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United Nations Development Programme

DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY IN ELECTORAL ASSISTANCE:
LESSONS LEARNED IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

COUNTRY REPORT FOR TUNISIA

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AFTURD	Association des Femmes Tunisiennes pour la Recherche sur le Développement	IFES	International Foundation for Electoral Systems
AGFUND	Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development	IRI	International Republican Institute
ATFD	Association tunisienne des femmes Démocrates	ISIE	Instance superieure independante pour les Elections
BPPS	Bureau for Policy and Programme Support	LTDH	Ligue Tunisienne de défense des Droits de l'Homme
CAWTAR	Center of Arab Woman for Training and Research	MEPI	Middle East Partnership Initiative
CEDAW	Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women	NCA	National Constituent Assembly
CPR	Congress for the Republic	NDI	National Institute for Democracy
CSO	Civil Society Organization	PCOT	Workers' Communist Party of Tunisia
DRI	Democracy Reporting International	PDP	Progressive Democratic Party
EMB	Electoral Management Body	PSD	Socialist Destourian Party
EOM	Election Observation Mission	RCD	Democratic Constitutional Rally
EU	European Union	SEPT	UNDP Support to the Electoral Process in Tunisia Project
FDTL	Democratic Forum for Labour and Liberties (Ettakatol)	SNJT	Syndicat national des journalistes tunisiens
GEM	Gender Observation Mission	UCGT	General Confederation of Tunisian Labour
GPECS	UNDP Global Programme on Electoral Cycle Support	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
		UTT	Union of Tunisian Labour

1. INTRODUCTION

Women's participation in the 'Arab Uprising' was a defining feature of the movements that transformed the Arab region in 2011. Tunisian women participated massively in the protests, strikes and demonstrations that culminated in Ben Ali's resignation and the Constituent Assembly elections of October 2011. Their participation in the revolution and vocal support for inclusion in the new political order resulted in gains such as the adoption of a law establishing parity on electoral lists, Tunisia's withdrawal of reservations to CEDAW and the election of women to 27 percent of seats in the Constituent Assembly.

Tunisian women won their place at the table through their committed engagement before and during the revolution. The success of the Tunisian elections is the achievement of the Tunisian people. Their attainment was supported by UNDP and other international actors who provided some support along the way. A wealth of creative and pertinent programming approaches was introduced after the

revolution to encourage women to participate in all aspects of civic and political affairs. Through dialogue, training, networking and music, Tunisian women embraced the opportunity created by the introduction of the parity measure, which compelled many women to run as political candidates for the first time. Through productive partnerships and effective coordination with other national and international actors, UNDP's programmes supported Tunisian women's participation through this historic period of political transition.

This study traces the recent path of women's political participation in Tunisia, with a focus on the 2011 National Constituent Assembly elections.¹ It identifies some key actions that were taken to support and promote the participation of women, focusing on local organizations and international assistance providers, particularly UNDP. It also seeks to identify concrete lessons learned to promote the equal participation of women in all stages of the electoral cycle, including the integration of gender mainstreaming into electoral administration.

¹ This case study has been prepared by Julie Ballington, Gabrielle Bardall, Kristin Haffert and Dorra Mahfoudh. This case study resulted from an in-country study mission that took place in Tunis from 9-16 March 2012. Special thanks to Vincent de la Cruz, Soulef Guessoum and Donia Ben Romdhane for assistance with the mission. Thanks also to the staff in the UNDP Country Office.



2. BACKGROUND OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN TUNISIA

2.1. Tunisian Political Context and Institutional Overview

For almost a quarter of a century, a single, powerful actor, the Democratic Constitutional Rally (RCD), heir of the Socialist Destourian Party (PSD), dominated the Tunisian political landscape. RCD leader Zine El Abidine Ben Ali deposed the constitutionally recognized “president-for-life”, Habib Bourguiba, in 1987 and the RCD swept all single- and multi-party executive and legislative elections for the following 23 years. The eight legally recognized opposition parties operated in a strictly controlled environment and played a limited role in the political landscape.

The absence of political freedom, in a context of extreme economic inequality, laid the ground for a popular revolution developed in the weeks following 17 December 2010, when a young vegetable vendor, Mohamed Bouazizi, self-immolated

in protest of the government’s confiscation of his produce. The “Jasmine” or “Dignity” revolution² that culminated in Ben Ali’s abdication on 14 January 2011 created a new political map within Tunisia and was considered the first event of the so-called Arab Uprising. The transition period that followed the social movement witnessed the creation of several independent national institutions. The High Commission for the Fulfilment of Revolutionary Goals, Political Reform and Democratic Transition (commonly known as the ‘Political Reform Commission’ or the ‘Ben Achour Commission’) is one of three independent commissions established by the transition government. It was created by decree on 12 February 2011 with the mandate of preparing proposals for constitutional and electoral reforms and developing the new legal framework for elections to the National Constituent Assembly (NCA). Composed of a commission of experts and a council of 155 members, including 25 percent women, its

² The popular revolution was widely labeled the “Jasmine” revolution at the international level, after the national flower; however, the nickname was not widely adopted within Tunisia, where Ben Ali’s rise to power in 1987 was known by the same name. The Tunisian name for the 2011 revolution is Thawrat al-Karāmah, or the “Dignity Revolution”.

role was to serve as a provisional parliament and facilitate the transition by promoting a consensual approach among the different actors (parties, civil society representatives, representatives from the country's different regions, national personalities, etc.).

One of the first acts of the Political Reform Commission was to establish the Instance Supérieure Indépendante pour les Elections (ISIE), an independent national electoral management body responsible for organizing the NCA elections.³ In May 2011, the Interim President promulgated the decree-law creating the ISIE. Historically, electoral management in Tunisia followed a model reflective of the country's French colonial history, wherein elections were conducted under the authority of the Ministry of the Interior and local municipalities. This governmental model of electoral administration was criticized for being biased and open to political manipulation during the RCD years and strong support for a reformed, independent electoral management body (EMB) emerged after the revolution. Beyond administrative efficiency, the choice of an independent model was intended to restore Tunisian citizens' faith in electoral processes, bring them to the polls and ensure impartiality and independence.

The members of the ISIE central commission were elected by the Political Reform

Commission and began their work following the legislative decree about its constitution on 18 April 2011. The ISIE central commission was comprised of legal experts, computer specialists and representatives of non-governmental organizations and universities.⁴ The ISIE's mission consisted of managing and monitoring the vote and proclaiming the results. The ISIE included a central headquarters and local authorities in each electoral district in Tunisia.

The Political Reform Commission also established a provisional legal framework for the elections through a number of decrees and decree-laws.⁵ The framework included the electoral code⁶ and decrees for the creation of the ISIE and other legal provisions on political parties, the press, civic associations and audio-visual communications. The collaborative, transparent approach to designing the law within the Commission and its negotiation with the provisional government were recognized as a significant break from the electoral traditions of Tunisia's past.

The political landscape transformed profoundly during the months of the transition. Dozens of political parties formed ahead of the NCA elections on 23 October 2011. Many newly established parties were relatively weak and ultimately unable to present lists for the elections while others,

³ D.L. n° 27 from April 18, 2011, JORT n°27, April 19, 2011, p. 484.

⁴ Section 8 of the legislative decree on the creation of the Independent High Authority for Elections provides that the central authority includes 16 members designated by decree and chosen by the High Authority to meet the objectives of the Revolution

⁵ Decree-laws were legal documents first drafted by the Achour Commission that took effect after signature by the interim president (IFES, "Elections in Tunisia: The 2011 constituent Assembly, FAQ". 13 July 2011).

⁶ Decree-law No 35. (10 May 2011), the 'election law' outlines the election process, including voter registration, candidate eligibility, campaigning, election day procedure, announcement of results and more. (IFES, "Elections in Tunisia: The 2011 constituent Assembly, FAQ". 13 July 2011)

such as the Islamic opposition party, Ennadha, had continued to operate underground in exile after being banned under Ben Ali. Civil society experienced a similar groundswell. Although thousands of civil society organizations (CSOs) existed officially under the Ben Ali government, their influence remained marginal due to the limited civil liberties of the RCD regime. Following the revolution, many long-standing CSOs, such as the Tunisian Human Rights League (the first human rights organization in Africa and the Arab world), were able to operate independently for the first time and many new others emerged. Trade unions, key actors in Tunisia's struggle for independence and during the revolution, also reconstituted. Two new unions emerged, the Union of Tunisian Labour (UTT) and the General Confederation of Tunisian Labour (UCGT).

The legislative decree (10 May 2011) on the election of the National Constituent Assembly set the framework for elections, including guaranteeing pluralistic, transparent, credible and democratic elections, in particular through the establishment of the voter registry under ISIE control and the right for all Tunisians to participate in elections with their national identity card. A proportional voting system was selected. In addition, the law established parity and alternation between men and women in the candidate lists and invalidated those lists that did not respect this rule.

The Ennahda Islamist party won the October 2011 elections with a 41 percent plurality, falling short of an outright majority. The assembly convened in November 2011 to

draft the new constitution. The following month, human rights activist and president of the Congrès pour la République (CPR), Moncef Marzouki, was elected president by the Constituent Assembly, and Ennahda leader Hamadi Jebali was sworn in as prime minister. Moustafa Ben Jaafar of the Ettaktol was elected President of Constituent Assembly. These three leaders, commonly known as the Troika, would lead the transition. Only lists that respected the parity provision were accepted; however, most parties complied with the law and women were elected to 27 percent of seats in the NCA, one of the highest proportions in the history of Tunisian parliamentary assemblies.

2.2. Situational Analysis of Women's Political Participation

Historically, Tunisia has been one of the most progressive states in the Arab world with respect to women's legal and social status. The 1956 Personal Status Code gave women full legal status (including the right to own and run businesses, possess bank accounts and independently seek passports), abolished polygamy and repudiation, and legalized birth control, abortion and women's right to file for divorce. The right of Tunisian women to vote was enshrined even before the 1959 Constitution by the law on municipalities in 1957. The government required parents to send children of both sexes to school and, today, women account for more than 50 percent of university students and two thirds of judges and lawyers.⁷ Ninety-six percent of

⁷ US Department of State Country Brief Tunisia

young Tunisian women are literate today⁸ and women participate actively across society including in politics, law, medicine, academia, media and business.⁹ Although the constitution recognizes a national religion, Islam, Tunisia has been strongly secular since independence and has banned the Islamic veil for women and beards for men.

Despite its unique progress in this area, women's representation in Tunisia was not fully realized under the regimes of the past half-century. Before the revolution, women's representation in the political arena was close to the 'critical mass' of 30 percent, with around 20 percent in the government, 32 percent in the regional councils and 27 percent in the municipal councils. While these percentages were relatively high for the region, the RCD's legitimacy crisis negatively impacted women elected under the party. Women from opposition groups faced the same steep barriers to entry as their male counterparts. According to a national poll conducted in 2006, the most frequently cited barriers to entry in politics identified by women were the absence of democracy, the tight grip on elections by the ruling party, a lack of interest in public affairs, insufficient self-confidence and limited availability to devote significant time that would take them away from their homes and families.

Women's Participation in the Transition

The January 2011 revolution revealed women's tremendous participation in the reform movement. Defying social taboos and constraints, they participated in many ways, including sit-ins, strikes, neighbourhood watches, social networking and protests.¹⁰ After participating in street protests, they organized the women's walk for citizenship, equality and dignity on Saturday, 29 January 2011, during which thousands of Tunisian women, joined by many men, paraded in the centre of Tunis while showing signs stating "Democracy, welcome. Discrimination, out", "No to women's allegiance, exclusion, and marginalization", "Tunisia liberty and justice", "Women's poverty is not inevitable", "Justice is feminine" and more.

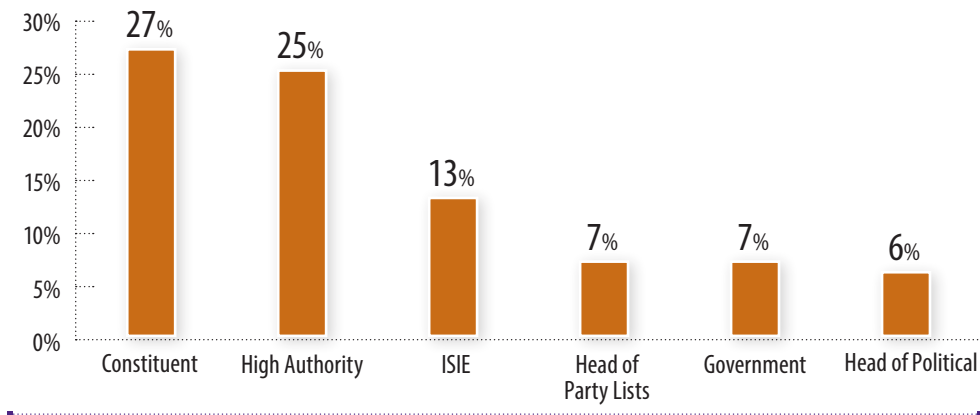
Once elections for the Constituent Assembly were announced, women were active in different ways, in various official bodies and commissions and in civil society. In the High Commission for the Fulfilment of Revolutionary Goals, Political Reform and Democratic Transition, women represented 25 percent of the 155-member body, including the elected vice president. This body developed the legislative decree concerning the election of the Constituent Assembly and the decree establishing the ISIE.¹¹ As a result of women's mobilization, and the action of some individual members

⁸ UNICEF Statistics. Youth (15-24 years) literacy rate (%), 2005-2010*, female http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/Tunisia_statistics.html#90

⁹ <https://www.granta.com/New-Writing/A-Revolution-of-Equals>

¹⁰ It is important to note that Tunisia has 3.6 million Internet users for 10.6 million citizens (33.9 percent of the population, according to Internet World Stats, March 2011). Facebook has 2.6 million users in Tunisia (24.5 percent of penetration rate, twice as much as the global average, according to Internet World Stats, June 2011).

¹¹ Gender Concerns International, Gender Election Monitoring Mission – Tunisia, <http://www.genderconcerns.org/images/gal/GEM%20Report%20%20Eng%2012-06-2012.pdf>

Figure 1: Participation of Women in Transitional Political Structures, October 2011

of the High Commission, the transitional government adopted the gender parity law under Article 16 of the decree on elections.

There were two women out of six members in the Independent Commission on Human Rights Violations and as many in the National Commission on Embezzlement and Corruption. There were two women commissioners among the board members of the ISIE (13 percent). Despite representation in these bodies, the provisional government included only two women ministers and political parties from across the spectrum demonstrated ambivalence and opposition with regards to women's equality, the parity law and the participation of female candidates, particularly those who openly defended women's rights. The new electoral law and the parity and alternation requirements have been significant advances for women's involvement, but have not been sufficient to remove all obstacles to gender equality in Tunisian electoral politics.

Participation in the 2011 Election – Voter Registration and Women Voters

Over seven million Tunisians over 18 years old were eligible to vote in 2011, according to available estimates. Voter registration took place from 11 July to 14 August 2011. Almost all eligible voters were registered and women made up 45 percent of the total overall. Among young voters between the ages of 18 and 35, the proportion was 51 percent women, highlighting the enthusiasm of younger women in particular to engage in the new political order and/or the apathy or challenges for older women to register. In most regions, including the traditionally conservative south, women turned out to register to vote. ISIE and CSOs made massive awareness-raising efforts targeting women. One of the key issues of the voter registration campaign was related to Section 6 of the electoral code, which distinguishes between voluntary or 'active' registration and spontaneous or 'passive' registration whereby a voter simply shows his or her identification card on election day. This was a very confusing provision for many: the distinction was between voters who 'actively' chose their polling centre

and those who did not and were thus allocated to 'special centres' on the basis of the information in the ID card database. Voters merely needed to show their ID cards on polling day. The ISIE launched an education campaign to help explain this distinction.

On 23 October 2011, the Election Day for Constituent Assembly members in Tunisia,¹² there was a tremendous turnout of women voters nationwide, many of whom came out to wait early in the morning before polls opened. According to the NDI electoral observation mission, "at certain times [on election day] women and youth comprised the majority of voters in polling stations, particularly later in the day. According to the official voting procedures manual, polling station officials could choose to separate queued voters into lines for men and women; roughly half of the stations visited by [NDI] observers implemented this procedure. Observers also noted a higher presence of women and youth at special polling centres [for those who had passively registered], a possible indication that women and young voters turned out in fewer numbers to [actively] register. Sex-disaggregated data was not collected for voter turnout, so women's participation rates are not fully measurable."¹³

Participation in the 2011 Election – Women as Candidates

A closed party list proportional representation system was used to elect all 217 NCA

seats. The 217 seats were distributed among 27 domestic constituencies and six out-of-country constituencies (the number of seats to be filled in each district ranged from four to 10 in the domestic constituencies and one to five in the overseas constituencies). Political party lists and independent candidate lists were required to alternate between men and women (the 'zipper' system), thus resulting in 50 percent women candidates on most lists. Lists had to have the same number of candidates as the number of seats in the constituency. In constituencies with an odd number of seats, the extra candidate was usually male. In all, 11,686 candidates competed in the 27 constituencies in Tunisia and another 474 candidates vied for seats in six out-of-country constituencies.¹⁴

Many political parties presented candidate lists. The major parties were the Islamism movement Ennahda (Renaissance), the Congress for the Republic (CPR), the Democratic Forum for Labour and Liberties (FDTL, Ettakatol), the Progressive Democratic Party (PDP) and the Workers' Communist Party of Tunisia (PCOT). In addition, lists of independent candidates grouped under the Popular Petition for Freedom and the Justice and Development (PP).¹⁵ Only five parties were present in all 33 districts (Ennahda, Ettakatol, PDP, CPR and PDM). There were 1,624 party lists submitted, of which 1,519 were accepted by with ISIE (some lists were rejected for not conforming to the law in terms of parity between women and men). Of the 1,519

¹² Out-of-Country Voting was held 20-22 October 2011.

¹³ National Democratic Institute. Final Report on the Tunisian National Constituent Assembly Elections. 2 October 2011. http://www.ndi.org/files/tunisia-final-election-report-021712_v2.pdf

¹⁴ IPU Parline, http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/2392_E.htm

¹⁵ IPU Parline, http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/2392_E.htm

registered lists, 655 were independent lists, 830 were lists of political parties, and 34 lists of coalitions between different candidates. Voters were able to select one list of their choice in their district.

Given the small number of seats per district and given the fact that votes were split between a high number of parties, those candidates placed at the top of the list stood the best chance of election. The first position on the list was therefore especially desirable; indeed, in over 50 percent of cases, lists only won one seat in a constituency. Although the law required that women and men be alternated throughout the list, an important consideration was how many women headed the lists. In all, 5,502 women ran and 128 of them were placed at the top of their lists. This resulted in only 8.39 percent of all lists being headed by women (85 party lists and 43 independent lists). In the Tunis district, women headed only 20 lists. Only one coalition, the Democratic Modernist Pole, ensured equality in the heading of lists, largely due to its strong female support base. The fact that so few women headed the party lists significantly hampered the chances of many women being elected. As only one or two candidates were drawn from most lists, women were elected only if the list managed to draw enough votes to elect two candidates.

Electoral Results

Following the elections, women won 59 out of 217 NCA seats (27 percent). The Ben Arous constituency (Tunis District), from which 10 of these women came, was the only

constituency where parity was achieved between elected men and women. Forty of the 59 elected women represented the Islamist movement of Ennahda and the remaining 19 were distributed among seven other political parties. As Ennahda won several seats in many constituencies, most of the women members were elected from Ennahda.¹⁶

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN NUMBERS

- 5,502 women candidates in 27 constituencies
- Only 128 lists were headed by women candidates (8 percent)
- Of 128 lists headed by women, 85 were political party lists and 43 were independent lists
- Parties largely respected gender parity and alternation of men and women on the lists – those lists that did not were not registered by ISIE
- Only the Pôle Démocratique Progressiste (PDM) had women head 50 percent of their lists
- Women won 59 out of 217 seats (27 percent)

The electoral process in Tunisia still presents many challenges for women candidates. The electoral results indicated a number of weaknesses in the electoral system that undermined the objectives set forth in the quota rule. Despite the safeguards of the parity measure and the alternation of men and women on lists, the low number of women heading party lists undermined the intentions of the law-makers. In this context, the high number of party lists registered

¹⁶ Drude Dahlerup et al.

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/de/studiesdownload.html?languageDocument=EN&file=78151>

resulted in fragmentation of the vote among the electorate, and often only those who headed the list were elected. Fewer women than men headed lists overall. The high number of constituencies also affected women. In general, women are more likely to be elected in larger districts.

Despite the upsurge in women's recruitment ahead of the election, their positioning on the lists and general concerns over the electability of women candidates remained controversial within party decision-making structures. Although most Tunisians supported the parity measures, a survey during the transition found that significantly more women supported it than men (85 percent vs. 53 percent, respectively).¹⁷ Many rationalizations were put forward to justify the positioning of women on the lists. Some parties stated that the "nature of Tunisian society does not accept women as heads of electoral lists." Others said that "men are more interested in politics than women" or that women "are not very politicized."¹⁸ Indeed, a significant gender gap was noted during the pre-election survey conducted by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES). The survey indicated that, while Tunisian men largely supported women voting and working in polling centres, "over one-third of men oppose women in what can be considered more

direct leadership roles: women as government ministers (39%), women in parliament (34%), women as candidates in an election (35%) or women heading a political party (42%). [...] When asked about voting for a woman president if she was equally qualified as a man, 63% of Tunisians say they would not vote for a woman president."¹⁹

Overall, the number of women elected indicates that the general context remains difficult for women's political participation. During the election campaign, many candidate lists did not include pictures of women candidates or, if they did, the pictures were often defaced or covered with defamatory insults.²⁰ Even after the revolution, politics has continued to be perceived as a male prerogative and social norms persist in relegating women to roles outside the political sphere. The conflicts within parties have often centred on the electability of women candidates and, accordingly, their positioning on the lists. The positioning of female candidates on the electoral lists was a clear demonstration of the resistance to integrating gender party objectives into electoral practice. However, an examination of these challenges is beyond the scope of the present research, which focuses on the lessons learned in relation to international assistance provided for women's political empowerment.

¹⁷ IFES. "Support for Women in Politics in Tunisia: Excerpts from an IFES nationwide pre-election survey". 2011.

¹⁸ What newspapers or the International Organization of La Francophonie's observation mission for the October 23 elections report: "Concerning women's representation, Mr. Jerbi has recognized that the CPR was hostile to the principle of parity if women are not very politicized." p. 34.

¹⁹ IFES. "Support for Women in Politics in Tunisia: Excerpts from an IFES nationwide pre-election survey". 2011.

²⁰ Gender Concerns International, Gender Election Monitoring Mission – Tunisia, <http://www.genderconcerns.org/images/gal/GEM%20Report%20%20Eng%2012-06-2012.pdf>



3. INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE TO THE NCA ELECTORAL PROCESS

3.1. Background

The 2011 elections were nationally owned and administered by state institutions. UNDP, as well as other international organizations, worked in a low-key way to provide technical support and advisory services to the experts of the authority responsible for managing the transition phase and preparing for elections. There was a particular demand from the Tunisians for comparative experiences from other countries and regions. A number of other international organizations supported the democratic process, including IFES, the European Union (EU), the National Democratic Institute (NDI), the Carter Center, Democracy Reporting International (DRI) and the International Republican Institute (IRI).

UNDP support was provided primarily through the project Support to the Electoral Process in Tunisia (SEPT), which started in April 2011. The project aimed to ensure strong public participation and increased trust in the electoral transition process and to build a foundation for independent, professional and self-sustained electoral

management in Tunisia. Other stakeholders involved in the electoral process were also targeted, including civil society, especially those organizations that played a role in public outreach (particularly to women and youth).

IFES also launched an electoral and political assessment and support programme in Tunisia in January 2011. Working closely with the ISIE, the EU and UNDP, IFES advised on various aspects of the electoral process. A division of labour and coordination among the organizations was agreed. The programme, supported by USAID, sought to achieve four main goals, including supporting the election management body to deliver credible and competitive elections and supporting the Tunisian government and electoral authorities in establishing a reliable, inclusive and accurate voter registry. The programme conducted a number of time-sensitive technical assessments, provided training for ISIE and civil society actors and helped the ISIE create and print voter education materials for the NCA elections, including 10,000 posters and two million flyers.

UNDP PROJECT DESIGN AND GENDER MAINSTREAMING

In February 2011, UNDP began working on a strategy to support the transition. The strong commitment of UNDP Country Office Management ensured the integration of gender from the outset into project design and through the full electoral cycle. Advancing gender equality, raising the profile of gender issues in the constitutional debate, supporting women's advocacy movements and promoting women's participation were identified as priorities.

The importance of supporting gender mainstreaming efforts in the transition and in electoral assistance was reinforced in the United Nations High-Level Needs Assessment mission on electoral support, which took place in March 2011. This was important, as it provided the framework for ensuring a strong commitment to gender in the UNDP Project Document on electoral support.

The UNDP SEPT project document included clear activities to promote women's political empowerment. One of the three outcomes was related to women's political empowerment: women candidates are equipped with skills to participate successfully in electoral processes.

Two of the five expected project outputs related explicitly to gender:

1.2 Gender equality promoted throughout the work of the Electoral Management Bodies

3.1 The capacity of women to participate successfully in electoral processes as candidates is built

In the project design, gender equality was intended to be mainstreamed through the entire electoral assistance project. Notably, the project supported the EMB through a gender advisor, which made it one of the first UNDP projects to do so. BPPS's Global Programme on Electoral Cycle Support (GPECS), which was one of the funding and advisory mechanisms for the project, together with the donors (Spain, Sweden and Australia), had pushed for a strong gender dimension in the Programme. This is further elaborated in the project document:

"All advisors will ensure that their assistance promotes gender equality and that the needs of marginalized groups are taken into account in all aspects of the electoral process. This includes gender balance and gender sensitivity in institutions, gender-balanced recruitment policies as well as enabling participation of marginalized groups in election decision-making, implementation, as voters, candidates, candidate agents, observers, journalists and educators. Advice and assistance on including gender will cover drafting the legal and procedural framework, operational plans, information and messages as well as targeted public outreach campaigns. In addition to this, an advisor on gender mainstreaming will be made available to the successive electoral management bodies to provide direct advice on gender issues. The advisor will also guide and coordinate the gender mainstreaming activities of the other electoral advisors."

In addition, activities targeted at empowering potential women candidates were included. The recently adopted parity provision in the electoral law required parties to field 50 percent women candidates – a proportion much higher than the number of women candidates in the past.

IFES also assisted the ISIE in establishing a media centre to centralize the dissemination of election-related information for the NCA elections.

A second IFES programme, funded by the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) and conducted in partnership with Swiss media organization *Fondation Hirondelle*, supported the development of comprehensive multi-media public information/outreach and voter education campaigns and the creation of the official websites of the ISIE and NCA. The programme also provided expert technical advising on political and electoral reform and a train-the-trainer programme for poll workers in advance of the NCA elections.²¹ IFES, in partnership with the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR), also generated important data regarding women's status in politics, economy, society and family in Tunisia and other countries of the Middle East – North Africa region through their project Status of Women in The Middle East and North Africa (<http://www.swmena.org>). Through comparative and country-specific surveys, the project measured how women in Tunisia, Lebanon, Morocco, Egypt and Yemen saw themselves as members of society, the economy and the polity.

NDI collaborated with Tunisian activists to share experiences in democratic transitions and help political parties grow stronger. It also sought to improve the transparency of elections and encourage active participation of civil society. In addition to deploying a 47-member international election

observation mission (EOM) to observe the NCA election, NDI expanded its capacity development activities for Tunisian political parties. It worked to assist parties with their efforts to ensure a democratic political system firmly anchored in principles of participation, inclusion and accountability. NDI invited senior political leaders from countries that underwent recent democratic transitions, such as Bulgaria, Portugal and Spain, to share insights with Tunisian parties. As parties prepared for the NCA elections, NDI experts led consultations and workshops in Tunis and around the country on internal organization, strategic communication, campaign strategy, candidate training, women's political participation and party poll-watching. To assist parties with developing targeted messages that resonated with citizens' priorities, NDI also conducted qualitative studies of Tunisian public opinion, including a youth-focused study and a targeted pre-election study, and shared the results with party members and civil society. Complementary to its international EOM, NDI also implemented a nationwide initiative to support CSOs' efforts to monitor the October 2011 elections. With the Institute's assistance, a coalition of CSOs fielded more than 2,000 observers to observe voting across the country.²²

IRI also worked with political parties to provide them with the tools to reach out to youth and women, to strengthen the capacity of civil society to perform public advocacy, to increase transparency and citizen participation in the National

²¹ IFES. Status of Women in the Middle East and North Africa. <http://swmena.org/en/tunisia>

²² National Democratic Institute. <http://www.ndi.org/tunisia>

Constituent Assembly and to provide timely public opinion research on changing political attitudes.²³



The EU contributed to electoral assistance efforts, including support to the ISIE, in order to ensure transparent and credible elections. The EU funded voter and civil educational programmes and the deployment of EU electoral observations missions. On the day of the election, the delegation managed to visit over 128 polling centres (including 25 special centres for non-registered voters) in 14 districts and distributed across 12 governorates. It also supported

civic education initiatives such as DPROD's All Tunisians to the Ballot Box campaign. The campaign developed 15 skits for TV and national radio to popularize political concepts and make them accessible to all strata of the population, especially those in the most underprivileged regions.

DRI supported civil society organizations in Tunisia during the transition, with the support of grants from the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the European Union and the Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The goal of DRI's programme was to assist a wide range of local CSOs to become strong, independent institutions to serve as watchdogs for Tunisia's democratization process. The programme also sought to enhance public understanding of and encourage greater demand for genuine democracy. DRI's support to CSOs consisted of trainings, workshops, expert advice and briefings on democratic governance, such as electoral and constitutional issues.²⁴

Interventions and support from the UN and international organizations have been numerous and diversified. Their impact remains to be evaluated. However, it seems that most of the technical electoral advising support from international organizations (such as legal reform and logistical planning) did not have an explicit gender focus or particular theme for women's empowerment. While efforts were made to incorporate gender mainstreaming at certain points, this was not done systematically.

²³ International Republican Institute. Tunisia Overview. <http://www.iri.org/countries-and-programmes/middle-east-and-north-africa/tunisia>

²⁴ Democracy Reporting International. <http://www.democracy-reporting.org/programmes/tunisia.html>

3.2. Promoting Women's Political Participation

A number of national organizations have worked to support democratic processes in Tunisia and a few programmes before the revolution addressed women's political participation. Notable amongst these is the UN-INSTRAW and Center of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR)²⁵ project Strengthening Women's Leadership and Participation in Politics and Decision-Making in Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia, which ran between 2008 and 2010 and focused on research on the three Maghreb countries. The 2008-2010 programme analysed women's participation in political life from two standpoints: the local conditions for women's participation in political life and development and the role of political parties in providing women access to the political scene. The results of this research were used to conduct workshops in 2010 and 2011 for women political aspirants and civic leaders and were one of the few pre-revolutionary activities to address this issue.²⁶

Other civil society organizations promoted women's political participation and the transition, including L'Association tunisienne des femmes Démocrates (ATFD), which works through a rights-based approach for women's rights and gender equality within all spheres of society. ATFD collaborated with other organizations, including l'Association des Femmes Tunisiennes pour la

Recherche sur le Développement (AFTURD), Commission Femmes de l'Union Générale des Travailleurs Tunisiens and Collectif 95 Maghreb Egalité, on civic outreach, which is described in more detail further on). These associations organized the Women's Walk for Citizenship, Equality and Dignity, which took place on 29 January 2011, and promoted the adoption of parity in the electoral law at the High Authority.

One of the significant activities conducted by these associations was the 'Women's Manifesto for Equality and Parity', signed by several hundreds of men and women.²⁷ In it, women pay tribute to the Tunisian people, martyrs, young men and women and proclaim their commitment to fight for the improvement of living conditions in the private and public arena and to defend women's rights. During the pre-electoral period, these associations and other emerging organizations implemented awareness-raising activities in the regions and lobbied the government and NCA.

Another interesting and relevant initiative was a Gender Observation Mission (GEM) established to observe elections in October 2011. Gender Concerns International, an international development organization based in The Netherlands, observes elections from a gender perspective in different countries. In Tunisia, it teamed up with ATFD, AFTURD and La Ligue Tunisienne de défense des Droits de l'Homme (LTDH) to conduct

²⁵ The Center of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR) is an independent regional organization based in Tunisia, created in 1994. It deals with issues relating to gender equality and works to encourage women's participation in development through research, training, communication, advocacy and networking activities. CAWTAR was an important national partner for international organizations in advance of the 2011 election.

²⁶ Information on this project is available at <http://localgov.cawtar.org/index/Lang/en-en/Page/siteinstraw>

²⁷ See, for example: <http://menilmontant.typepad.fr/7avous/2011/04/tunisie-manifeste-des-femmes-pour-legalite-et-la-citoyennete.html>

the first gender and elections observation mission in Tunisia. The mission aimed to ensure that the gender dimension was properly addressed in election observation and analysis.²⁸

To support women's voices and active participation in Tunisia's political transition, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) organized consultations and workshops for women in political parties to help them advocate within their parties for platforms and actions that were responsive to women. Workshops included honing communication, organizing and networking skills. NDI supported summer universities for women candidates and campaign managers to support their efforts to organize effective campaigns for the elections. NDI also organized a series of national focus groups to ascertain the opinions and perceptions of Tunisian women and men toward women's political participation.

Although Tunisia was relatively more progressive than other Arab countries in the area of women's political participation at the outset of the revolution, UNDP recognized the need to capitalize on the window of opportunity offered by the political transition to deepen and broaden gains in this area. A dedicated gender advisor was hired to implement relevant projects in the work plan, particularly related to electoral management. The gender advisor was located in the ISIE, which helped maintain the priority of women's empowerment throughout the process and provide ongoing support in the daily decision-making of the

organization. The programme also sought to support the new, heightened demand for women candidates following the introduction of the parity measure by working with women aspirants and candidates to enhance their capacity to campaign. Another staff member from the UNDP Regional Centre in Cairo was seconded for three months to support potential women candidates.

The gender activities in the UNDP SEPT project were largely organized into three main areas:

- Work with the ISIE on gender inclusion
- Targeting of women voters to register and vote
- Support for women candidates

The UNDP activities were implemented in partnership with other organizations, including CAWTAR and NDI. The following three sections outline these areas of activity and identify lessons learned with regard to women's political participation in each of them.

3.3. Supporting ISIE and Electoral Management

UNDP support for the political transition in Tunisia began before the establishment of the ISIE in May 2011. UNDP's ongoing involvement in the transition process supported the development of the electoral code and government decree for the creation of the ISIE as well as other electoral decrees pertaining to the press, associations, political parties and audio-visual communication.

²⁸ Gender Concerns International, *Gender Election Monitoring Mission – Tunisia*, <http://www.genderconcerns.org/images/gal/GEM%20Report%20%20Eng%2012-06-2012.pdf>

The UNDP team supported the commission of experts on the Electoral Code, which proposed a draft electoral code to the Higher Authority (part of the Ben Achour Commission). UNDP's assistance in this area was particularly helpful in promoting gender equality in the revised legal framework. While applying to all voters, this measure particularly helped prevent family voting and other common challenges for women voters. In addition, support for gender sensitivity during the legal review process helped with the passage of the parity measure that was at the heart of women's political participation in Tunisia during the post-revolution elections.

UNDP assistance to ISIE complemented the work that was already being undertaken by national experts. It focused on planning, budgeting and operationalization of electoral operations (voter registration, candidate nomination, campaign, voting, counting and announcement of results) as well as on voter education, legal affairs and public relations. A review of these activities is beyond the scope of this research and the following section focuses on one of the entry points for support provided to ISIE in terms of gender mainstreaming.

Gender Parity

According to Article 5 of the 18 April 2011 Law establishing the higher independent body for elections, the body nominating the ISIE members was to "endeavor [emphasis added] to observe the principle of male/female equality" among commissioners and staff. The provision was not an enforceable

requirement, however, and, ultimately, the ISIE fell short of gender parity at all levels. Within the ISIE leadership, there were two women among the 16-member Commission and the deputy chairperson was a woman.

Although efforts were made to get more women involved in staffing of the regional level offices of ISIE, they were only able to reach 18 percent women in the regional administrations and 11 percent in the local administrations. Women presided over only two regional commissions. One commissioner explained that, while efforts were made to recruit more women into higher-level positions, the challenge was that women did not put themselves forward as candidates. There were more women involved as registration and polling staff, as unemployed graduates and teachers were mobilized for these positions and women represented a high percentage in both groups. Of 52,108 poll workers, 14,828 were women (28.5 percent). However, in some areas, few women presided over the polling stations.²⁹ The regional offices also were responsible for registering lists of candidates for their constituency and so oversaw enforcement of the candidate parity law and alternation of women and men on the lists. Several lists were not registered because they failed to meet the required number of candidates or failed to alternate men and women throughout.

Gender Integration in ISIE

The ISIE staff did not include a gender advisor. However, despite the absence of a gender focal point, formal gender policies

²⁹ Idem.

or method of work, gender was integrated into some of the work of ISIE, particularly with UNDP support. A UNDP gender and elections advisor was co-located at ISIE and worked with the staff members, primarily responsible for outreach and training. The UNDP gender advisor was a Tunisian national, with vast experience and networks in gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment. As part of her induction to electoral management, the gender advisor took part in a BRIDGE gender and election training session that was convened in Pretoria in May 2011. The participation in this training was an important introduction into gender and elections issues and could be considered as a good practice for other UNDP staff members.³⁰

UNDP advised the ISIE on integrating gender sensitivity into some of its work, especially voter outreach. As a way of coordinating with women's organizations, ISIE, with UNDP support, convened a meeting of civil society organizations in July 2011 as a way for ISIE to review the content of voter education materials developed by civil society and to develop a common platform for civic education. Twenty-one associations and three networks were represented and discussions focused on messaging around equality, the right to vote and secrecy of the ballot. The participants recognized the critical role played by the non-governmental sector in complementing ISIE's voter and civic education programmes. Underlining the importance of basing political choice on policy preference, not personalities or other considerations, the workshop participants

elected to target political parties to develop and communicate their platforms. The participating organizations were challenged by weak sharing of information and tools among organizations and with the ISIE as well as by limited resources to develop accurate and politically neutral educational materials. Coordination of the delivery of civic education programmes emerged as a key area for improvement. The meeting culminated in recommendations for coordination between the CSOs and the ISIE in terms of material content, development and delivery. The event was a pilot for four subsequent working groups around the country in September and October 2011. Following this session, there was discussion about establishing a unit of representatives of NGOs to work with the ISIE to ensure gender mainstreaming in the work of ISIE, but, unfortunately, the unit never functioned because of lack of availability of its members.

The ISIE also convened a meeting with women's organizations to receive input into its work and exchange ideas. As a result of the meetings and provision of strategic advice, ISIE voter outreach materials paid particular attention to gender concerns. For example, electoral posters were explicitly designed to promote gender equality in voter participation. At the ISIE's instructions, the choice of messages and communication materials were monitored to ensure parity messaging. Together with the training department, a polling procedures manual was developed that also sought to include a gender perspective, such as by including

³⁰ UNDP/BPPS Global Programme on Electoral Cycle Support (GPECS) funded the participation of the Gender Advisor in the training. The training was organized by International IDEA and took place in Pretoria from 16-20 May 2011.

EXTRACT FROM UNDP TERMS OF REFERENCE: GENDER AND ELECTIONS ADVISOR

Under the direct supervision of the Chief Technical Advisor, the Gender Advisor will contribute to UNDP's electoral support in Tunisia with a main focus on mainstreaming gender concerns in the EMB's institution-building and in electoral operations.

The Gender Advisor will lead UNDP efforts in achieving the following output of the project Gender Equality is Promoted throughout the Electoral Process. The bulk of his/her support will be towards the new Tunisian EMB but will s/he will also provide advisory support to other electoral stakeholders (civil society, Ministry of Women and political parties).

The primary task of the Gender Advisor will be to ensure the strategic direction of activities, coordinate the operational activities and monitor outputs in this area. S/he will be embedded with the EMB and will be responsible for continuously providing technical advice, help to build the technical capacity of EMB in the relevant areas of the electoral activities.

photos of women voting. The training of polling officials was conducted countrywide, using a training-of-master trainers' methodology. UNDP conducted many other voter outreach activities (which will be examined in the next section).

It is apparent that significant contributions were made towards gender mainstreaming into the work of ISIE. There were some missed opportunities, however, such as lack of provision of sex-disaggregated data, particularly on voter turnout. In general, limited consideration was given to mainstreaming gender issues in electoral operations, including registration and election day planning. There were some reports that the provision regarding accompaniment of illiterate voters was misunderstood by polling staff and that, in some polling places, illiterate voters, many of whom were

women, were not allowed to be accompanied by a support person.³¹ Following the election, the ISIE and its partners did not conduct a lessons learned activity or other form of reporting on gender mainstreaming during the transitional elections to identify challenges and successes or to lay down benchmarks for future progress.

Security for women was another concern that may have been overlooked. During the election period, there was anecdotal evidence of political violence against women. In post-election focus groups conducted by NDI, women expressed "more anxiety than men about their physical security, citing personal experiences of rampant street harassment and implying that cases of sexual harassment are also becoming more frequent in the workplace."³² However, neither the ISIE nor its partners directly

³¹ Gender Concerns International, Gender Election Monitoring Mission – Tunisia, <http://www.genderconcerns.org/images/gal/GEM%20Report%20%20Eng%2012-06-2012.pdf>

³² Borovsky, Gabriella and Asma Ben Yahia. NDI. "Women's Political Participation in Tunisia After the Revolution: Findings From Focus Groups in Tunisia". May 2012.

addressed the issue of political violence against women in elections and no targeted strategy, training, planning or other measure was taken to specifically seek to reduce and mitigate this particular form of violence. In some polling stations, some women were reportedly subject to intimidation by representatives of political parties in order to influence their votes.



There was also no institutional policy for gender mainstreaming. It was noted in several interviews that the concept of gender mainstreaming was seen as an 'imposed' construct, with parity (and a focus on numbers) being viewed as a more home-grown construct. Thus, the absence of a specific gender mainstreaming policy may be attributed to the emphasis on the goal of parity rather than on mainstreaming.

Nonetheless, without legal guarantees for parity within the ISIE and without extending parity to the head of lists for list quotas, the use of parity fell short of its intended goals. It was also evident that equality work was seen as the domain of women activists and that more work needed to be done to include men.

It needs to be remembered, though, that this work took place in an incredibly short period of time and results must be considered with this constraint in mind. The elections were organized within a four-month period, with the ISIE being a temporary body. Despite some shortcomings, the ISIE demonstrated a strong commitment to women's political empowerment and inclusion in political processes. It is important to build on these gains and good practices in the next EMB, which would start with a commitment to gender equality in the law. Going forward, the ISIE may advance its objectives in this area by instituting a gender focal point or gender committee and continuing its valuable partnerships with CSOs.

From this analysis, it was also not apparent to what degree, if at all, other organizations supporting ISIE mainstreamed a gender perspective into their electoral assistance work. Electoral assistance to the EMB seems to have been broadly wanting in gender inclusion. Instead, there was a tendency to address gender in elections through other areas, such as supporting women candidates and voter education, and in the public opinion surveys and focus groups conducted by IFES and the EU. UNDP was the only international assistance provider to include gender in all aspects of the project design. The reliance on gender

mainstreaming by UNDP and its dedicated gender expert may have detracted from the goal of mainstreaming gender for the other organizations.

It should also be noted, though, that the inclusion of a gender perspective within electoral assistance is relatively new. In Tunisia, particular areas to consider going forward will be the impacts of boundary delimitation on women, the provision of sex-disaggregated data for registration and voter turnout as well as an assessment of risks for women voters and candidates.

3.4. Voter Awareness and Education Campaigns

The Voter Awareness and Information Campaign was a joint effort of UNDP and other organizations to contribute to voter education efforts ahead of the election. Its primary goal was to increase voters' access to information that civil society organizations gave about ISIE procedures for registration and voting. The programme sought to harmonize the content of awareness-raising tools and ensure their compliance with the procedures that the ISIE decided upon. It also built civil society organizations' capacity to develop and implement large-scale civic and voter education initiatives. Implementation took place through regular meetings with civil society organizations and dialogue to arrive at a common platform with regard to awareness-raising. Informational workshops on technical issues relating to elections were organized to build knowledge of the legal and procedural updates in the electoral

process. Events held under this initiative included two-day workshops in five cities³³ that brought together participants from 21 associations and three active networks on voter awareness. The programme targeted and achieved gender parity in the participants in its workshops.

UNDP also supported the development of two significant media awareness-raising tools, including music and social media initiatives. These were the *Enti essout* song and the *DemocraTweet* initiative, both of which targeted young women and men voters.

Enti essout song

UNDP SEPT commissioned a team to propose a song to promote the participation of young people in the post-revolutionary electoral process. The team proposed a collective song to emphasize the positive aspects of the revolution and to raise awareness among the country's youth about the importance of the elections. A group of volunteer artists, each describing his or her social experiences and dreams for a better Tunisia, wrote and recorded the song '*Enti essout*' (My People, You are the Voice). The goal was to invite young people and the public at large to mobilize for the future of Tunisia by participating in the democratic process.

The song became a popular national anthem. The clip was viewed 140,000 times on Vimeo and 160,000 times on YouTube and the Facebook page has attracted 24,000 fans. According to UNDP monitoring

³³ Tunis, 29 July 2011; Hammamet, 17-18 September 2011; Tabarka, 24-25 September 2011; Kairouan, 1-2 October 2011; and Tozeur, 8-9 October 2011.

statistics, the song received very broad exposure and popularity well beyond the borders of Tunisia. This initiative has drawn attention from others working in the region's emerging democracies as a model of how to engage youth around a creative project.

DemocraTweet

As part of its SEPT project, UNDP also commissioned an interactive game named DemocraTweet to promote public understanding of democracy and the NCA elections. The game was designed as an application to appeal to the 'Facebook and Twitter generation' that had played an important role in the Tunisian revolution. It was designed around five principal themes: the basics of what constitutes a democratic regime, the transition towards democracy, the National Constituent Assembly, voting for the NCA and what happens on election day. In partnership with Tunisia's leading radio station, Mosaïque FM, the game was launched via the radio station's Facebook page, which counts 400,000 fans. It started on 2 October 2011 and was played online until 22 October, the eve of Tunisia's first democratic elections.



Two winners were drawn by lottery in the presence of a public notary. The prize was a trip to New York to carry a message from the

youth of Tunisia to the United Nations. The game was integrated into Mosaïque FM's nationwide advertising campaign with the slogan "Wasal Soutak!" ("Send your voice" to the United Nations) with posters and billboards around the country and mentions on air. The winners were announced live on a popular Saturday radio show and were later invited to the station for a prize-giving ceremony with the United Nations Resident Representative in Tunisia that included live interviews.

The project then encouraged the two winners to gather up messages from Tunisia's youth to take to the UN. They canvassed their peers, friends and families while the radio called for submissions from its Facebook fan base. Dozens of contributions were received, compiled and edited. The message consisted of 10 main points, including a request for support from the UN for the emerging democracy, making the voice of youth heard, education reform, support for higher education and research, job creation for youth through the development of regional tourism, promotion of links with other emerging democracies, support for public health in rural areas, support for environmental protection and the development of renewable energies. The two young winners visited New York from 3-9 December 2011. The message, in Arabic, was handwritten by a professional calligrapher in Tunisia and delivered to UNDP Administrator Helen Clark.

The DemocraTweet programme contained a solid foundation of basic information on the five themes,³⁴ with gender issues carefully

³⁴ I.e., 1) The basics of what constitutes a democratic regime; 2) the transition towards democracy; 3) the National Constituent Assembly; 4) voting for the NCA; and 5) what happens on election day



addressed and mainstreamed throughout the content. Fewer men than women played, but the men who played learned something about gender equality and the role of women, according to evaluation statistics that the programme collected.

In addition to the media-based activities, UNDP supported the organization of debates and round-tables as part of its voter education programmes. Beyond the framework of SEPT, UNDP organized two round-tables (3-4 June 2011) on 'South to South Conversation on Dialogue and a Search for Consensus during the Democratic Transition'. The first round-table focused on socio-economic themes and the second on political dialogue and the search for a consensus during the democratic transition. They brought together top Tunisian executives, political leaders, civil society activists (including women and young people) and jurists. South-American political leaders and former ministers also attended, which enabled comparative approaches and

the sharing of best practices with those of countries such as Mexico and Chile, which went through a similar phase in the 1990s. By providing a forum about similar experiences, the round-tables aimed to ensure the success of Tunisia's political agenda.

Mainstreaming Gender into Civil Society Outreach

Many Tunisian organizations launched extensive awareness-raising activities for women about the importance of women's participation in the electoral process, making a significant contribution to ISIE's work in promoting inclusive elections. Some of the most active advocacy and education organizations in this were the Association Tunisienne des Femmes Démocrates (ATFD), the Association des Femmes Tunisiennes pour la Recherche sur le Développement (AFTURD), the Commission Femmes de l'Union Générale des Travailleurs Tunisiens and Collectif 95 Maghreb Egalité. After participating in street protests, these women's associations organized the Women's Walk for Citizenship, Equality and Dignity, held on 29 January 2011, when thousands of Tunisian women joined by many men walked in the centre of Tunis to show support for women's inclusion in the transitional political process.

During the pre-electoral period, these civil society organizations engaged in awareness-raising activities around the country, particularly with rural populations and youth. The 'Caravan for Women's Votes' was organized with activists to explain the concept of parity, encourage registration and political participation and defend women's rights. The Caravan met with

some verbal harassment on its route, but succeeded in sharing its message across the country ahead of the elections.

Gender equality was, in some instances, integrated into associations not directly focused on women's empowerment during the transition and electoral process. For example, Youth Without Borders (YWB) was created in March 2011 with a base of close to 500 young members (students, officials, doctors, etc.) in 11 governorates. Although it targeted all youth, its leadership specifically sought out young women from around the country and insisted that women activists in the organization be included as observers and trainers. They organized a number of civic education 'caravans.' The first caravan was conducted in the northern regions of the country and was called 'Women and Citizenship.' It advocated for massive participation by women, especially during voter registration.

In a similar vein, the association Lem Ech cheml (literally, "gathering persons who have dispersed") has also worked to support women's political participation during the transition. It leveraged the experience of four of its members who were also acting as members of regional electoral management bodies during the transition. Its activities focused on civil monitoring caravans working together with the regional bodies. Regional coordinators were hired from among unemployed graduates. The perspective was to 'not bring the good word from the capital', but to hire civil educators in their regions and respect parity among them. Women were active in the caravans thanks to good training in communication. They knew the regional context very well and were able to enter the region without

difficulty. One of the activists explained, "The targets of our actions are the most marginalized people. These are country people in the inner and southern regions, particularly women and young people. We were afraid of failing to make women join, but to our pleasant surprise, there were more women than men."

3.5. Support for Women Candidates and Political Party Engagement

One of the early wins for women's political participation was the passage of the parity quota, mandating a 'zipper list', with men and women alternated throughout the list (Decree 35, Article 16). Electoral lists that did not respect this rule would not be registered. A list-proportional representation electoral system was chosen, with representatives being elected in multi-member constituencies of up to 10 members. Tunisia is one of the few countries in the world where a 'zipper list' was mandated by law. In most countries where this system is used, political parties usually voluntarily adopt this measure.

The work related to the parity quota was outside of the work with the EMB. This was a nationally owned process with highly motivated and articulate women activists working with the Higher Commission that was responsible for drafting the electoral law. UNDP and other international organizations played a supportive, behind-the-scenes advisory role. UNDP worked with the commission of experts on the electoral code, which then made proposals to the Higher Authority.

Women Candidates

The parity requirement regarding candidate lists resulted in a flurry of activity by political parties to recruit aspiring women candidates and prepare them for the election campaign. The quota provision required thousands of women to take part in the election, the majority of whom had never been involved in politics. Women anticipated numerous obstacles during the NCA elections, notably difficulty fundraising for their campaigns and personal attacks or intimidation. Apprehension of these challenges and the comparative lack of political experience among women generated an urgent demand for support and training amongst women candidates of all political affiliations in the months before the election.

Within the framework of SEPT, UNDP led and partnered on a series of activities designed to prepare women candidates for the elections. For many women, basic skills in the areas of fundraising and media relations, strategy and policy development and the 'how to' of initiating and running a political campaign were vitally needed to meet the parity requirement and develop meaningful campaign platforms. Running from July to October 2011, the UNDP activities addressed key needs in enhancing women's political participation, particularly in the area of campaigning. The activities focused on such topics as identifying resources available to women candidates, effective strategies, networking and dialogue, entry points for making one's voice heard, and common challenges and tactics to overcome them. UNDP conducted these activities in cooperation with international and regional partners, including CAWTAR and NDI.

Summer School: Candidate Training

From 18-19 June 2011, UNDP initiated the first Summer University for Women in Politics to train potential women candidates in preparing and running their electoral campaigns. The event was conducted in partnership with NDI, CAWTAR and UN Women. Fifty-three women from different regions, representing 43 political parties, as well as representatives of civil society, participated. Practical training sessions and opportunities to exchange experiences with women politicians from other countries helped prepare potential women candidates with the necessary skills and confidence to organize effective campaigns. Participants received training from international and national experts on how to overcome campaigning challenges, including establishing campaigning teams, collaborating with CSOs and communicating successfully with the voters and the media.

The summer institute aimed specifically to:

- Strengthen women candidates' communication and campaign organization techniques
- Establish a strategic campaign plan for each participant
- Promote multi-party and intra-party dialogue among women
- Create opportunities for exchange and sharing of experiences
- Encourage discussion and exchanges between women in political parties and civil society

Guest speakers and trainers shared their personal experiences in politics and public

FEEDBACK FROM CANDIDATES WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE SUMMER UNIVERSITY TRAINING

"I registered and participated in the seminar at the end of September/early October 2011. This was an excellent and practical learning – how to go into the field, speak to people, organize the campaign, etc. This gave me confidence in myself because, in truth, I had lived in a political environment [...] but I did not have the tools.

With this training, I contacted my team to tell them how the work needed to be done and distribute the duties. Two or three weeks later, there was another session on how to communicate with the press. We did a role-play with a journalist as if we were in a television studio. I therefore mastered what I had to say and how to gain the upper hand over the media, which always try to get us." (Candidate, Ariana district)

"I was pleased to work with UNDP and the trainers. I learned that an electoral campaign is not always about the money, but about strategy too. I learned how to develop a good rapport with my constituency too." (Candidate, a rural constituency)

"I did not have campaign experience and our parties lacked guidance in this area. We have political and social programmes, but how do we communicate them? The training allowed me to work on communicating a complicated political programme, simplifying it, organizing it and making it accessible." (Candidate, Kebili district)

life and led sessions on: organizing an electoral campaign; promoting effective coalition-building among women; developing a message and communicating effectively; building relationships with the media; creating channels of mutual support for women between political parties and civil society; and accessing useful tools and resources to promote women's political participation and equality.

The two-day Summer University promoted dialogue among women candidates from different parties and created opportunities for women political activists to exchange experiences and meet counterparts in civil society. At the end, participants committed to train other women within their political parties. The institute helped aspiring candidates create their strategic campaign plans and established links that facilitated exchange of experiences among peers from different parties and countries and inter-party dialogue.

The activity also demonstrated the strong partnership between the organizations, particularly UNDP and NDI, which covered the majority of costs. There was good collaboration institutionally and between professional staff, resulting in smooth logistical and operational organization and management of the event. Mutual trust and strong communication between organizations made this a success for donor cooperation.

Various Tunisian and international organizations followed up on the summer institute with targeted activities over the following months before the elections. For example, the League of Women Voters – Tunisia (LET) organized two debates to help voters get to know six Tunisian women running at the head of their lists in four electoral districts. UNDP organized two debate events in August 2011 to encourage women to run for office. In September and October 2011, several workshops took place in the capital, the East (Sousse) and the South (Gafsa). These

workshops provided specialized training on developing electoral strategies, establishing campaign teams and managing campaigns, mobilizing voters, collaborating with civil society organizations and communicating with members of the community, the voters and the media. The programme also trained journalists for ‘fair electoral coverage’.

UNDP also provided personal coaching sessions to 15 women candidates from different political parties at the heads of their lists. UNDP experts worked with women in the parties to help them define the themes that interested them and to be active and gain influence within their parties. Four of the women who participated in UNDP’s candidate trainings won seats in the NCA. One of the key challenges of the programme was the selection process for participants, because of the great need and demand for the workshop. UNDP also sought to reach out to the male party leadership. The programme held discussions with party leaders on selecting male and female candidates, leadership positions within the parties and skills development.

While preparing women candidates was a priority, convening dialogues with political parties directly on women’s participation was also a critical element of technical assistance. UNDP was able to use its neutrality and convening power to engage with political parties as they were compiling their lists of candidates. This provided an opportunity to discuss the parity law, the process of candidate selection, positions on the list and leadership roles within the parties. The Women of My Country video was used as a tool to engage in the discussions with political parties.

Video Documentary

The UNDP-CAWTAR partnership also developed a documentary film and CD-ROM *Femmes de mon pays, femmes à part entière* (Women of My Country, Women to Reckon With) as a tribute to the women candidates of the NCA elections. The documentary was launched on 8 March 2012 and was followed by a discussion on the role of women in politics and the decision to become a candidate. The 26-minute film followed the candidacies of five Tunisian women who, despite the differing outcomes of their campaigns, came out of the electoral period with a commitment to furthering women’s political participation in the future. The documentary brought the challenges of women’s campaigns to life, and it also emphasized the energy and enthusiasm of the campaign teams and supporters, encouraging other women to get involved by showing the reality and practicality of political work. It was broadcast in Tunisia and other Arab countries in 2012 during conferences and workshops to encourage women’s participation in politics and to discuss the challenges faced by female candidates.

Women and Tunisian Media

Female journalists have been at the forefront of political events since the revolution. For the first time in Tunisia and in the Arab region, a woman is heading of the Syndicat National des Journalistes Tunisiens (SNJT – National Association of Tunisian Journalists). Young women cyber-activists played a catalytic role in triggering the social uprising and monitoring and commenting on political developments during the transition. Even before the revolution, women, including several notable women bloggers, were

active in social networks. Drawing upon the Internet and social networks such as Facebook, they have sought to mobilize public opinion and young people in support of a 'direct and popular democracy' and against repression.³⁵

In spite of the significant number of newspapers (88), radio stations and television stations that were created after the revolution, the amount of time allotted to women so that they can speak and appear as candidates or debate their role in political life has not significantly changed since the pre-revolution period. According to the results of three media monitoring reports that a group of civil society organizations³⁶ compiled during the transition period and electoral process, women candidates have only 2 percent to 10 percent of air time and even this meagre amount tends to be devoted to 'less relevant' and less galvanizing themes than those reserved for men.

Other initiatives were also employed to engage media and to ensure coverage of the campaign. For example, in July 2011, CAWTAR organized political debates with media outlets to emphasize the importance of gender-sensitive media coverage. In addition to the Women's University in June 2011, CAWTAR organized a week-long training for trainers on 'Gender and Media Treatment of Women's Issues' in November 2011 in Tunis in collaboration with AGFUND (Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development). Their goal was to bring more attention to the gender approach and techniques and tools required for gender

integration and women's rights in the media. Twenty-two journalists and media representatives from Tunisia and several Arab countries participated. UNDP also offered two workshops in Tunis and in Gafsa for 45 journalists to discuss gender-sensitive media coverage of the campaign and election.

Lessons Learned Around the Election

An assessment workshop was convened by UNDP and CAWTAR in Tunis on 15-16 December 2011, entitled 'Road of the Candidates to the Constituent National Assembly Elections: Summary, Lessons-Learned and Strategies for Best Results'. The seminar brought together 19 women candidates from 15 political parties (including four women who won seats in the NCA) and included journalists and NGO members. This was an important opportunity for evaluation of the opportunities, obstacles and lessons learned for women who competed in the campaign and election.

One important issue concerned the obstacles faced by women candidates within political parties and by women running on independent lists. The participants noted that the many male members of their political parties, even those who appeared to be the most progressive, still believed that women were incapable of being leaders of political parties. On the whole, perceptions were that political parties continued to undervalue the skills, capacity and experience of their women members and to perpetuate gender stereotypes. Women also noted that their parties were less inclined to

³⁵ The most renowned is Lina Ben Mhenni, who published a book, *Tunisian Girl, blogueuse pour un printemps arabe*¹⁵, at Indigène éditions, where she describes her role as an independent blogger and protester before and during the Tunisian revolution.

³⁶ ATFD/AFTURD/LTDH/Snjt/Olpec, op. cit.

'take a risk' on women candidates than on male candidates. Nonetheless, candidates coming from political parties that had been newly created after the revolution noted that the creation of the lists had been done spontaneously and openly and had not excluded them. However, women coming from more established parties complained that the lists had been created in a rush. The male-dominated central or regional office of the political party most often determined the lists. Selection criteria were unclear. Some of the candidates highlighted disagreements and even conflict with the men who were at the head of their lists. Often, this was due to unequal distribution of campaign finances as well as to access to media time. On the whole, political party rules lacked specific dispositions regarding the representation and participation of women within the parties' decision-making structures.

Communication between the candidates and their political parties was often difficult. The candidates found it challenging to make their voices heard within the leadership of the parties. Some of them said that the parties had manipulated them by encouraging rivalries between women members of the same party. They cited lack of access to public campaign funds and being invisible to the media.

Women also encountered significant problems in their campaigns. Many of the participants noted that political debates often transformed into bitter personal critiques. In general, there was a lack of substantive policy debate and a lack of ideology expressed in dialogue. Candidates often demonstrated a weak mastery of the rules of campaigning and debating. Some of the shortcomings of the campaigns included



not being able to organize direct action with local constituents, overlooking regional specificities in the development of their campaign strategy, failing to pursue media coverage more aggressively and generally lacking financial resources. However, the strength of the campaigns was also noted. The women believed that they had brought an ethical dimension to their campaigns and noted that the campaign training that they had received have been highly useful.

The media participants noted that women candidates were sometimes hesitant to speak in front of the camera due to their comparative lack of experience. They also noted that some of the male candidates that had been placed in the second position on the list had prevented women candidates at the head of the list from speaking to the media and had instead gone to interviews in their place.

On the whole, although women came from many diverse backgrounds and political orientations, they shared a basic optimism: "With the revolution, the veil has fallen from the realities in Tunisia, both at the social and economic level," said one candidate. "The lack of awareness of people's rights (women and children, for example) led me to this commitment. A revolution must break the ties with the discriminatory past with regard to human rights."



4. LESSONS LEARNED

4.1. Good Practices

The experiences of Tunisian men and women in the ISIE, in the political races and in civil society throughout the elections provide valuable lessons for future elections in Tunisia and in the world, as do the experiences of the organizations that accompanied them along the way. Some of the good practices gleaned from this study include:

Parity Measure for Women Candidates

The quota was successful in so far as it promoted parity and was conducted according to a zebra list format. However, the intention of the law did not play out in practice and the law must go further to achieve its stated goals. Due to the lack of provisions in the law regarding the allocation of candidates to the head of the lists, women were placed at the head of the list in only 8 percent of the cases. Election reform discussions should consider this in order to achieve parity in representation.

Coordination among Partners

Coordination between assistance providers, particularly between UNDP and NDI on the candidate trainings, was important. This promoted synergy, creativity and project efficiency. There was good collaboration institutionally and between professional staff, resulting in smooth logistical and operational organization and management of activities. Mutual trust and strong communication between organizations made this a success for donor cooperation.

Early Involvement of Assistance Providers with Gender

UNDP responded quickly during the transition, which enabled it to maximize assistance during the tight electoral timetable. The strong commitment of UNDP Country Office management ensured the integration of gender from the outset of project design and through the full electoral cycle. Likewise, the availability and leadership of staff committed to gender mainstreaming were critical, as was the support of the GPECS team

and donors in pushing for gender inclusion throughout the project. The ongoing nature of the support was important, including the early engagement and ongoing legal review and oversight.

Gender Advisors

The placement of a UNDP gender advisor in the ISIE helped maintain the priority of women's empowerment throughout the process and provide ongoing support in the daily decision-making of the organization. This was a good practice in terms of ensuring a gender perspective through all of the electoral assistance work. In addition, the secondment of a specialized staff member from the Regional Centre in Cairo to support potential women candidates yielded important results.

Chief Technical Advisors and Gender Awareness

Although the presence of a gender advisor provided substantial benefits to the programme and is considered a best practice, it should not hinder other electoral experts from incorporating a gender perspective into their work. A former Chief Technical Advisor on elections remarked, "The electoral field is not a field in which you can have only gender experts. Unlike in social programmes, I think that it will be more useful to sensitize electoral experts to the issue of parity and gender, and to increase the number of women who are electoral experts. We must train more women to become electoral experts and sensitize electoral experts to the gender question."³⁷ This is especially true of leadership of assistance missions and specialists in

technical areas of electoral administration such as voter registration, boundary delimitation and electoral security.

Voter Outreach

Good progress was made with adopting a gender approach in the work of ISIE and coordination with CSOs was good. UNDP invested in some novel approaches to voter outreach and, in particular, the *Enti essout song* gained national popularity.

Convening Political Parties

Drawing on its neutrality and institutional weight, UNDP convened dialogues with political parties on women's participation as the parties were compiling their lists of candidates. This provided an opportunity to discuss the parity law, the process of candidate selection, positions on the list and leadership roles within the parties. UNDP can work with women in these parties to help them connect, define the themes that interest them, be active and influence the parties from within.

In general, issues affecting women's political participation in elections are often integrally linked to broader activities that, for assistance providers, fall under the category of 'governance'. In particular, work with political parties is often viewed as part of governance practice, yet it is an area of key importance for women in electoral assistance, especially regarding campaigning, legal awareness and violence prevention. These practice and programming approaches would benefit from increased synergies in planning and implementation.

³⁷ Interview with Jerome Leyraud. Tunis, Tunisia. 15 April 2012.

4.2. Further Opportunities

Mainstreaming Gender into the Legal Framework

The new law that will be established to govern future elections in Tunisia must institutionalize the issue of gender throughout. The mainstreaming of gender should be consistent and not limited to the parity provision.

Gender Mainstreaming into Electoral Management

Although there was good progress, more needs to be done to ensure gender mainstreaming within the institution. In order to do this, EMB staff should be sensitized to gender issues and encouraged to incorporate them reflexively into their daily decision-making. The objective of this is to incorporate gender concerns as a regular way of doing work, rather than as a separate issue. Institutionalizing gender mainstreaming may be achieved by developing a gender policy and accompanying action plan, assisted by nominating focal points for implementation.

More broadly, the electoral administration has been largely male-dominated, from staff, to advisors, to leadership in general. The body should consider how to attract more women to the organization, particularly to leadership positions and to election administration as a whole.

Adapting the Electoral Cycle Approach

The NCA elections were organized in just four short months, which limited the programmes that could be undertaken to increase women's representation. In the future, the electoral administration body should adapt an electoral cycle approach and identify gender interventions that can be done throughout the electoral timetable.

Broadening Civic Outreach

The efforts of the ISIE and of numerous civil society organizations provided thousands of voters with necessary information throughout the electoral process. However, these outreach efforts did not reach a significant portion of the population. In order to reach a broader audience – and particularly women – more material should be developed and more citizen education programmes should be promoted, especially in the internal regions that are furthest away from the coast.

NGOs that are responsible for awareness-raising need to be better coordinated in order to avoid duplication and service gaps and to improve the quality and accuracy of educational materials.

Adapting the 'Language of Gender'

The vocabulary and language/concepts used in defining and promoting women's political participation should be examined and adapted to local sensitivities because

they may otherwise cause resistance in some cases. The term ‘gender mainstreaming’ sometimes has the connotation of being an imposed concept; understanding the actual meaning of the concept requires learning. This meaning should also be diversified (inclusion, equality, participation, etc.) and different arguments should be given in support of these ideas. All parties should recognize the need to have diversified candidates and gender integration must also include men and involve them throughout the full process.

Data Gathering

The ISIE missed some opportunities to collect helpful data, particularly regarding women’s voter registration, turnout and election violence against women. The ISIE had access to disaggregated voter registration data, but did not use it.

Campaign Financing for Women Candidates

Campaign funding was noted as one of the most important problems that women candidates faced throughout this election. Public funding provided by the government reduced the gender gap, but even public funding did not always go into the right hands – as was the case, for example, when women who headed lists were compelled to share their resources with male candidates who had been placed below them on those lists. Parties should also be encouraged to support the candidates financially;

as a corollary, financial or other incentives may be considered to encourage parties that place women at the head of their lists.

Addressing Political Violence against Women in Elections

Sexual harassment, threats and intimidation were an unfortunate part of the experience for many women candidates. Broad stakeholder agreement, including between political parties, candidates, security and the electoral administration, is needed in order to identify and implement effective strategies to reduce and mitigate election violence against women.





5. CONCLUSION

Tunisia has long been at the forefront of women's political participation in the Arab region. The social and political changes introduced with the Arab Uprising have benefited women, but have also presented new challenges and reinforced structural issues that have faced the women's movement for decades.

In particular, legal provisions and reforms, such as the parity measure, lack substantive support in other areas that would make them truly effective in achieving their stated goal of gender equality. Addressing deficits of training and campaign financing will be important steps, as will be continuing to work with male leaders of political parties to recognize the value of women's contribution to the future leadership and policy direction of their parties.

Tunisia is a relatively young society and Tunisian youth have been instrumental in bringing about the change that they desire. The use of new information and communication technologies spurred the revolution and it is no surprise that these same technologies are furthering the progress of the democratic transition. Assistance programmes that adapt them and draw on innovative technology tools to educate and advocate remain at the forefront of change in the country.

The following recommendations for enhancing international assistance for women's political participation are based on the Tunisian experience:

- **Mainstream gender institutionally and legally:** Ensure that quota measures reach their desired goal of parity by closing loopholes and move beyond quantitative representation by enhancing the quality of women's participation through education and resources. Promote gender mainstreaming in the new EMB and implement staff training.
- **Engage a gender advisor:** Employ a dedicated gender advisor as part of electoral assistance and as a key step toward ensuring success.
- **Convene actors:** UNDP in particular can use its institutional weight and neutrality to convene political actors to discuss emerging and/or sensitive issues in a constructive forum.
- **Take a long-term approach:** Necessary legal reform, civic education for voters and capacity support for women candidates are long-term objectives that require ongoing engagement by donors. Using targeted programmes and with dedicated experts, continue electoral assistance in these areas throughout the electoral cycle.



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United Nations Development Programme

Bureau for Policy and Programme Support

One United Nations Plaza

New York, NY, 10017 USA

Tel: +1 212 906 6305

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