal to work towards than dramatically changing the culture's views of women¹⁰.

Another practical and effective mechanism that can be used to increase women's political presence in electoral offices (national and local levels) is the electoral system. In fact, not all the electoral systems can secure the election of women. Studies evidenced that the differences in women's representation across electoral systems are substantial.

¹⁰- Richard E. Matland , *Enhancing women's political participation: legislative recruitment and electoral systems, Women in parliament: beyond numbers, A revised Edition, In ternational IDEA, 2005, p. 99*

It is worth mentioning that «just as important, electoral systems can be, and regularly are, changed. Compared to the cultural status of women in society, or a country's development level, electoral rules are far more malleable. Changing the electoral system often represents a far more realistic goal to work towards than dramatically changing the culture's views of women»¹¹ .

There are a number of factors that women should be concerned about when designing an electoral law.

In **plurality/ majority systems**, the winner is the candidate or party with the most votes, and typically there is only a single winner in each district.

In the **proportional representation systems** (PR), the electoral system is designed to ensure that the overall votes for a party or a coalition are translated into a corresponding proportion of seats in the legislature. All PR systems use multi-member districts.

District magnitude is the number of seats per district.

Party magnitude is the number of seats a party wins in a district.

Electoral threshold: the minimum percentage of the vote a party must have in order to win a seat in the legislature.

Single-member districts in plurality / majority systems have consistently proved to be the worst possible for women.

The proportional representation systems are better than plurality/ majority systems **for increasing women's representation**. But some PR systems are preferable to others. Just having a PR is not sufficient.

The best PR systems are those that guarantee: 1/high party magnitude, 2/high district magnitudes, 3/the smallest number of geographic electoral district (the whole country as one electoral district is the optimum).When district magnitude is one (generally

11- Richard E.Matland , *Enhancing women's political participation:legislative recruitment and electoral systems, Women in parliament:beyond numbers, A revised Edition, In ternational IDEA, 2005, p. 99.*

in plurality / majority systems) the party can nominate one person per district. In single-member districts, female candidates must compete directly against all men. In these cases the preference generally goes to a man, as a woman is often believed not to be capable of winning in a direct competition with men.

When the district magnitude increases (then the candidates' list become longer), the chance that a party will win several seats in the district increases. When the party expects to win several seats, then gatekeepers will divide winning slots on the party list among various internal party interests, including most likely women's interests and women then are inserted in the lists and have more chances to win¹².

The mechanisms such as the electoral gender quotas and the electoral system are only mechanism to remedy numerical underrepresentation of women in national and local elected offices. A comprehensive strategy need to take over these mechanisms in order to **improve women's contribution** in national and local affairs to reinforce **women's local leadership**.

Exercise and methodology: Role play, Plenary presentation and brainstorming with the floor.

4. Obstacles to women political participation at local level

Research and studies have demonstrated that women face similar challenges in running for political participation. It was recognized that "women running for election were usually held to higher expectations from society and were often scrutinized far more closely than men seeking election. This pressure often results in women having to work harder and more than men»¹³ .

The factors that hinder women's political participation are **complex and intertwined**. Such factors influence one another and **relate to**

12- Richard E.Matland , *Enhancing women's political participation: legislative recruitment and electoral systems, Women in parliament: beyond numbers, A revised Edition, International IDEA, 2005, p.101.*

13- *Is parliament open to women? An appraisal, 28-29 September 2009, Geneva, Summary of the conference, p.1.*

the overall position of women in society. Hindrances to women's participation in the political sphere at national and local levels are mostly the same and include legal and political obstacles, cultural and psychological obstacles, social and economic obstacles. However, some of them are even more pronounced when it comes to women's political participation at local level.

1/ Legal and Political Obstacles

Among the legal and political obstacles the following features are predominant:

- **Lack of legal rights and discrimination in legislation:** all civil rights of women such as property rights, inheritance and family rights, influence their capacity to participate in public life. The legislation concerning labour can hamper indirectly women's participation in the public sphere, limiting their opportunities for economic independence.

When the principle of gender equality is incorporated into law, this is not enough with a culture overtly or tacitly opposed to equality between the sexes. This is even more evidenced at local level.

- **The nature of the electoral system** which can be favourable or not to women candidates. Women are not sufficiently informed about the effect that the electoral system can have on their representation and therefore they do not put pressure for obtaining systems that would favor an increased representation of women.

- **The the lack of specific rules** concerning the use of funds for electoral campaigns, fixing limits and providing for reports to be made. It has in fact been demonstrated that generally a lack of accountability and transparency has negative effects on women as it leads to more funds being directed to men.

- **The election management which is often non gender sensitive:** The management of elections can also represent a hindrance for women participation. Sometimes, when elections are not properly managed, it might be difficult for women to go to the polling station

and wait for hours. Another difficulty can be the absence of women officers at the polling station to identify and assist women. Women may also be hampered by the lack of identification cards. As a result they might prefer either to renounce to vote or to delegate a male member of the family. This is especially at local level.

- **Lack of Support from Parties and Political Leaders**

- **Male Model of Political Life**

- **Lack of Security:** Women often are not active in politics because politics is not a safe and secure domain for them. Violence has become a characteristic of political life, especially during elections, in many countries. In several countries candidates have been threatened with assassination and some have actually been murdered. Women candidates are often harassed and faced with more physical and psychological threats than their male counterparts. In such context, women are discouraged from participating. The issue of security is of particular importance in countries under conflicts and occupation, where it is certainly a major obstacle to the political participation of the population and particularly women. In extreme conflicts situations women might be completely absorbed with the task of providing for the daily needs of the family and secure survival and therefore will have to give up participating in public life.

2/ Cultural and Psychological Obstacles

All over the world, cultural and psychological factors appear to be the major obstacle to women's political participation. At local level, such factors include mainly:

- **Traditional cultural and social patterns:** Traditional patriarchal systems that still feature Arab and African societies favours sexually segregated roles and continue to emphasise women's role as mothers and housewives, and to restrict them to those roles. At local level, tribalism can constitute an additional obstacle. On another hand, when women members of tribes are elected to local councils their allegiance to the tribe or clan come first, than solidarity with other women.

- **Conservative interpretation of religious tradition.**
- **Women's lack of confidence to stand for election and self-esteem.**
- **The perception of politics as "dirty" and violent:** women might perceive politics as a dirty game. The costs of politics is high even at local level, and the temptation of obtaining funds from private firms or individuals in exchange for favours or of using public funds for private interests, can also be very high. At local level, where everybody knows everyone in the community, women can be are disinclined to compromises. Also, women perceive politics as a field where you are forced to use immoral or coercive methods, such as calumniating opponents on the ground of morals. At local level, women are even more reluctant to accept such methods. Moreover, fights among different political factions can sometimes take violent forms, such as clashes among different factions, or threats on opponents, and women may therefore perceive the political domain as a dangerous one. This is true even at local level.
- **The attitude of media towards women:** The media almost always portray women in traditional roles and encourage the long-standing patriarchal stereotype of the «weak sex». The activities of women politicians are not covered by media, as much as the male politicians' are. Media seldom give voice and report about the programs of women candidates and about the record of women in political posts or deals with these issues properly. They are less open to the concerns and achievements of women politicians, than to those of their male counterparts. This insufficient or distorted media coverage is translated into a lack of constituency for women at national and local levels and can certainly hamper the possibility of success for women in politics.

3/ Social and Economic Obstacles

The social and economic status of women in society has a direct influence on their participation in the political life. Researchers have

found a correlation between women working outside the home and women in national and local elected offices. The same correlation does not exist between the level of education of women and political representation; although a good education is certainly of help for women in politics.

- **The Triple Burden:** women carry a disproportionate share of domestic work. Some women find it difficult to reconcile full-time jobs outside the home and their domestic tasks as mothers, wives and caretaker of the elderly in the family. Adding a third task, an active involvement in politics, would in certain cases be impossible. This is a very serious obstacle to women's political participation.

- **Lack of Resources:** women's political participation is constrained by poverty. It is difficult for women to participate in political life when their major concern is survival. Often women don't have a paid job outside the home and if they do their wages, on average, are lower than those of men. In addition, women own less real estate or monetary wealth than men due, not only to the reduced capacity of earning, but also to discriminatory inheritance laws and traditions. Women, having a lower income and less property than men, find it difficult to have at their disposal the funds necessary to run a campaign to win a seat in Parliament or a local council. The prevailing cultural structure of society hampers women's capacity to raise funds for campaigning. Potential contributors prefer to put their money towards campaign of male candidates.

- **Lack of coordination with and support from women's organizations and other NGOs:** Women suffer from insufficient contacts and co-operation with important public organizations, such as trade unions and professional associations, where, again, the membership and leaderships are almost all male. Women who want to be active in politics often lack also support from NGOs, associations and even from women's groups, who are involved mainly in healthcare and social assistance.

- **Insufficient Education and Training:** in addition to general edu

cation that certainly plays a role in the participation in public life, women lack the political training required to enter into a political career, which generally is provided by parties or, informally, by experienced politicians.

Exercise and methodology: Role play, working groups, presentations, Plenary presentation and brainstorming with the floor.

5. Strategies to improve elected women's contribution and local leadership

The legal mechanisms aimed at increasing **women's numerical presence** into local government.

Need to be supplemented by other measures that move beyond number and aim at **improving women's contribution** in local affairs and in gender equality issues and **women's local leadership**.

A comprehensive supporting strategy has to be put in place to both address the structural factors linked to the underrepresentation of women and improve women's effectiveness in meeting local needs. The sustainable improvement will entail the state parties, the political parties and the local representatives –male and female- contribution and endeavors to implementing the supportive strategies.

Beneath are presented the main pillars of the strategy that would improve women's contribution and leadership at local level.

1/ Capacity building

To become better local administrators and deliver high quality of gender sensitive services, women need to improve their ability and capacity to address specific issues related to:

- Gender: how to mainstream gender in local priorities and policies, how to lobby for gender issues inside the local elected office? How to build coalition inside and outside the local elected office?
- Electoral system and electoral gender quotas: women should be

aware about the diverse electoral systems and their impacts on their presence in electoral bodies ...in countries undergoing constitutional and/or law reforms it is very important that women know which proposal to support, which quotas work with the electoral system, ...
- How to fund raise

2/ Political parties

Political parties should be encouraged to review their internal rules and procedures (set clear rules for candidate selection rather than a system based on loyalty to those in power¹⁴, adopt gender sensitive rules) and to implement specific training programs that specifically target women. Political parties should not work with women only during elections; they should work with them between elections. Mentoring between women elected at national and local level can serve to reinforce capacity, experience and confidence of local elected women.

3/ Political finance

«Funding can be used as an incentive to encourage women's participation, whether it is public, private or a combination of both. Finance legislation can include incentives for political parties to earmark specific allocations to support women's candidacies. Spending limits can also be implemented as a way to level the political playing field. ...a gender-sensitive finance component in laws and policies on political participation»¹⁵ is an additional option for political finance strategy.

4/ Coordination for better gender mainstreaming in local affairs

To achieve a better gender mainstreaming of local policies and work, there's a need to reinforce the coordination of the different committees of the local elected body. Women need to convey common sittings to debate in order to ensure the inclusion of gender perspective. Local elected men should be more involved in gender equality work to become partners for change for the benefit of all the community.

14- Richard E.Matland , *Enhancing women's political participation: legislative recruitment and electoral systems, Women in parliament: beyond numbers, A revised Edition, International IDEA, 2005, p.106.*

15- *Is parliament open to women? An appraisal, 28-29 September 2009, Geneva, Summary of the conference, p.2.*

5/ Partnerships and networking

To better respond to local needs, local elected women have to hear and learn from their constituents. Political as well as professional groups such as women doctors, lawyer and business associations, women's CSOs and NGOs can play an important role to improve the contribution of the local elected/ aspirant women. They can also reinforce their visibility and leadership, thus it is crucial for local elected women to build partnerships with them. Local elected women have also to work closely with the national women's machineries as they have complementary roles to play. They have also to dialogue on gender issues, whenever required, for local interests with the police and the judiciary.

«...we need to share our experiences. This in itself will inspire women. We will not feel that we are alone in this game, and other women will not feel isolated from the process. At every opportunity, at every forum, each and every time we must share information, ideas, and knowledge. We must make sure that women are the most informed people within society».

Margaret Dongo, former MP. Zimbabwe.

omen in parliament: beyond numbers, A revised Edition, International IDEA, 2005, p.38.

6. Safety measures

In order to combat and limit intimidation of female candidates, measures have to be set up.

Exercise and methodology: working groups, presentations, Plenary presentation and brainstorming with the floor, use of CAWTAR/UN-INSTRAW documentary.



CILG VNG International
Development Centre for Innovative Local Governance
Immeuble IRIS 3ème étage, Rue du Lac Malaren, Les Berges du Lac 1053 Tunisie
Tel: +216 71 860 245 - Fax: +216 71 860 242 / E-mail: cilg@cilg-international.org