CAWTAR

Gender and Decentralization

in Jordan, Libya, Tunisia and Yemen - 2014

Forum of Federations
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for Training and Research

Gender and Decentralization

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«The Forum of Federations, the global network on federalism, and multi-level governance, supports better governance through learning among practitioners and experts.
Active on six continents, it runs programs in over 20 countries including established federations, as well as countries transitioning to devolved and decentralized governance options.
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PREFACE

The Arab Spring underscored the unravelling of centralized oligarchic states such as Libya, Egypt, Yemen and Tunisia as well as impacting on the pace of reforms in Jordan and Morocco. All of these countries are experimenting with some form of decentralisation, devolution and empowering lower levels of government. Women and other marginalised groups were at the forefront of the Arab Spring in the hope of finding a path to inclusive democracy and gender equality but the post-revolutionary and transitional period has shown that even when women take an active part in regime overthrow, their ability to maintain the same degree of political activism in the period that follows is largely dependent on underlying historical and institutional contexts. The overall level of women's political participation in the MENA region is low. A country like Qatar have no female members of parliament.

The Forum of Federations' (The Forum)' experience in Tunisia, Libya, Yemen and elsewhere has highlighted the need to conduct programs specifically for women and that it is insufficient to just target women through broad programs on decentralisation because their specific realities become diluted or are eclipsed. It is in this context that the Forum of Federations initiated a Gender and Decentralisation program in the MENA region in 2013 aimed at empowering women to maintain and strengthen their level of political engagement in the transition-to-democracy period. The program contributes to building the capacity of women to assume sustained roles in the political and governing process of democratic and decentralized state building through increased political knowledge and skill development. Phase I which ended in March 2014 focussed on Tunisia, Jordan, Yemen and Libya.

The awareness that there is a reciprocal causal connection between women's political participation on the one hand, and decentralisation and local democracy on the other, is emerging both in the literature, and in the practice of stakeholders involved bolstering democratic transitions. The connection between gender

and state structures has been under-studied, although there is an emerging literature on the nexus between federalism and gender. It notably deals with the impact of state structures on political participation, on strategies to defend women's issues in multilayered regimes, or on the impact of those regimes on specific policy areas.

This publication has been produced for the Forum by The Centre of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR) to explore the nexus between women's political participation and decentralised governance and to reflect on the cause and effect relationship between decentralisation and gender as well as the impact that the process of decentralization may have on women's political participation and on gender in general. It also examines both the potential advantages and risks of decentralisation for women. An international steering committee comprised of two international experts provided oversight and direction on both the structure and content of the paper. The national status reports were prepared by national experts indentified and supervised by CAWTAR. Much of the input was collected via focus group discussions organised with the participants attending the training sessions held within the framework of the MENA Gender and Decentralization programme

The paper focuses mainly on the experiences of Jordan, Tunisia, Libya and Yemen. While there is no generic approach or status on gender, political participation and decentralisation, this paper contributes to building the intellectual capital on the subject which will inform and serve future programs, policies and activities. The utility of the paper is also to draw on the individual experiences into a wealth of knowledge for the mutual benefit of all, based on the Forum of Federations' principle of 'dialogue and learning from each other'.

Thanks are due to the Executive Director of CAWTAR, Soukeina Bouraoui and the research team, particularly Maryam Ben Salem. Special thanks also to Johanne Poirier and Enid Slack for steering the paper and providing valuable critique and direction. Many thanks also to all the workshop participants from Jordan, Libya,

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Special thanks to the Government of Canada without whose financial support this publication would not have been possible.

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Rupak Chattopadhyay,
President and CEO,
Forum of Federations

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Since the 1970s, decentralization has been at the heart of policy debates, especially in Western democracies. In the 1980s and 1990s, several northern and some southern countries began to implement vertical decentralization; certain central government powers were delegated to lower levels of government or representative structures of residents and elected authorities[1].

The importance given to the issue of decentralization by international organizations such as the United Nations and the World Bank and some donor countries in the context of economic cooperation stems from the assumption that the local community is the first step to democracy. Decentralization is often considered to be a sine qua non for the establishment of a real democracy. It would address the government's gap in terms of public service, ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of local government and give legitimacy to local councilors.

There is now a significant body of research on decentralization in different contexts and in various social and economic frameworks regarding the transformations witnessed by several Arab countries since the beginning of 2011.

On 14 January 2011, Zine el Abidine Ben Ali's[2] authoritarian regime in Tunisia was brought down by a popular protest movement, the first in a series of uprisings across the Arab region which came to be referred to by the blanket term 'the Arab Spring'. Countries as different as Egypt, Morocco, Bahrain, Libya, Yemen and Syria have all been affected, with varying results, including the fall of authoritarian regimes (Egypt, Tunisia, Yemen and Libya), the implementation of political reforms by regimes shaken by the events of early 2011 (without major changes in politics and the exercise of power - Morocco, Jordan),[3] and an appalling civil war (Syria).

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1. Isabelle Milbert, « Processus de décentralisation municipale et environnement urbain: quelles perspectives pour les femmes ? », in Preiswerk Yvonne, Milbert Isabelle (Ed.), *Femmes, Villes, Environnement*, Berne, UNESCO, 1995, p. 32-47.
2. President of Tunisian Republic from November 7, 1987 until January 14, 2014.
3. Imen Gallala-Arndt, « Gouvernance et nouveaux acteurs politiques. Les réformes constitutionnelles en Tunisie, en Égypte, au Maroc et en Jordanie : une analyse comparée », *IEMED*, 2012, p. 157.

Media coverage of the trajectories and results of the Arab Spring has often been intense. In addition, both journalists and researchers have looked at the active role played by women in ordinary people's protest movements[4]. According to Aisha Abounaï, women were "not claiming specific rights but economic, legal and family equal citizenship in all policy areas. They demanded democracy and the right to dignity for all men and women [5]."

Despite women's efforts in these revolutionary times, they have not achieved increased levels of representation in newly elected bodies, as a cursory examination of the Egyptian, Libyan and Tunisian cases will show. In Tunisia, thanks to the law on male/female parity in electoral lists for the elections of the National Constituent Assembly -NCA - October 2011[6], women were able to win 29.82 % of the seats (65 women out of 218 elected representatives)[7]. For Libya, the results were even lower: 33 women (16.5%) were elected to the General National Congress in July 2012. The most alarming case is that of Egypt. In the elections to the Lower House in 2011, only 2% of the elected representatives were women, as against 12.7% in the previous elections. In the early 2013 elections for the Upper House, the Shura Chamber, only 12 women (4.4 %) were elected[8].

In many countries in the Arab region, democratic transition is accompanied by the establishment of a new legislative framework (constituent process) or by significant political reforms, including changes in governance and calls for greater attention to the issue of women's political participation in a decentralized context. By opening up the political game with multiple levels, sites or scales of government, decentralization, it is argued, will reduce gender inequalities in politics.

4. Manal al-Natour , "The Role of Women in the Egyptian 25th January Revolution", *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 2012, vol.13, N°5, p. 59-76.
5. Aïcha Abounaï, « Les femmes marocaines et « le printemps arabe » », *Tumultes*, 2012, vol. 1, N° 38-39, p. 117.
6. Parity on electoral lists was enacted by the High Authority for the Achievement of Revolution's Goals. The law governing the electoral process mandates parity and alternation men - women on all electoral lists. It stipulates the cancellation of lists not respecting the principles of parity and alternation.
7. http://www.anc.tn/site/main/AR/docs/composition/compos_s.jsp
8. Union Interparlementaire, *Les femmes au Parlement en 2012 Regard sur l'année écoulée*, 2012, p. 6.

On the basis of these observations, the Center of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR) undertook a study on gender and decentralization for the Forum of Federations and covering four countries (Jordan, Libya, Tunisia and Yemen). Through these case studies, the present report researches the ways in which links between gender and decentralization function. The report investigates a number of central issues, including notably:

- how the launching (or forthcoming launching) of the decentralization process in these countries has allowed (or could allow) for the greater inclusion of women in public life;
- what the role of women has been in making decentralization work;
- advantages and disadvantages of decentralization in terms of gender equality and the promotion of gender-sensitive policy-making.

By comparing the decentralization experiences of four countries from the Middle East and North Africa regions (MENA) with the experiences of decentralization policies in various other countries (Northern countries, Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America), this report identifies the potential and challenges of the impact of decentralization on women, and, conversely, on the role which women (can) play in state restructuring.

1. General Context in Jordan, Libya, Tunisia and Yemen

The four countries covered by the project (Jordan, Libya, Tunisia and Yemen) all belong to the Arab-Muslim world. These countries differ in their political regimes (monarchy in Jordan, republics in Yemen, Libya and Tunisia), socio-cultural makeup, geography, environment and history. At the levels of gender inclusion on the one hand and decentralization experiences and policies on the other hand, the issues that specifically concern us here, significant differences among the four countries can be seen.

Table 1. Demographic and social data in Jordan, Libya, Tunisia and Yemen

	Population (millions)	Labor force participation (female)	Labor force participation (male)	Unemployment rate among women %	Male unemployment rate %	Literacy rate among women %	Literacy rate among men %
Jordan [9]	6.18	16	69	21	11	94	98
Libya	6.15 [10]	31.80 [11]	-	-	-	99.82 [12]	99.93 [13]
Tunisia	10.88 [14]	863.1 [15]	2505.6 [16]	21.9 [17]	12.8 [18]	99.2 [19]	98.9 [20]
Yemen [21]	24.80	26	74	41	12	49	82

9.   Gender Gap Report 2013. p. 238
10.   La Banque mondiale. Perspective monde. Université de Sherbrooke. Population totale. http://perspective.usherbrooke.ca/bilan/servlet/BMTendanceStatPays?codeTheme=1&codeStat=SP.POP.TOTL&codePays=LBY&codeTheme2=4&codeStat2=x&codePays2=LBY&langue=fr
11.   Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC). Labour force; women under 15. Données 2012 http://www.sesrtcic.org/oic-member-countries-infigures-ar.php?c_code=26&cat_code=1
12.   La banque mondiale. Perspective monde. Université de Sherbrooke. Degré d'alphabétisation chez les femmes (15-24 ans) 2010. http://perspective.usherbrooke.ca/bilan/servlet/BMTendanceStatPays?langue=fr&codePays=LBY&codeStat=SE.ADT.1524.LT.FE.ZS&codeStat2=x
13.   La banque mondiale. Perspective monde. Université de Sherbrooke. Degré d'alphabétisation chez les hommes (15-24 ans) 2010. http://perspective.usherbrooke.ca/bilan/servlet/BMTendanceStatPays?langue=fr&codePays=LBY&codeStat=SE.ADT.1524.LT.MA.ZS&codeStat2=x
14.   Institut National des statistiques. Population totale au 1er juillet 2013. http://www.ins.nat.tn/indexfr.php
15.   Institut National de Statistiques. Evolution de la population active occupée selon le sexe 2006-2013. Trimestre4- 2013
16.   Institut National de Statistiques. Evolution de la population active occupée selon le sexe 2006-2013. Trimestre4- 2013
17.   Institut National de Statistiques. Taux de chômage selon le sexe 2006-2013 - en %. 4ème trismestre 2013
18.   Institut National de Statistiques. Taux de chômage selon le sexe 2006-2013 - en %. 4ème trismestre 2013
19.   Institut National de Statistiques. Taux de scolarisation par genre 6-11 ans. http://www.ins.nat.tn/indexfr.php
20.   Institut National de Statistiques. Taux de scolarisation par genre 6-11 ans. http://www.ins.nat.tn/indexfr.php
21.   *Ibid* p. 378.

1.1 Politics and women's participation in Jordan, Libya, Tunisia and Yemen

1.1 Tunisia

Source: http://fr.mapsofworld.com/tunisie/

Tunisia achieved independence on 20 March 1956 after 87 years as a French protectorate. The monarchy was abolished 25 July 1957. Habib Bourguiba, leader of the Tunisian national movement and Prime Minister under Lamine Bey, the last hereditary ruler, became president on 8 November 1959.

During his thirty year period at the head of the Tunisian State, Habib Bourguiba was to become increasingly autocratic, ruling through a series of prime ministers. He eventually introduced a one-party system, then life presidency. However, in the domain of women's rights, Tunisia was to be the most avant-garde of the Arab-Muslim States, through the promulgation of unexpectedly progressive political and social rights for women, beginning with the Code of Personal Status of 1957. In the same year, Tunisian women also gained the right to vote and to stand as candidates in elections. This proactive, modernist policy in the field of women's rights was to be upheld by Tunisia's second president, Zine el Abidine Ben Ali, who removed the ailing Habib Bourguiba in a constitutional coup on 7 November 1987. The regime's critics accused the modernist policy line as a façade functioning primarily to hide a significant democratic deficit[22].

Former President Ben Ali was indeed the key decision maker when it came to women's rights. Thanks to the adoption of a voluntary quota system by the ruling Rassemblement constitutionnel démocratique (RCD), women accounted for 27.57% of MPs in 2009, and 33% of municipal councilors in the May elections of 2010. These percentages can be explained by the dominant position of the RCD in Tunisian politics; essentially, it was guaranteed overwhelming majorities in any elections held.

Two weeks of increasingly tense street protests, starting on 17 December 2010 with the self-immolation of a young street vendor, Mohamed Bouazizi, led to the huge demonstration of 14 January 2011 – and President Ben Ali's flight into exile in Saudi Arabia. Since then, a period of political transition has moved forward relatively smoothly, with the country organizing its first fair and open

22. Sophie Bessis, « Le féminisme institutionnel en Tunisie », *Clio. Histoire femmes et sociétés* [En ligne], 9 | 1999, mis en ligne le 22 mai 2006, consulté le 30 juillet 2013. URL : http://clio.revues.org.domino-ip2.univ-paris1.fr/286; DOI: 10.4000/clio.286

elections for the National Constituent Assembly (NAC), a body which was to draft the new Tunisian constitution. A form of parity was adopted for electoral lists, alternating men and women candidates, thereby enabling women to win 29.82% of the seats in the NAC. Thus, in the Arab region, where the average percentage of women in lower houses of Parliament is 17.8%, Tunisia's women occupy an enviable position[23].

Nevertheless, only two women received ministerial portfolios (environment and women's and family affairs) in the first elected government, led by conservative Ennahdha politician Hammadi Jebali[24]. The second Ennahdha government, led by Ali Larayedh[25], included just one woman, the Minister for Women's Affairs, the Family and Children. The current cabinet[26] has only two women ministers out of twenty and one woman secretary of state. Moreover, women hold few decision-making positions in political parties and trade unions. In the last elections for the executive board of the Union générale des travailleurs tunisiens (UGTT, the main trade-union) none of the four women candidates were elected. In political parties, the available data shows that women have a limited presence in political and executive posts[27].

23. Inter Parliamentary Union, Women in national parliament, February 2014; http://www.ipu.org/wmn-f/world.htm

24. The Troika government composed of Ennahdha party of the Democratic Forum for Labour and Liberties-FDTL and the Congress for the Republic CPR-which was formed after the elections for the National Constituent Assembly-ANC-in October 2011.

25. Government headed by Ali Laariadh (Ennahdha) which was formed in March 2013 following the resignation of Hamadi Jebali.

26. Independent government headed by Mehdi Jomaa.

27. Maryam Ben Salem, *Traditional and new forms of young women's political engagement in a transitional context. Tunisia as example,* Tunis, CAWTAR & IDRC, 2013, p. 7.

1.2 Libya

LIBYA
Political Map

ITALY
MALTA
TUNISIA
TRIPOLI
Yafran
Yafran
Ghadamis
Gharyan
Gharyan
Bani Walid
Sawfajjin
Ghadamis
Surt
Surt
Ash Shati
Adiri
Birak
Sabha
Sabha
Al Jufrah
Awbari
Awban
AliUwaynat
Zawilah
Murzuq
Ghat
Murzuq
Al Qatrun
ALGERIA
NIGER
CHAD

Mediterranean Sea
GULF OF SIRTE
Tukrah
Banghazi
Al Marj
Al Fatih
Banghazi
Ajdabiya
Marsa al Burayqah
Ajdabiya
Hun Waddan
Jalu
Tazirbu
Al Kufrah
Al Jawf
Maitan as Sarah
AliUwaynat
Susah
Darnah
Tobruk
Darnah
Bardiyah
Al Jaghbub
Butnan
EGYPT
SUDAN

TURKEY
GREECE

1. An Nuquat AlKhams(Zuwarah)
2. Az Zawiyah (Az Zawihyah)
2. Al Aziziyah (Az Azizizyah)
3. Tarabulus
5. Al Khums(Al Khums)
6. Tarhunah
7. Zlitan
8. Misratah(Misratah)
9. Al Jabal AlAkhdar(Al Bayda)

0   50   100 Km

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(Updated on 27th February,2012)

International Boundary
Province Boundary
★ National Capital
□ Province Capital
• Other Cities

Source: http://fr.mapsofworld.com/Libya/

On 24 December 1951, Libya declared its independence from Italy as the
United Kingdom of Libya, a constitutional and hereditary monarchy under King
Idris I Senoussi. On 1 September 1969, a small group of military officers led
by 27-year-old army officer Muammar Gaddafi staged a coup d'état against
King Idris, launching the Libyan Revolution. Under Muammar Gaddafi's 42-year
rule, Libya developed a remarkably closed political system in which civil society

had little voice. Nevertheless, significant improvements were made in women's status, notably via the marriage and divorce legislation of 1984: women's access to employment was facilitated, polygamy was virtually banned, marriage by free-consent made possible; women's position in divorce proceedings was improved, too. However, in terms of political participation, women have remained on the sidelines due to the closed nature of the Libyan political system. Though the aim of the Jamahiriya, or 'State of the Masses' launched by Qadhafi was to ensure Libyans' participation in their country's management, major policy decisions remained the preserve of the Guide and his close entourage[28]. As Wafa Boughaighis emphasizes, "Qadhafi almost negated any power the law retained through promoting tribal customs and tradition, a policy that resulted both in weakening the rule of law and turning laws into mere suggestions rather than obligatory rules. This also destroyed modern insights and concepts through infusing society with ancient rural traditions and customs that came with the rural tribal mentality Gaddafi helped promote"[29].

After the Libyan revolution of 2011, the revised electoral system, which introduced the principle of parity in party lists, had a significant positive effect, resulting in a substantial increase in the number of women in parliament. There were 545 female candidates for the elections of the General National Congress of July 2012, as compared to 662 male candidates: 33 were elected (16.5 percent representation in the 200-member transitional authority)[30].

In 2013, the Council of Ministers Decision (No. 161) on the Adoption of Principles and Procedures for Municipal Elections introduced quota provisions for revolutionaries with special needs and women (Article 1 (20)), who are to be elected by majority vote (Article 46 (2))[31].

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28.   Moncef Djaziri, « Libye : avancées sociales, régression politique, dissensions en perspective », *Centre Tricontinental (CETRI)*, 2010, http://www.cetri.be/spip.php?article1470

29.   Wafa T. Bugaighis, "Prospects for Women in New Libya", 2012, 21p.

30.   Women's E News: Libyan Elections Give Women a 17% Starting Point. 18 Jul 2012. http://womensenews.org/story/the-world/120719/libyan-elections-give-women-17-starting-point

31.   Quota project – Global data base of Quota for women- Libya http://www.quotaproject.org/en/uid/countryview.cfm?country=137

1.3 Jordan

Source: http://fr.mapsofworld.com/Jordan/
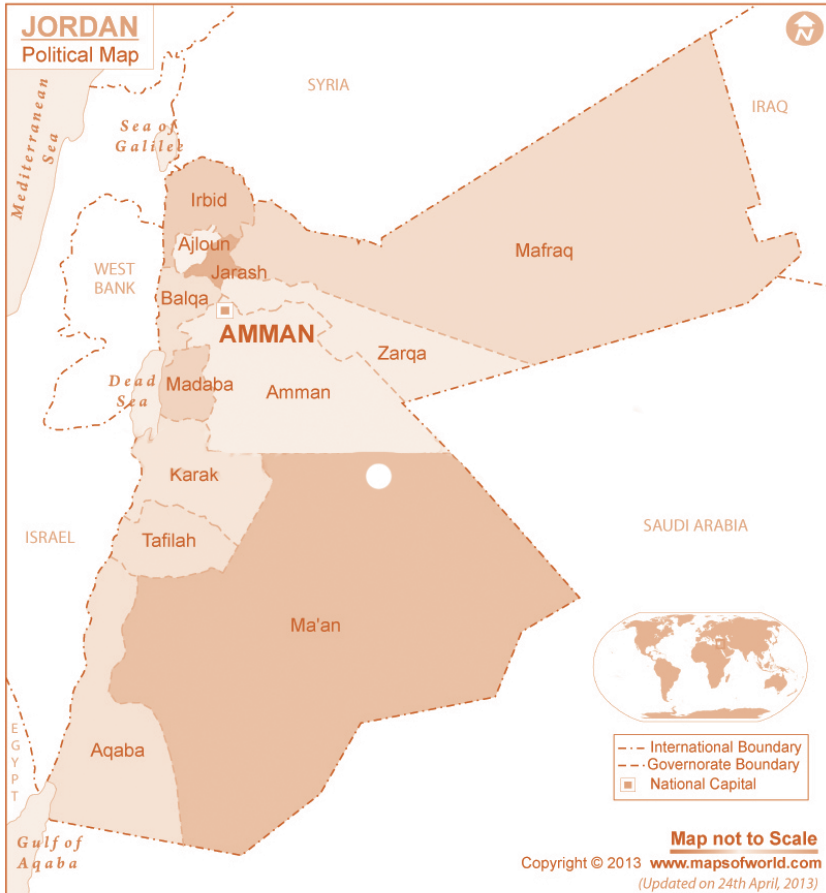
The current territorial configuration of the region south of Syria and north of Egypt and Saudi Arabia goes back to the post-First World War period. In 1923, as the British mandate over the area was being worked out, the decision was taken to split the territory into two parts: Palestine west of Jordan, designated to accommodate an eventual "Jewish national home", and the Hashemite Emirate of Transjordan to the east of the river, which became the fully independent Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan as of 1946.

Women were excluded from the political process in the Emirate. According to Ghazi Saleh Nahar and Rima Lutfi Abu Humaidan, "equality between men and women was not considered as a political issue nor was it perceived as a priority before the 1950s. Women gained the right to vote, but not to stand for elections. However, that right was restricted to women with primary education or above, thereby excluding a large number of women from the right to vote"[32]. By virtue of a Royal Decree of 1974, women were granted the right to participate in elections both as voters and candidates[33]. Even though women did not have the right to vote or be candidates for municipal councils under the terms of the 1955 law, amendment number 22 in 1982 granted them this right for the first time. The National Strategy for Women 2006–2011 focused on major legislative changes to reinforce gender equality and give justice to women.

A quota system was introduced in the 2003 national elections via amendments to Article 11 of the electoral law of 2001. "In Jordan's mixed-member proportional electoral system, 108 members are elected from 45 single or multi-member districts, 15 seats are reserved for women from 12 governorates and 3 bedouin districts (as part of the 2012 electoral law reform) and 27 members are elected through a proportional representation system"[34].

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32. Ghazi Saleh Nahar and Rima Lutfi Abu Humaidan, "The Factors Affecting the Women Political Participations in Jordanian Parliamentary Elections (2003-2013)", *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 2013, Vol. 3 *N°* 11, p. 84-94.

33. Abdulhalim M. Al-Adwan, « Jordanian Women's political participation: On the verge of the Arab Spring », *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 2012, vol. 13 N°5, p. 138.

34. http://www.quotaproject.org/fr/uid/countryview.cfm?country=113

1.4 Yemen

Source: http://fr.mapsofworld.com/Yemen/
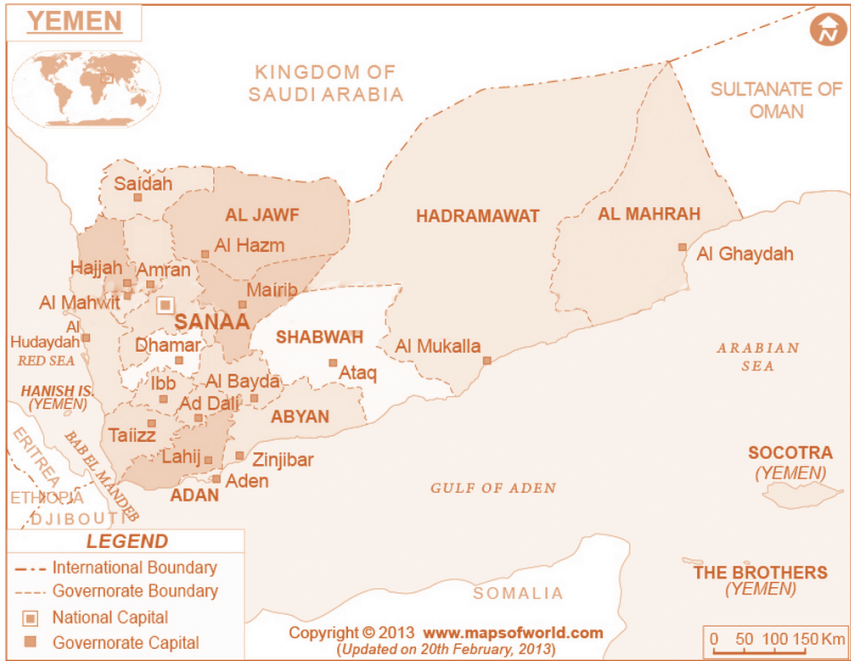
At the local level, 297 of the 970 municipal council seats, i.e. 30% of seats, are reserved for women[35].

Prior to unification in 1990, the territory of today's Republic of Yemen was occupied by two states, the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (the PDRY, often called South Yemen) and the Arab Republic of Yemen (known as North Yemen). While North Yemen never experienced colonial occupation, the territories of the PDRY had been ruled by Britain in various ways and were independent for just 23 years, from 1967 to 1990. South Yemen was seen by many as a unique experiment in Arab socialism.

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35.   *Ibid.*

In the PDRY, the Constitution of 1970 and the Family Act of 1974 made significant changes in the status of women: the minimum legal age for marriage was fixed at sixteen for girls and eighteen for boys; the dowry became symbolic; women acquired the right to initiate divorce proceedings and, post-divorce, have custody of children and keep the family home; and provisions were made for equal inheritance. During the 1980s, women activists participated in political life but never reached major positions of responsibility.

While the 1970 Constitution of the Arab Republic of Yemen affirmed the principle of equal rights between men and women, there was no explicit mention of women's right to suffrage. During the country's first local council elections in 1971, women stood as candidates and Yemeni women voted. But Parliament withdrew women's right to stand for national and local elections in 1987[36]. Following a protest movement led by thirty to forty women against this arbitrary measure, five of them were appointed to parliamentary seats. "We silenced the unsatisfied group without allowing women to be candidates in elections. [37]"

After the reunification of the two states, the 1994 constitution made amendments deleting some articles of the constitution of the newly united country. Thus, Article 27 stipulating that "all citizens are equal before the law, equal in their general rights and duties without any distinction because of their sex, color, origin, language, profession or their social rank" was replaced by Article 31 "Women are the sisters of men. They have rights and duties, which are guaranteed and assigned by Shari'ah and stipulated by law ». The latter is none another than the article 34 of the former North Yemeni constitution[38]. Article 42 of the amended constitution seems to refer specifically to male citizens: "The citizen has the right to elect and nominate himself as a candidate in an election, as well as the right to demonstrate his opinion in a referendum. The law shall regulate the provisions regarding the practice of this right". Yet women voted in the general elections of 1997 and 23 women came forward as candidates[39].

36. Maggy Grabundzija, « Femmes et politique au Yémen (1962/1967 - 2003) », *Chroniques yéménites* [En ligne], 11 | 2003, mis en ligne le 30 décembre 2003, consulté le 13 février 2014. URL : http://cy.revues.org/153
37. *Ibid.*
38. Rémy Leveau, Franck Mermier et Udo Steinbach, *Le Yémen contemporain*, Karthala Editions, 1999, p. 296.
39. http://www.al-bab.com/yemen/pol/election1997.htm

The first local elections after unification were held on 20 February 2001 and made a place for female candidates, 44 of whom were elected. In the last parliamentary elections in 2003, one woman was elected out of 301 candidates.

Table2. **Date of access to right to vote and to stand candidate for women in Jordan, Tunisia, Libya and Yemen.**

	Access to voting right at national level	Access to voting right at local level	Access to right to stand as candidates in national elections	Access to right to stand as candidates in local elections
Jordan	1974	1982	1974	1982
Libya	1964	-	-	-
Tunisia	1957	1957	1957	1957
Yemen (république unie)	1991	1991	-	-

Table 3. **Percentage of women in elected bodies in Jordan, Libya, Tunisia and Yemen**

Country	Rate of women in %
Jordan (House of Representatives) [40]	12
Libya [41]	16,5
Tunisia (National Constituent Assembly) [42]	28.11
Yemen (House of Representatives) [43]	0.33

40. Inter Parliamentary Union http://www.ipu.org/parline-f/reports/1163_A.htm (elections of 2013, data updated in January 2014)
41. Inter Parliamentary Union.Les femmes dans les parlements nationaux. http://www.ipu.org/wmn-f/classif.htm ((elections of 2012, data updated in December 2013)
42. Inter Parliamentary Union. http://www.ipu.org/parline-f/reports/1392_A.htm (elections of 2011, data updated in January 2014)
43. Inter Parliamentary Union.http://www.ipu.org/parline-f/reports/1353_A.htm (elections of 2003, data updated in November 2012)

1.2. Decentralization in Jordan, Libya, Tunisia and Yemen

The pace of decentralization differs across the four countries in the present report. In the Tunisian case, though decentralization is mentioned in the 1959 constitution, the text's ambiguity and slow and ineffective implementation mean that experts have to envisage the country's experience as deconcentration rather than decentralization per se. The principle was first clearly enshrined in law by the 2014 constitution. In Yemen, after reunification in 1990, decentralization was enshrined in the 1991 Constitution (articles 4 and 147).

In Jordan, decentralization, though recent, has been effective. In 2005, King Abdullah II formed a royal commission to examine the issue and make recommendations for implementing decentralization.

The Libyan case is different again. From 1951 to 1963, Libya was a federal monarchy with the executive, i.e. Prime Minister and cabinet, responsible to the lower house. In the upper house sat eight representatives of the country's three provinces. With the discovery of oil in 1967, Libya became the world's fourth largest exporter of oil. Partly in order to simplify the oil companies' need for a simpler tax system, this federal system was abolished and management of the oil sector was centralized. Ten new provinces were created, and their governors appointed by the king. The centralizing experience continued under Qadhafi. Today, with the fall of the Qadhafi regime, there are numerous calls for a return to a federal state allowing for a fairer distribution of the country's wealth. In particular, groups in Cyrenaica (Barca in Arabic), the cradle of the revolution, have been active in calling for a return to the federal system[44].

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44. Dirk Vandewalle, A History of Modern Libya, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012 (deuxième édition), 344 pages in : Luis Martinez, « Lectures », *Politique africaine*, vol. 2,   N° 130,2013, p. 248-260. URL : www.cairn.info/revue-politique-africaine-2013-2-page-248.htm. DOI : 10.3917/polaf.130.0248

1.3. Methodology

This report, drafted by Maryam Ben Salem, PhD in political science and researcher in CAWTAR, and Noujeil Héni, sociologist, brings together data from a series of national reports on gender and decentralization produced by experts in each country under study. The Tunisian national report was prepared by Salah Triki, Chief Director for special programs at the General Commissariat for Regional Development[45]. The Jordanian national report was prepared by Nada Wer, American Relations Officer at the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation[46], while the Yemeni national report was drafted by legal expert Mohamed Salah Suleimani, the officer responsible for training programs at the Yemeni Social Fund for Development[47]. In the case of Libya, as it proved difficult to find a national expert, data has been drawn from focus-group studies and a desk review conducted by the persons responsible for drafting the consolidated report.

The three national reports were drafted on the basis of methodological guidelines defined by CAWTAR. Each report was to cover the following:

- **Review of the current literature on decentralization and gender** in each country with a focus on the following:

  - The benefits of decentralization for women's political participation.
  - The role of women and women's organizations in the decentralization process.
  - Barriers to women's political participation in a decentralized context.
  - Mechanisms existing to strengthen women's political involvement at the local level.
  - Relevance of the local level for women.

- **Survey of existing decentralization policies:** The goal is to review existing policies, the progress in their implementation, their shortcomings and eventual obstacles.

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45. Salah Triki, *Rapport national sur genre et décentralisation en Tunisie*, 2013.
46. Nada Wer, *Rapport national sur genre et décentralisation en Jordanie*, 2013.
47. Ahmed Salah Suleimani, *Rapport national sur genre et décentralisation au Yémen*, 2014.

- **Assessment of the level to which gender is included in the processes of implementing decentralization:** The aim here is to highlight both shortcomings and successes through a comparison with international best practices.

In addition to the national reports, four main elements structure this report's approach:

i) A literature review: This is a review of the general literature on gender and decentralization based on the above-mentioned elements and highlighting the way the link between gender and decentralization has been studied and analyzed in academic research.

The selection of the literature reviewed in this report was made first on the basis of a keyword search on the Internet using the search terms of decentralization,/ gender, and / gender and decentralization, and second, with a focus on Arab countries. A search was also conducted in CAWTAR's document base, which contains more than 10,000 references, to identify research on decentralization and women's political participation. In addition, a keyword search on platforms of dissemination of scientific journals was also performed (Persée, Cairn, revues.org, JSTOR). The literature collected through these methods has been enriched by a number of journal articles provided by the members of the steering committee set up by the Forum of Federations to provide guidance during the writing of this study.

The selection of the literature was conducted using the following criteria :

- Information that has relevance to the theme of the report,
- Case studies that provide access to an analysis of actual experiences of decentralization / federalism / devolution in different regions of the world and their impact on women's participation in political life and that allow comparative analysis.

Highlighting the link between gender and decentralization from case studies allows the identification of limits, obstacles, successes and failures in terms of inclusion of women in a decentralized context in different regions of the world.

ii) Identification of policies / strategies of decentralization existing in the three countries based on national reports, with a focus on gender mainstreaming. According to the Group of Specialists on Mainstreaming Equality (EG-S-MS) of the Council of Europe, gender mainstreaming is "the (re) organization, improvement, development and evaluation of decision making processes, for the purpose of incorporating the perspective of equality between women and men in all areas and at all levels, by the actors normally involved in the implementation of policies[48]". The aim is to highlight obstacles to gender mainstreaming in decentralization policies and limits on the inclusion of women in decision-making.

iii) Focus groups[49]. Considering first, the scarcity of works / documents on gender and decentralization in the four countries involved in the project, and secondly, the difficulties in obtaining a national report on Gender and Decentralization in Libya, the technique of focus groups was used to collect additional data on the issue. To do this, we took advantage of the presence of participants from the four countries covered by the study in seminars organized by The Forum of Federations under the umbrella of a MENA regional project entitled "Empowering women for participation in the process of decentralised and devolved state building and governance"

Five focus groups were conducted in Tunis as part of this project and involved representatives of the four countries covered by the study with three types of profiles: 1) senior and middle level administrators involved either in local governance or gender issues; 2) elected officials and business or civil society leaders; and 3) civil society representatives[50]. The first focus group was held

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48.   Institut pour l'égalité des femmes et des hommes. http://igvm-iefh.belgium.be/fr/domaines_action/gender_mainstreaming/
49.   Moderation guide for focus groups is available in appendix I.
50.   List of participants availablein appendix II.

on December 19, 2013. The second and third focus groups were held on January 23, 2014 and the last two focus groups were held on February 18, 2014. It is worth mentioning that participants in the focus groups were not grouped according to their individual profiles but were mingled in each of the five focus groups.

The purpose of the focus groups was to enrich the national reports produced by experts with data from governmental actors (at central or local levels) and civil society actors who are in charge of the application/ implementation of decentralization policies, or work to promote decentralization or better participation of women in public life in their respective countries.

Focus groups have made the following actions possible:

• Collecting perceptions / representations from stakeholders on both decentralization and the participation of wome.
• Enriching available data (literature review and national reports) about existing challenges, obstacles, conflicts, strengths and strategies by questioning the relevance of public policies in decentralization and inclusion of gender for each of the actors involved in the focus groups.
• Collecting concrete recommendations that will consolidate the recommendations proposed by national experts and recommendations emanating from international best practices.

iv) In addition, 11 individual interviews were conducted with some participants in the focus groups in order to further develop certain issues raised in the focus groups.

PART ONE : DECENTRALIZATION AND GENDER: GENERAL OVERVIEW

While the beginning of the wave of change in the MENA region is mainly due to socioeconomic and development factors, revisiting decentralization and its contribution to enforcing gender and women's opportunities is further reinforced by this new context.

1. General overview about the concept gender

The word gender emerged in the social sciences nearly 40 years ago[51]. This term should not be confused with the word sex and the biological differences between men and women, but rather should be seen as a category of analysis[52]. It refers "not only to various rhetoric appeals fostering sex differences, but more generally, the social construction of sexual difference in the economy of social relationships between genders, structured by "male" dominance over "female", evolving throughout history and across the social space[53]."

In this report we refer to gender in two ways. The first is in terms of incorporating the perspective of equality between women and men in the decentralization process implemented (or in progress) in four countries (Tunisia, Libya, Jordan and Yemen). The second is in terms of existing "power relations"[54] between men and women that limit opportunities for participation of women in the public sphere.

The focus on the impact of gender on women's political participation is justified by two essential elements. First, there is not much information on the impact of women's living conditions and women's ability to participate in decentralization, though there is slightly more information on the role of women in politics.

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51. Ann Oakley, *Sex, gender and society*, Maurice Temple Smith Ltd., 1 janv. 1972 .
52. Joan Scott, « Genre : une catégorie utile d'analyse historique », *Le Genre de l'histoire, Les Cahiers du GRIF*, 1988, N° 37-38, p. 125-153.
53. Lucie Bargel et al, « Appropriations empiriques du genre », *Sociétés & Représentations*, 2007, vol. 2, N° 24, p. p.5.
54. Joan Scott, *Art. Cit.*

Second, the importance of this issue has increased in light of recent changes in the four countries covered by the study.

The literature review will explore the questions of how and to what extent decentralization does or does not exceed the gender barriers to women's access to the political sphere. An examination of the national reports and the results of the focus groups will make it possible to identity persistent obstacles in terms of women's political participation and to evaluate the inclusion of gender in decentralization policies implemented in the four countries of this report.

2. General overview about the concept of decentralization

2.1. Academic definition of decentralization

Let us start by clarifying key concepts, namely decentralization and others that are close to it, such as deconcentration, delegation and devolution.

According to Chabrot, decentralization is defined legally as from the moment when public institutions, separate from central government and with their own legal personality, are created[55]. The OECD provides a broader definition of decentralization, which is considered as a process involving a transfer of "public functions from higher levels to lower levels of governance in order to get closer to citizens. It may be an administrative decentralization (transfer of civil servants and public functions to the local level), financial (transfer of financial resources and revenue-generating powers), or political (transfer of decision-making powers) or a mixture of all of them.[56]"

Deconcentration, devolution and delegation are three types or degrees of decentralization.

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55. Christophe Chabrot, « Démocratie et Décentralisation : un couple platonique ? », V*e Congrès de l'Association Française Des Constitutionnalistes*, Toulouse, 6-7-8 juin 2002, p. 5-6.
56. Johannes Jütting, Elena Corsi and Albrecht Stockmayer, "Decentralisation and Poverty Reduction », *Policy Insights N° 5,* OECD DEVELOPMENT CENTRE, 2005, p. 1.

- Deconcentration means that "the central government retains authority and responsibility for a specific function, but does exercise / perform this function outside the capital by antennas or administrative offices located in regions[57]."

- Delegation is, according to Perrenoud, a deeper form of decentralization than deconcentration. "Through delegation, the central government transfers the decision-making process and administration to semi-autonomous organizations that ultimately must be accountable to it. Governments delegate responsibilities when they create public enterprises or corporations, special services, semi-autonomous school districts, regional development corporations, or special units responsible for project implementation[58]."

- Devolution, or the level of decentralization associated with the largest reduction in the powers of the central state, is accompanied by the transfer of responsibilities and powers of the latter to local (or regional) governments[59]. "We talk about devolution when governments devolve functions, transfer decision-making powers, authority in finance and management to quasi-autonomous units of local government with municipal and local bylaws. Generally, devolution operates by transferring responsibility for the provision of services to municipalities that elect their own mayors and councilors, perceive their taxes and have the authority to make investment decisions[60]."

- Federalism refers, according to Jill Vickers, to the vertical division of political authority between two (occasionally three) hierarchically organized governments with constitutionally specified powers[61].

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57. Stéphanie Boulenger, Isabelle Gauthier, François Vaillancourt, « Déconcentration, délégation et dévolution : avantages, inconvénients et mise en place », *Les cahiers de la série scientifique*, 2012, p. 5.
58. Philippe Perrenoud, « Décentralisation, mode d'emploi », *Journal de l'enseignement primaire*, 1990, *N° 25*, Genève. http://www.ei-ie.org/educ/french/fedgdl-avril1990.html
59. Stéphanie Boulenger, Isabelle Gauthier, François Vaillancourt, *Art. Cit., p. 7.*
60. Philippe Perrenoud, *Art. Cit.*
61. Jill Vickers, "Gender and State Architectures: The Impact of Governance Structures on Women's Politics », *Politics & Gender*, 2011, vol.7, N°2, p. 254.

2.2. Decentralization from the focus groups participants' perspective

The insights and understanding gleaned from the contributions of the focus group participants, whether they are leaders, administrators or policy makers, give significant meaning to the word decentralization and other related concepts.

Based on the experiences of the Arab countries studied in this report (Yemen, Jordan, Tunisia and Libya) in the field of decentralization, perceptions of this concept indicate a deep understanding and a coherent analysis of its theoretical and practical indicators. However, the focus groups participants' knowledge about decentralization is limited to this specific concept. They do not distinguish among the concepts of deconcentration, decentralization, devolution and federalism.

In addition, we were able to collect a number of other concepts that have been functionally and methodologically designed through our individual and group interviews with a large number of activists in civil society entities and nongovernmental organizations. These include:

Local Governance: This concept has been frequently used in our discussions about the notion of decentralization. It stresses decentralization policies focusing on characteristics of the regions and smaller areas in addition to the contributions of men and women citizens in changing their social and economic conditions at a regional level. Local governance does not refer to the transfer of some responsibilities from the central government to local levels, but rather the transfer of decision-making authority to localities so that they can implement the appropriate decisions. According to the focus groups participants, local governance does not mean the transfer of certain responsibilities from central to local levels, but rather the need to transfer all the responsibility and authority to make the decision of communities so that they can implement appropriate decisions and achieve effective decentralization.

Participatory Democracy: The notion of participatory democracy was connected to the concepts of decentralization and gender in our field work in addition to the notion of local governance. The participatory approach was used to insist on the fact that decentralization supports the development of political actions and the administrative and economic reform in the regions and in smaller areas. Democracy plays a key role in the success of decentralization. From another angle, the decentralization policy contributes to the consolidation of democratic practice and realization of the principle of election in all local councils and representative bodies,, as well as support the participation of women in particular.

Popular Participation: When implementing decentralization, popular participation implies providing opportunities to all citizens and all social categories, regardless of their living standards or levels of instruction, in order to empower all citizens to be responsible for their living conditions and reduce poverty and the marginalization of people living far away from the central government.

Elections: The need to resort to elections in the constitution of local councils and municipal entities to further reinforce decentralization has been repeatedly underlined by our participants. There was also often reference to the relation between women's participation in the composition of various public structures and institutions and the success of decentralization policies. This is due to women's skills and capacities, which help them to persevere and successfully face all types of challenges.

Representation/Parity/Gender Equality: The condition of gender representation and parity in the composition of local public institutions was often raised when discussing possible additions to decentralization including gender and women's opportunities in particular. Enforcement of these aspects requires the adoption of new supporting and binding legal texts providing the most appropriate framework to enhance women's opportunities. The issue of "quota" has also been addressed in this context. It is considered as one of the factors helping to increase the participation of women in the political sphere in particular and public

affairs in general, according to the results of the experiences of decentralization in some countries, such as Jordan.

Political participation: In the focus groups, political participation mainly referred to women's participation, as men are considered to be more politically engaged. In addition to this, political action has been reserved for the special educated elite or for people having historically been active in politics or in labor unions. Decentralization will enable all social categories to follow, get interested, join and participate in politics. According to our respondents, decentralization will help women to join and participate in politics in spite of their family, social and economic obligations that may otherwise prevent them from being active. The link between decentralization and political participation has been mentioned as it would provide opportunities for women to learn and be trained in management and governance. Through collective dialogues, participants cited some past experiences revealing the inability of non-educated women to manage local affairs. It is important to note that the application of decentralization would contribute to the training and education of women.

Social Justice: This concept was raised when discussing outputs of decentralization in general. Social justice refers to the equal distribution of wealth and resources among the regions in addition to the fair distribution of opportunities among the population regardless of the social condition and geographic location.

Box 1. The implications of the concept of decentralization and its extensions conceptually according to civil society activists –

As far as I am concerned, I think that decentralization is closely related to participatory democracy and the two notions are the two sides of one medal. Any decision taken at the regional or local level must be made with the participation of men and women citizens... Participation also incites citizens to cooperate and support the execution of the plan. I therefore believe that decentralization encompasses participatory democracy enforcement of the participatory democracy may be by appointing or electing governors, delegates or members of the local or regional development councils. Elections provide legitimacy to local and regional executive bodies and citizens will then buy in to local decisions in general.

(Womens' Civil Society Activist – Tunisia)

In conclusion, the concepts mentioned in the previous sub-section reflect the consciousness of most representatives of civil society and local administrators about the benefits of decentralization and how it could positively affect opportunities for women and their role in all public areas. The ideas of "participatory democracy" and "local governance" constitute fundamental concepts that ensure and consolidate the principle of "representativeness" and "gender equality "and the achievement of "social justice" at different levels.

Thus, decentralization has emerged as one of the radical solutions that will meet the needs of all citizens, and that can support opportunities for both sexes at the same time.

3. Overview of previous studies related to decentralization/ federalism/ devolution and gender

3.1. Decentralization, participatory democracy and gender equality in politics

It is first appropriate to examine the relationship between democracy and decentralization in the literature.

Decentralization, considered by some scholars as a means to promote "participatory democracy, introduces a more responsive system of service delivery and advances the rights of citizens[62]". The question that should then be asked is whether decentralization actually reduces citizens' exclusion from politics on the one hand, and on the other hand decreases inequalities in politics, especially for women, who are particularly prone to marginalization and discrimination. The idea of participatory democracy was forged in the crisis of representative democracy. It presents itself as a way to overcome certain obstacles inherent in the latter, including the limitation of citizen participation in the vote, which increases the separation between political professionals and citizens. Conventions of representative democracy indeed imply that social applications go through a set of filters whose vote is the key[63].

Moreover, to further debunk the myth of equality on which the democratic system is based, namely "one citizen, one vote", some political scientists have uncovered the unequal capacities of citizens to assert their interests in the vote[64]. These inequalities are due to different causes (education level , degree of political competence, etc.), and gender as "relations between men and women based on socially defined roles that are assigned to one or opposite

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62. Rondinelli, D., Cheema, G. et J. Nellis, "Decentralization in Developing Countries: A Review of Recent Experience", *World Bank Staff Working Paper*, N°581, Washington, World Bank ,1983. Smith B. Decentralization: The Territorial Dimension of the State, London, Allen and Unwin, 1985.
63. Olivier Fillieule, *Stratégies de la rue. Les manifestations en France*, Paris, Presses de Sciences Po, 1997.
64. Daniel Gaxie, « Cognitions, auto-habilitation et pouvoirs des « citoyens » », *Revue française de science politique*, 2007, vol. 57, N°6, p. 737-757. Daniel Gaxie « Le cens caché », *Réseaux*, 1987, vol. 5 N°22,. 29-51.

sex[65]" is one of the most important ones. The gender inequality in politics concerns both ordinary citizens and women who engage in politics. As Carole Pateman noted,"women have never been and still are not admitted as full and equal members and citizens in any country known as a democracy"[66], because of the existence of "widespread and deeply held convictions, and of social practices [....] that contradict the (more or less) formally equal civic status of women[67]" .

Many scholars believe that decentralization is designed to bring citizens closer to power through the opportunity offered to them to become more involved in local debates, since the local level is more accessible to citizens. It is then considered to promote gender equality and benefits to women. Indeed, considering that they often lack resources and competencies to participate at the national level, local affairs are subsequently more relevant for them[68].

Skepticism about the close link between decentralization and democracy is, however, observed in the literature. Chabrot considers, for example, that democracy does not imply decentralization, nor is decentralization essentially based on democracy[69]. Rémi Lefebvre, meanwhile, noted in the case of France a decline in citizen participation in local elections despite the proliferation of participatory mechanisms (the abstention rate at the local level has increased from 21.6% in 1983 to 33.5 % in 2008) which would be due to "the increasing complexity of issues and the professionalization of political actors."[70] In this specific case, the frustration with the growing complexity of the political issues at the local level contradict the assumption that the local level is more relevant for citizens and thus implies a greater participation.

65. IVe conférence mondiale des Nations Unies sur les femmes, Pékin 1995.
66. Carole Pateman, *The Disorder of Women: Democracy, Feminism, and Political Theory*, Stanford University Press, 1989, p. 210.
67. *Ibid*, p. 210-211.
68. Amanda Williamson et al., « Décentralisation et participation des femmes aux plans de développement intégré (PDI) en Afrique du Sud », *Afrique contemporaine*, 2007, vol.1, N° 221, p. 127.
69. Christophe Chabrot, « Démocratie et Décentralisation : un couple platonique ? », *Ve Congrès de l'Association Française Des Constitutionnalistes*, Toulouse, 6-7-8 juin 2002, p. 6.
70. Rémi Lefebvre, « La démocratie participative absorbée par le système politique local », *Métropolitiques*, 29 octobre 2012. URL : http://www.metropolitiques.eu/La-democratieparticipative.html.

As Amanda Williamson, Pearl Sithole and Alison Todes mention, it is assumed that decentralization would ensure better representation of all social groups and categories, especially women, based on the premise that more local governance facilitates women's access to responsibility, decision-making and ultimately political power[71].

This significant gap existing in literature is to be taken seriously insofar as it urges us to go beyond the simple premise to try to examine to what extent and under what conditions decentralization can consolidate and strengthen democracy and gender equality. This question is all the more important in view of the fact that decentralization is considered by international organizations such as the World Bank or the United Nations as the ideal way to establish a real democracy [72].

3.2. Nexus between gender (women's participation in public issues) and decentralization in the literature

When it comes to scientific literature dedicated to the link between gender, from the perspective of women's political participation and decentralization, one of the most crucial questions is Vickers' one on whether changes in state architecture are "good" or "bad" for women[73]. Issues that typically arise relate to whether we are observing improvements in the representation of women (both quantitative and qualitative) through decentralization. Also, taking into account different models / experiences of decentralization (historicity, shapes, mechanisms implemented), we must ask to what extent and under what conditions is decentralization is beneficial or not for women.

In literature, answers to these questions have been diverse. Indeed, it is rare to find studies that have an entrenched opinion on these issues. Some scholars highlight success in terms of women's inclusion in decision making

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71.   Amanda Williamson et al., *Art.Cit.*, p. 127.
72.   Dennis A. Rondinelli, James S. McCullough and Ronald W. Johnson, "Decentralisation in Developing Countries: A Review of Recent Experience", *World Bank Staff Working Paper, N° 581,* Washington, World Bank, 1983.
73.   Jill Vickers, "The Impact of State Architectures on 'Women's Politics': A Framework for Analysis." *Feminist International Network on State Architecture* (FINSA), Framework Paper, 2009.

thanks to decentralization, while others often show the persistence of political under-representation of women at the local level despite the implemented decentralization processes. There is also a third trend proposing that even when a certain level of women's participation is ensured, the actual impact on women's living conditions is not necessarily improved. Indeed, the detailed and comprehensive examination of previous experiences in the field of gender and decentralization constitutes a real challenge due to the diversity and uniqueness of different contexts.

This review of the literature allowed us to uncover significant variations between countries in terms of the impact of decentralization on the political participation of women and thus to determine the factors blocking / favoring the expansion of women's participation in local politics and their access to deliberative assemblies.

Conditions favoring / blocking women's participation in public issues in foreign decentralized/ federal contexts

One common factor is shared by different experiences both in Western countries and in other parts of the world, and that is the requirement to reform the legal system and legislative texts. The presence of legislative texts constitutes a prerequisite to enforce decentralization on the ground and to enable men and women citizens to feel its benefits. According to most scholars, decentralization implied in many countries a better representation of women from a quantitative point of view. Yet, they often have reservations about the impact on women's living conditions.

Decentralization experiences conducted in Latin America clearly showed that women were more committed and engaged to improve local conditions than men. This fact was checked on the ground by focusing on the daily activities performed by women; it was then noted that women's commitment to change their conditions depended on their role and willingness to incur change. This fact was reflected in the considerable increase of women's representation in local

councils, "rural associations"[74] and clubs considered to be important lobby and pressure groups. In Uruguay, for instance, Aguirre showed that political decentralization measures applied since 1990 reinforced women's participation at the local level as women represented, in 1995, 30% of the local councils' members (Juntas Locales) and 42% of the Vicinal Councils[75]. However, in spite of the increase in terms of representation, women's living conditions and participation in higher political spheres have been below expectations[76].

This observation shows that link between legal change and the impact on women's political participation and lives is not straightforward. Amanda Gouws considers that the act of establishing structures does not systematically imply policy changes: "It depends on the extent to which priorities are open to negotiation, the degree of government involvement in promoting equality between men and women and the degree of transparency of actions. Other factors include the quality of national leaders and the dynamic movement of women and their ability to influence the political process and political mechanisms"[77].

Thus, the arguments that multiple sites of government/ legislature offer opportunities for women's participation and that territorial / local affair are more relevant for women need to be put into perspective. In northern countries such as Canada, USA, Great Britain, Spain, Italy, France, Poland, Germany and Austria, comparative studies on decentralization or federalism allowed the highlighting of variations with regard to the impact on women's political participation. This comparison made it possible to see under what conditions decentralization/ federalism provide opportunities or constraints for women's representation.

For example, the comparison among Spain, Poland and Italy, three countries that "have decentralized recently—Italy from the 1970s to 1990s, Spain beginning in the 1980s, and Poland in the late 1990s and early 2000's", showed

74. Claude Auroi, *Ibid*, Tunis, 2006, p.173-186.
75. Rosario Aguirre, « La citoyenneté politique des femmes en Uruguay », in : Bérangère Marques-Pereira et Patricio Nolasco (Dir.), *La représentation politique des femmes en Amérique Latine*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2001, p. 139-162.
76. *Ibid*.
77. Amanda Gouws, "The state of the national gender machinery – structural problems and personalized politics", In : Buhlungu S. et al (eds.), *State of the Nation: Afrique du Sud*, 2005 – 6, p. 143-166. http://www.pmg.org.za/docs/2007/070307gouws.pdf

the positive impact of stable leftist governance and strong decentralization on women representation in Spain, while it remained under expected levels (fair representation according to UN) in Poland and Italy. Ortbals, Rincker and Montoya also highlighted in these countries that in the short term, meso-level legislatures did not benefit women as anticipated in terms of the increase of substantive representation and women's leadership. However, meso-level women's policy agencies implied high levels of rhetorical support for feminist policies[78]. Besides, as Gwen Gray noted for the case of Australia, working at three levels of government, even if it appears constraining at the short term, it "might produce results over the longer term"[79].

In the case of Germany and Austria, a comparative analysis demonstrated that, beyond the fact that the Women's Policy Agencies are considered a success, and that federal structures promote the creation of units specifically devoted to issues of gender equality in several levels of government, on the whole, strong cooperative federalism in Germany has guaranteed a more solid and powerful infrastructure than weak Austrian cooperative federalism[80]. The most important conclusions with regard to conditions enabling a greater women's political representation in the context of cooperative federalism:

- Important role played by left/center parties for advancing gender equality in federal states;
- Greater opportunities provided by cooperative federalism on different levels for Women's Policy Agencies (WPA) development and activity as allies for women's projects and, thus, for "state-feminism";
- Importance of economic stability as it is advantageous for women's policies. Economically stable times support federalism, but economically challenging times tend to produce a downward adaptation and the marginalization of women's equality agendas.

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78. Candice D. Ortbals, Meg Rincker, and Celeste Montoya, "Politics Close to Home: The Impact of Meso-level Institutions on Women in Politics », *The Journal of Federalism*, 2011, vol. 42, N°1, p.78-107.
79. Gwen Gray, "Women, Federalism and Women Friendly Policies", *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, 2006, vol. 65, N°1, p. 25-45.
80. Sabine Lang and Birgit Sauer, "Does Federalism Impact Gender Architectures? The Case of Women's Policy Agencies in Germany and Austria", *The Journal of Federalism*, 2013, vol. 43, N°1, p. 68-89 doi:10.1093/publius/pjs048

Gwen Gray also demonstrated that differences existing between two similar federations -Canada and Australia- are due to different institutional arrangements (high level of centralization in Australia that reduce political capacity for sub-national units). She also affirmed that federalism offers opportunities at the sub-national level under certain circumstances, namely the ideological orientation of the party[81].

In the same vein, Franceschet stressed, through the Chilean case of a decentralized country, the importance of leftist government and the crucial role played by political actors committed to women's rights. Indeed, conservative mayors and the Church refused to apply President Bachelet's executive decree (2006) requiring the free distribution of emergency contraception (EC) to anyone over the age of 14 who requests it[82].

Similarly, the effect of political decentralization on representative outcomes highly depends on parties' internal dynamics according to Kenny and Verge[83]. Mackay and Kenny note, for the specific cases of United Kingdom and Spain, that "moments of constitutional and institutional restructuring can open up possibilities for change—for example, opening up new arenas for party competition, increasing the probability that women will be selected and elected. Yet, at the same time, the relationship between constitutional change and party organizational change is not straightforward"[84]. Focusing on political parties in devolved regions (Spain and United Kingdom), Mackay and Kenny compared the impact of devolution and multilevel dynamics in these countries on the issues of women's descriptive representation[85] and the performance of political parties. Internal party dynamics and institutional legacies can "filter, absorb, and even overturn the pressures arising from institutional change". They argue that gendered dynamics and gendered legacies can limit the potential of gender equality reforms.

81. Gwen Gray, *Art. Cit.*
82.   *Ibid*, p. 278.
83. Meryl Kenny and Tania Verge, "Decentralization, Political Parties, and Women's Representation: Evidence from Spain and Britain", *The Journal of Federalism*, 2012, vol. 43, N°1, p.109-128 doi: 10.1093/publius/pjs023
84. Meryl Kenny and Fiona Mackay, "Gender and Devolution in Spain and the United Kingdom", *Politics & Gender*, 2011, vol.7, N°2, p. 284.
85. Women descriptive representation means "standing for constituents because of shared social characteristics" which is opposed to substantive representation that is "acting for constituents." Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation*, University of California Press, 1967.

The existence of women's movements capable of making political demands is also considered as having a crucial impact on women's meso-level representation[86]. Conversely, attention has been paid to how federalism / decentralization shape women's movements organizations. In this dialectical relationship, Vickers notes, from the cases of Canada and United States, that the federation's distinctive historical legacies has differentiated effects on campaigns for the legal rights to abortion. Indeed, barriers and the response of women's movements as they work to circumvent or modify barriers vary depending on the following factors: degree of decentralization, historical legacy, division of powers, counter-movements and partisan polarization. Thus, even though women's movement organizations in the U.S. are stronger than their Canadian counterparts, these factors limited their strategies to circumvent obstacles[87].

In addition, studies focusing on particular institutional configurations and relations between Women Movement Organizations and political institutions allow the identification of conditions under how WMOs reconfigure in order to address the opportunities and constraints

presented by the creation of new intermediary levels in processes of devolution or federalization. Karen Celis, Fiona Mackay and Petra Meier concluded, from the cases of Belgium and Scotland, that the lure of the regional level is strong under these conditions: 1) connection with regional political elites; 2) regional and national aspirations defining gender equality as a goal; 3) technocratic (in the case of Flanders) or democratic (in the case of Scotland) discourses facilitating access to policymaking for WMOs"[88].

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86. Candice D. Ortbals, Meg Rincker, and Celeste Montoya, *Art. Cit.*, p. 98.

87. Jill Vickers, "A Two-Way Street: Federalism and Women's Politics in Canada and the United States", *The Journal of Federalism*, 2010, vol. 40, N° 3, p. 412-435.

88. Karen Celis, Fiona Mackay and Petra Meier, "Social Movement Organizations and Changing State Architectures: Comparing Women's Movement Organizing in Flanders and Scotland", *The Journal of Federalism*, 2012, vol. 43, N°1, p. 62. doi:10.1093/publius/pjs035 Downloaded from http://publius. oxfordjournals.org/ at Universite de Montreal on January 18, 2013,

Constraints and advantages to women's participation in public issues in decentralized / federal contexts.

It appears from the previous section that special features of federalism/ decentralization affect women's political representation differently. We propose to shed some light here on conditions that constitute a constraint or advantage for women's political empowerment in decentralized / federal contexts.

The case of Benin perfectly illustrates the persistence of political under-representation of women at the local level despite the decentralization process initiated in the country since 2003[89] S. Kakai[90] identifies various causes of political under-representation of women in Benin, namely legal weaknesses, social and cultural constraints, barriers linked to productive and reproductive tasks, unequal access to education and barriers such as mental patterns and the symbolic order.

He then put into question the very logic behind decentralization processes in Benin, which automatically excluded women. The author argues that based on the need for inter- regional balance rather than a synergy of male / female relations, there was no consideration of the gender dimension in decentralization policies in order to allow for the overcoming of the above obstacles.

Congruent political will to enforce women's rights from national and meso- level authorities' levels is a decisive factor to improve women's representation and living conditions. Evidence from Latin America showed that "decentralization also creates opportunities for meso-level authorities to obstruct national equality laws and policies or, conversely, to pursue equality goals blocked at the national level"[91]. Susan Franceschet identified as main obstacles to women's rights in Latin America: 1) the ineffective implementation of existing laws and policies because of weak bureaucratic capacity; 2) insufficient financial, technical, and human resources; 3) a lack of political will to enforce citizens' rights.

89.　This is the date from which decentralization has become effective with the installation of first municipal councils.

90.　S. Hygin Faust Kakai, « Analyse par genre de la participation et de la sous-représentativité des femmes au sein des instances décisionnelles et décentralisées au Bénin », *Perspectives & Sociétés*, janvier 2010, N°1, p. 22.

91.　Susan Franceschet,"Gender Policy and State Architecture in Latin America", *Politics & Gender*, 2011, vol.7, N°2, p.

In South Africa, the analysis of the impact of decentralization (through the Integrated Development Plans) on the political participation of women (2007) shows some improvement in their participation, though this remains limited to community meetings and their opinions are rarely taken into account and are not reflected in the IDP. According to Amanda Williamson, "the main doubts expressed about the benefits of decentralization for women address the increased power that this process gives to local elites and the patriarchal systems already in place[92]."

In the case of India, where Panchayats[93] played a key role in the decentralization process implemented in the 1950s[94], Isabelle Milbert[95] identifies the existence of real progress in the inclusion of women in decision making at the local level thanks to India's Seventy-third Constitutional Amendment mandating that one-third of all seats in local government be filled by women (1992)[96]. According to Milbert, women were still under-represented as mayors in 1995. Moreover, in the rare cases when women access decision-making positions at the local level, their positions and their interventions are dependent on the traditional division of social roles. They thus remain relegated to areas (in commissions) considered typically female. In 2008, the number of women has increased at the local level, especially compared to state- and national-level assemblies, where no such quotas exist (below 10 percent). However, according to Neema Kudva and Kajri Misra, "the impact of their presence is broadly accepted as being uneven. This is mostly interpreted as a result of the lack of ability of overwhelmingly poor, illiterate elected women representatives"[97].

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92.   Amanda Williamson et al., « Décentralisation et participation des femmes aux plans de développement intégré (PDI) en Afrique du Sud », *Afrique contemporaine*, 2007, vol.1, N° 221, p. 127.

93.   « Panchayats are village councils with constitutional powers. They give people in rural parts of India the authority needed to manage their local affairs and implement public works. » Harihar Bhattacharyya, « Les panchayats de l'Inde : un pont entre le gouvernement et le peuple », *Forum des fédérations*, novembre 2001, vol. 2, N° 1,, p 1.

94.   *Ibid*, p. 1.

95.   Isabelle Milbert, « Processus de décentralisation municipale et environnement urbain: quelles perspectives pour les femmes ? », in Preiswerk Yvonne, Milbert Isabelle (Ed.), *Femmes, Villes, Environnement*, Berne, UNESCO, 1995, p. 32-47.

96.   The Constitution (seventy-third amendment) act, 1992 (243D) (2) Not less than one-third of the total number of seats reserved under clause (1) shall be reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes or, as the case may be, the Scheduled Tribes." http://indiacode.nic.in/coiweb/amend/amend73.htm

97.   Neema Kudva and Kajri Misra, "Gender Quotas, the Politics of Presence, and the Feminist Project: What Does

In the same vein, Vickers concluded that working at three levels of government is resource- intensive and time consuming for small groups with limited money and energy. She then stressed the importance of strong organized groups and financial resources on the improvement of women's rights and political participation[98].

Mainstreaming gender in decentralization efforts launched since 1960 in Senegal represents another successful experience, as it closely relates to attempts to reinforce local democracy in areas where people's participation in public life is limited, as is the case specifically in rural areas[99]. The slogan that led these efforts was "Less of the State, better is the State" which focused on providing opportunities to the citizens to manage their local affairs and solve their socioeconomic problems by means of solutions and suggestions generated by their own participation. What best characterizes this experience is that it lasted for a very long period of time and witnessed several legal and legislative reforms, including the need to create "local rural councils" as public and legal entities and the need to resort to elections to choose members of local councils, which would offer equal opportunities for men and women and ensure efficiency of the councils. Nevertheless, the evaluation of this experience shows that most gender indicators have not changed, and decentralization did not contribute to the increase of women's participation in various local and regional structures, as there is only one woman mayor and four women chair local municipal districts, and only 11% of the local municipal councils are chaired by women (local elections held in 2002). Some of the factors accounting for this situation are stated below:

1) Education; 2) lack of information about public policies in general and more specifically on the process of decentralization, the mandate of local communities and their rights and duties as citizens within the latter; 3) the superposition of the productive and reproductive functions of women,; 4) negative perceptions and

the Indian Experience Tell Us?", *Signs*, Autumn 2008, vol. 34, N° 1, p. 55.

98. Jill Vickers, "Why Should Women Care about Federalism?", in Brown D. and Jane Hiebert (eds), *Canada: The State of the Federation*, Institute of Intergovernmental Relations, Queen's University, Kingston, 1994.

99. Moustapha Ngaidé, Rokhaya cissé chambaz, Genre et décentralisation au Sénégal.Contribution à la

representations linked to socio-cultural practices that see female candidacies as breaking into a male domain; 5) the lack of financial resources available to women; 6) deficiencies in terms of synergy and commitment of the various community-based organizations (associative movements, women's cooperatives , savings and credit unions , etc.) to defending women's interests.

3.3. Conclusions from the literature review

We can affirm, through this literature review, that:

- Even when there are beneficial effects on women's political representation in quantitative terms, barriers often persist at other levels, such as in terms of access to higher positions of decision making, impact on living conditions of women and relevance of local level politics for women.

- The extent of these barriers / opportunities varies from one country to another and from one period to another depending on the particular history of each country, its cultural context, the mechanisms implemented, specific features of federalism/ decentralization, state party system, the role of women's organizations and their capacity to mobilize and influence policy outcomes that affect differently women's politics.

- Decentralization contributes to the increase of women's participation as shown in the case of Latin America, but this participation is limited and below expectations and does not necessarily positively affect women's living conditions. Even in countries with political and economic workings strongly decentralized, as in Spain, "decentralization by no means seems to benefit women, as if the local government was more resistant to the image of active women than the central government.[100]"

- The local level is not necessarily more accessible to women insofar as their participation in local affairs varies depending on their level of education, on which their access to information and understanding of the issues and rules of the political game directly depend.

réforme de la décentralisation, *IED Afrique*, 2007, p.13.

- The resistance from both political parties and locally- elected men to the inclusion of women is one of the most significant barriers. Even when they participate, women are still dominated by political heavyweights who are usually men and thus remain relegated to subordinate positions or are able only to intervene in areas perceived as exclusive to women, such as social issues.

- Though campaign costs are lower at the local level, therefore supposedly making this level more accessible to women, the fact remains nonetheless that women often lack the financial resources to engage in elections.

- Participation at the local level allows women to accumulate the political and militant capital needed to climb the ladder and access decision-making positions, namely at the national level. However, women face different barriers that make access to elective positions very limited. When accessing it, the social division of labor in accordance with gender relegates women to areas considered typically female, a situation which negatively impacts the recognition of their political skills.

- Strong decentralization appears to be more effective in terms of increasing women's political participation, but it also depends on the existence of a common desire to include gender equality as a priority action between the local and national authorities, on the one hand, and the ability of local women's organizations to mobilize, organize and influence on the other.

While some authors come to question the purpose of international organizations behind the "generalization of participatory discourse" and suspect the "politically correct" camouflage of the economic adjustments imposed[101], in general, it is not so much decentralization being questioned but rather the obstacles of political, cultural and social issues, including persistent gender inequalities.

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100. Isabelle Milbert, *Ibid*, p. 45.
101. Thierry Lulle, « À qui sert la gestion locale participative ? Éléments de réflexion à partir d'une expérience à Bogotá(Colombie) », *Autrepart*, 2002, N°21, p. 152.

Therefore, decentralization alone does not allow for the overcoming of these obstacles that arise in terms of inclusion of women in decision making. The implementation of decentralization should be accompanied by a genuine desire to strengthen the participation of women in public life at the local level and should manifest itself through a strategy specifically aimed at women and the implementation of measures and mechanisms to overcome the obstacles identified by researchers.

PART TWO: DECENTRALIZATION EXPERIENCES IN ARAB COUNTRIES: OUTPUTS OF NATIONAL REPORTS

Decentralization experiences in some Arab countries including Tunisia, Yemen, Jordan and Libya differ according to each country's social, economic and political conditions. The common factor shared by various countries is that gender mainstreaming has not been a major challenge, since it has not been sufficiently addressed; instead, the quota system has been applied in electing regional, local and municipal councils. In Tunisia, the adoption of a voluntary quota by the ruling party under Ben Ali's regime explains the arrival of a number of women to parliament as a result of the presence of the proportion of representation of women in the various rules of the former ruling party. As for Yemen, there is no clear and specific women representation percentage despite the fact that the Yemenite constitution stresses "the recognition of women's rights and equality between men and women." The situation is similar in Libya, as the issue of women's participation wasn't a priority during the reign of "Qadhafi ", but was confined to some nominated positions. Perhaps the most important position ever accorded to a woman was "Secretary of the People's Committee Assistant". This lack of women's political participation could also be explained by the singularities of Libya's governance system, which do not support the stated concept that " authority is applied by the usage of popular democracy, which allow all male and female citizens to be partners in power and discuss all issues related to daily life in the framework of "People's Congress "conferences[102],

Despite the evolution of these political experiments, they have not led to the improvement of decentralization or to a significant increase of women's presence in the composition of local councils. Indeed, women's participation remained limited in several areas, including the political sphere.

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102. Om Ezz Ali Ferssi, *Women and Political Participation in Libya*, 1977-2005, Center for Arab civilization, Democracy and human rights, Cairo 2007, p 141.

We note the lack of clear academic research and studies related to gender and decentralization in several Arab countries which would help us better understand and assess this experience. Therefore, we will focus on the study of information, data and results included in national reports, as well as on data and information exchanged during the focus group discussions between the men and women participants. We have also referred to some academic research pertaining to this important topic.

1. Decentralization in Tunisia

1.1. The characteristics of the administrative division

Tunisia's territory is divided into 24 geographical districts, each called a "governorate". Each governorate comprises several geographical districts called "delegations". Tunisia has 264 delegations. Each delegation comprises several geographical districts called "sectors". Each of these geographical arrangements is governed by various types of republican delegates from the central authority: governor, delegate, mayor

Although the governorate is an administrative locality, it benefits from a civic identity and independence. It is ruled by a local committee and is under the supervision of the Minister of the Interior. It is important to highlight that the power of local authorities varies from one structure to another.

Governors are the state representatives in their respective areas of authority. In the national administration hierarchy schema, governors are under the direction of the Minister of the Interior. They are allowed to relay some or all of their functions to the exterior directors, governmental civic agencies and public institutions in order to implement national programs that depend on ministerial budgets. The delegates' functions include presiding over the municipal committees in their delegations. The delegates also officiate all local committees related to the state

and are assigned to assist the governors in the management of districts. As they control and coordinate between local and state administrations, they also preside over the delegations' development committees.

The missions of the regional and local councils are unique structures of Tunisia's administrative system.

The Regional Council looks after the governorate's affairs in all of the economic, social, educational and cultural fields. It also takes care of budget preparation, the tax system and the management of the governorate's properties.

The Regional Council is composed of the governor, elected parliamentarians who represent the governorates in national parliament, mayors and presidents of local councils.

The governor is the chairman of the committee gathering and is not authorized to vote; only members of the committee are allowed to vote. The majority of the council's decisions are adopted with unanimous approval, thus that vote is only used when there is disagreement.

The Regional Councils were dissolved by legal procedure in 2011 and were replaced by a 2012 resolution nominating special delegations "نيـــابات خصوصية" The "special delegation" is presided over by the governors and includes the parliamentarians elected for the region (constitutional assembly) as members along with the regional director of construction, regional director of development and regional director of state properties. The Regional Council for Development is assigned to review all proposals formulated by its chairman related to economic, social, educational and cultural development, as it has a consultative purpose.

The Regional Council for Development is chaired by the delegate. Its members are mayors and representatives of local state administrations and public institutions within the delegation[103].

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103.   Salah Triki, *Rapport national sur genre et décentralisation en Tunisie*, p.4. 2013.

1.2. Previous studies about decentralization and gender in Tunisia

1.2.1. Literature on decentralization in general

Studies on administrative systems and decentralization issued by various Tunisian official research institutes constitute the most important part of the literature. A study on "regional and local administration: de-concentration, decentralization and territorial integrity[104]" (2010) gives a diagnosis of various structures and parts of the Tunisian administrative organization with a focus on its chronological development. Analysis of decentralization in this study was limited to the administrative level and defined as "the distribution of power between the central bodies and decentralized independent bodies that operated under administrative, financial and technical supervision appointed by the central administration."

The study identifies two types of decentralization: 1) regional decentralization, in which certain elected local bodies have the authority to practice within a geographical scope and political limits; 2) services decentralization, in which some bodies are given financial and administrative autonomy and granted legal independent personality.

The "Center for Training and Support to Decentralization" was launched in 1994 and used to be referred to as the "National Center for the Recycling of Regional and Municipal Supervisors". It has mainly focused on providing training in technical and administrative matters. Since 2011, the Center for Training and Support to Decentralization has only published six issues of its magazine called "Asdaa" (Echoes).

The preliminary findings yielded by the study of the different issues published in 2012 and 2013 show an inherent connection between "decentralization" and "local governance" in general. There is no clear and accurate definition of indicators and characteristics of each concept nor of their mutual impacts and consequences on increasing participation opportunities for men and

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104. Mohamed Dhifi, *Regional and local administration, decentralization and deconcentration territorial integrity of the Republic of Tunisia*, Tunisia, 2010, p 9.

women at the local level, in addition to their focus on the administrative and financial management of municipalities and the management of local councils' properties. This Center has not specifically focused its programs and activities on gender equality or on local participation and representation, which already constitutes a handicap.

The third[105] and fourth issues of "Echoes", published in 2013, examined Chapter Seven of the draft of the Constitution, dated December 14, 2012, concerning local governance. The text mentioned that "local governance is based on decentralization in the framework of the State Unity". These "Echoes" issues identified and explained legal provisions included in the draft of the Constitution in Articles 131 to 143. The magazine also described legal texts regulating municipal work in general. The fourth issue reported that the Center started to prepare the "implementation of decentralization by focusing on constitutional principles and transitional requirements[106].

In this regard, the magazine stressed the administrative, financial and structural obstacles impeding local councils which would also hamper decentralization efforts on the ground. The same issue highlighted the "prevalence of the central government, weak representation and lack of the participatory approach", but did not mention the issue of gender. Also not mentioned were men's and women's participation rates to enforce decentralization in regional and local councils. In addition, the assessment focused on quantitative aspects as well as on technical, administrative and financial issues, while qualitative aspects were neglected, such as the distribution of skills, optimal use of local human resources in development and managing public affairs based on local characteristics. The fourth and fifth issues published in 2013 by the Center for Training and Support to Decentralization continued the examination of the Draft of the Constitution with a focus on major amendments made, but with no suggestions specifically pertaining to women or gender issues.

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105. "Center for Training and Support to Decentralization", *Echoes Magazine* – Third issue, January-March 2013.
106. "Center for Training and Support to Decentralization", *Echoes Magazine* – Third issue, June 2013, p. 9.

1.2.2. Literature on decentralization and gender

Some studies provide interesting insights in terms of political commitment at the local level as well as obstacles faced by women at this level. In a study on women's political participation at the local level focusing on two areas, Zaghouan and Kairouan, the authors questioned how the proximity policy[107] would, or would not, strengthen the participation of women in local structures of representation. Najar and Kerrou note that despite the increase in participation of women in municipalities through the adoption of a voluntary quota by the former ruling party, the "Constitutional Democratic Rally" (RCD) (30%), the number of elected women remains low and when they are elected, the responsibilities given to them tend to be limited tosocial and cultural responsibilities, as if they were unable to handle anything else. It is the same with other structures such as trustees, district committees, rural councils and political structures in general.

A survey conducted by CAWTAR in partnership with UNESCO[108] in 2012 shows that in the regions of Gafsa, Kasserine and Tozeur, which are considered marginalized in the development process, there is an attitude of distrust among vulnerable women towards politics. This attitude is mainly due to the feeling of political incompetence women had and the lack of public service at the local level and the inability of local authorities to meet the needs of citizens, especially the most vulnerable.

Focus groups formed within the framework of the above mentioned study involving local officials and representatives of local associations show the high awareness among the former of their lack of efficiency and effectiveness, which they attribute to the strong centralization of power. Thus, they lack financial resources and access to decision-making and information. This survey also notes the impact that failures at the local level and the exclusion of certain social groups from decision making at the local level have on the possibilities of success of the democratic transition process in Tunisia, which is based primarily on citizen involvement.

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107. It refers to citizen participation to local public management.
108. Maryam Ben Salem et Soumaya Ben Cheikh, *Politique et jeunes femmes vulnérables en Tunisie. Etude qualitative à Gafsa, Kasserine et Tozeur, Tunis*, CAWTAR& UNESCO, 2013, 99 p.

1.3. Background of decentralization in Tunisia

Although the profile of the Tunisian Administration was defined a long time ago, well before the French colonial period[109], decentralization in Tunisia was first considered in the mid-seventies of the last century (1970) as briefly stated in some formal and academic references. However, from a legal and legislative perspective, the 1959 Tunisian Constitution included some articles concerning local councils that provided for the setting up of public and local institutions to manage the affairs of both men and women citizens with no preference or discrimination. However, these provisions did not provide for the local councils' full autonomy in terms of decision making, management, elections, or for equal and fair representation between genders. Women's presence in regional and local councils was not noticeable, either in terms of quality or quantity due to the nature of laws in force during that 1970s period, as the Central Government preserved extensive control, and maintained management and monitoring prerogatives.

Since the 1970s, after the end of the Cooperative experience that focused on the concentration of production units and the establishment of -common agricultural, industrial and commercial cooperatives, Tunisia's economic and development model started a new phase marked by openness to external markets and the world economy and the international exchange of goods and products to respond to domestic needs and to international business requirements. The central power slightly declined and more freedom was granted to local and regional authorities to manage public affairs, mainly from an administrative and institutional perspective.

In the framework of the new political transformations witnessed by Tunisia since January 14, 2011, the new Constitution includes various articles and principles stating that "the local governance system is based on decentralization"[110]. This is in addition to incorporating article 46/ chapter 2, stipulating that "The State

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109. Cawachi Atiga, "Administrative Decentralization in Maghreb Countries: Critical Analytical Study", Master Research in Political Science, Faculty of Law and Political Science KasdiMebah, Algeria, 2011, p. 112.

110. Chapter Seven, Local Governance, Article 131.Constitution of the Republic of Tunisia, January 23, 2014.

undertakes to protect the acquired rights of women and also supports and works to improve them. The State shall guarantee equal opportunities between men and women to assume different responsibilities in all areas. The state works to achieve parity between women and men in elected councils. The State shall take the necessary measures to eradicate violence against women"[111]. This article stresses the role of the State in ensuring parity between men and women in various elected councils and gender equality in having access to decision making positions in all the various fields. The Constitution also provides for better representation of women in elected bodies and a more active participation in decision making at the central, regional and local levels, which would empower women in the urban and rural areas at the economic, social, cultural and political levels, and would at the same time reinforce decentralization[112].

1.4. Tunisia's experience in decentralization

1.4.1. Evaluation of the experience of decentralization in general

In relation to the one-party dominance in the political sphere in Tunisia and the weakness of the margin of personal freedoms and pluralism, the cognitive approach to the question of decentralization has been associated to the question of democracy since the late eighties of the last century. The book "Decentralization and Democracy in Tunisia[113]" (1998), is considered as one of the most important academic publications falling within this subject and published during a repressive period. This publication discussed the particularity of the existing political system, and how it operated at a local level. In addition, it examined how to address the localization of the state system of decentralization in order to maintain the dominance of the ruling party.

Decentralization has gone through different phases in Tunisia, starting with a heavy centralized administrative system in decision making. It may be referred to as one form of deconcentration[114] and a simple administrative organization

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111. Article 46, of the Republic of Tunisia, January 23, 2014.
112. Constitution of the Republic of Tunisia, January 23, 2014.
113. Hafedh Ben Salah, Gérard Marcou (Dir) *Decentralization and democracy in Tunisia, Paris*, L'Harmattan, 1998.
114. *Ibid.*, p.25.

technique having nothing to do with decentralization, which requires the participation of the citizens in decision making, the management of public affairs and development, and the delivery of services to taxpayers.

1.4.2. The impact of decentralization on gender

The presence of women in local and regional councils up to January 2011 was well below feminist CSO's expectations which relied on the support of women and their representation. However, it should be noted that the number of women in Parliament has been linked to the number of women who were active in the ruling party in relation to the rest of the political parties, particularly as the opposition members were oppressed. Women's participation in regional councils was limited to the women members of the Parliament, who within this capacity were automatically considered members of regional councils. Their participation at the local level within local development councils was almost non-existent as, according to legislation in force, the presence of women in local councils is limited to women chairing municipal councils, municipal districts, or village councils or women acting as county leaders, or representative of development associations working within the county's territory. Even at the level of municipal councils whose members, unlike local and regional councils, are elected, women's situation was not any better as their presence did not exceed 27.1% of the total number of municipal counselors elected after the last municipal elections held on May 9, 2010[115].

Some of the issues pertaining to gender and decentralization include:

- The distribution of tasks between men and women in the Public Service is gender- biased. Women are usually assigned tasks related to their daily tasks such as women's issues, youth, children or healthcare, while other senior positions are reserved for men;

- Symbolic presence of women but with no decision-making power; women are usually assigned simple tasks and responsibilities.

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115. Salah Triki, *National Report of Decentralization and Gender in the Republic of Tunisia*, February 2014, p. 2.

Nevertheless, the wave of social and political transformations undergone by Tunisia since January 14, 2011 has led to a new Constitution that would reduce the male monopoly of the central government, favor the emergence of a political and administrative system offering local authorities the power to make decisions and enhance democratic practices by generalizing elections on the various local and regional institutions.

Generally speaking, the decentralization experience in Tunisia since independence has been limited, as the management of public affairs over the last five decades has been marked by deconcentration according to the national report, with large disparities between urban and rural areas. Even at the level of elected bodies so far limited to municipalities that are located in urban areas, the presence of women has not yet reached rates that would enable them to actively contribute to public life and to society, and women's presence in municipal decision-making positions remains very limited[116].

2. Decentralization in Yemen

2.1. The characteristics of the administrative division

In Yemen Republic, local authorities operate on the geographical repartition of the country that divides it, based on legal and constitutional regulations, into 21 provinces. Provinces are divided into 333 Directorates when the number of cities reaches 225. There are 354 local councils in Yemen's Provinces and Directorates, which means 21 Provincial Councils and 333 Directorate Councils.

According to the Law of Local Authorities' number four of the year 2000, each Directorate or Province's administrative unit has its individual identity along with its own local elected council and development plan and annual budget that is in accordance with the law. In each administrative unit, the local council is composed of members elected for a four- year term and is chaired by a Prime Director. The High Local Council of Province, comprises 15 members that represent each directorate and is presided over by the province's governor.

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116. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

Likewise, the local councils are composed of several specialized committees, such as "the Committee of Planning and Financial Development", "Committee of Services" and "Committee of Social Affairs". This composition is duplicated in every administrative unit either at the province or directorate level.

2.2. Previous studies about decentralization and gender in Yemen

2.2.1. Literature on decentralization in general

The number of studies focusing on decentralization in the Republic of Yemen is not only limited but is very recent as the studies date back to the first decade of the 21st Century. We note in this regard that most of the studies and reports that we will refer to have not been published but are documents that should be considered as internal documents of some governmental institutions of the Republic of Yemen, such as the National Commission for Women. The history of decentralization in Yemen dates back more than three decades, but most studies and reports dealing with this issue are part of the State's strategic plans to improve local governance systems. The study on "Sector-based decentralization and definition of roles – complementary study to the national local governance strategy" (2005) is a good example of the trend. Reports and studies published relate to specific sectors and not to others, as some are focused on education and learning, and others on farming, irrigation, agricultural and veterinary counseling, water and sanitation, public healthcare and disease prevention. Other analytical and evaluation reports have tried to assess the local governance system in Yemen in an attempt to determine "insufficiencies" (2008) and to better identify the "Future model of governance and decentralization in Yemen" (2013). If we consider the last report to reflect Yemen's current situation, which is transitional at different levels, it mainly focused on the "Understanding of various stakeholders of the political systems that are most appropriate for Yemen with focus on decentralization including specific recommendations for the distribution of tasks. It also discusses legislative, executive and judicial responsibilities.[117]"

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117. Farouk Mouriani, Mohamed Hamadi, Adel Zoum, *Paper on political choices for the future governance and decentralization model in Yemen*, April 2013, p. 6.

2.2.2. Literature on decentralization and gender

Regarding previous studies related to gender and its relationship with decentralization in particular, there was only one simple study presented in seminars and conferences. This study is called "Women in Yemeni Local Councils" (2007) and was presented in a national forum to report on women who were elected to the local councils throughout the Republic of Yemen. The study also tried to highlight the relationship between "Women and Decentralization" (2007), and benefits for Yemeni women from the decentralization policy[118]. Gender mainstreaming was not included in the decentralization process since the beginning of its implementation. The issue of improving women's status in some areas was introduced in a second phase following a general regional development strategy.

Moreover, Yemen worked in the direction of including the gender dimension in some sectors, and through the recognition of some of the developmental programs and special sessions, (started since 2001,) with the review of the laws related to women. To this end, Yemen created a " national team " in the " National Commission for Women", and the relevant authorities , including the Justice, Legal Affairs, Endowments and Guidance, Human Rights, The Bar Association and the Council of Representatives . Thus, Yemeni women were given a place among poverty reduction policies and focus began on monitoring gender gaps in many areas of health, education and economic development.

These actions were in addition to recognizing the need to represent the heads of branches of the, " National Commission for Women," at the meetings of executive boards and in discussions of plans, programs and budgets[119].

2.3. Background of decentralization in Yemen

The administrative system relies on local authorities supervising various local structures and councils. However, the history of decentralization in general in the Republic of Yemen has always been closely related to the political and social

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118. Mohamed Salah Slimani, *National Report on Decentralization and Gender in the Republic of Yemen*, February 2014, p. 11.
119. *Ibid.*, p. 22.

situation of Yemen since the 1990s. The transitional phase and the exceptional conditions undergone by Yemen, accompanied by a number of political and administrative decisions, have ultimately unified the country and provided a crucial foundation for decentralization in this country.

Since 1990, when the two parts of Yemen were unified, a new era started for the construction of the State and for decentralization which was based on new constitutional foundations that stressed the need to reinforce "democratic" principles and "popular participation", authorized the creation of political parties and labor unions, the organization of regular general elections, presidential, legislative and local ones, enhancing freedom of the press, and encouraged the emergence of civil society organizations with the support of the State.

The Constitution was voted by Referendum in 1991 and included the elementary ingredients for decentralization. Local authorities were considered to be a constitutional authority offering citizens the opportunity to exercise their power and enjoy their rights as citizens to constitute the source of power. Local authorities also define the general framework for financial and administrative decentralization. Article 147 of the Constitution considers local authorities to be an integral part of the general State authorities.

The Constitution was amended in 1994, and the Chapter Two articles 144 and 145 related to the local authority institutions and consider the administrative units and the local councils to constitute an integral part of the Central Government, and part of the executive branch also including the Presidency of the Republic and the Ministry Cabinet, knowing that the head of the governorate is nominated by the Ministry of the Interior.

However, this technique did not succeed in separating the rule of executive authority and local authorities, since the political affiliation was the principal base that determined the local governance.

The Constitution also provided for the financial and administrative decentralization system as a basis for local governance, and also for direct elections to choose members of the local administrative bodies[120].

In the first decade of the 21st Century, several republican decisions were issued amending the decentralization management system in Yemen. More specifically, the Republican Decision n. 264/2003 provided for the creation of a ministerial commission to reinforce decentralization and to define tasks and prerogatives; the "Cabinet decision n. 112/2004 recommended the creation of a technical commission to further reinforce decentralization and define tasks and responsibilities.[121]"

2.4. Yemen's experience in decentralization

Although relatively old, the experience of Yemen in terms of decentralization includes some legal and social handicaps. Yemen's move towards decentralization and gender mainstreaming lacks a clear "political will" and the necessary support to reinforce the role of Yemeni women in the public and political domains.

2.4.1. Evaluation of the experience of decentralization in general

Yemen's experience in decentralization is also characterized by several other weaknesses mainly caused by the absence of coordination and harmony between the decentralization management principles and legal texts regulating management on the ground. Some of the weaknesses include:

- Contradiction between the legislation regulating local governance and many other executive laws and legal texts. More than 70 executive laws and decrees need to be amended in order to cope with the spirit of the local governance code, especially with regard to the local authority's development responsibility;

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120. Mohamed Salah Slimani, National Report on Decentralization and Gender in the Republic of Yemen, February 2014, p. 9.

121. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

- Lack of harmony between central and local authorities' institutions;
- Overlapping tasks and functions between local and central authorities;
- Complex decision making and reporting procedures at the local level;
- Legal texts do not address some key issues and subjects required to build and develop the local governance system, including mainly a legal framework to ensure cooperation between local authorities to achieve development objectives they are elected for;
- The local councils' Chairpersons are appointed by the central authority[122].

Box 2. Yemen's Decentralization Experience

Our experience started in 1991 by creating local councils at the level of directorates in charge of various areas. .. But since 1995, these councils were divided and started to be part of the State after reporting to entities almost independent of the State called "Local Communities Development Agency". Since 2006 up to now, there have not been any clear elections and all local councils work under the authority of the Ministry of Local Administration, which defines their budgets and plans of action. According to legal texts, local councils play a major role, but on the ground these councils are not fulfilling their tasks. They are supposed to look after their area, solve issues related to education, transport and healthcare   the main problems affecting this experience is that all local councils have been politicized, so some are influenced by the Reform Party (Muslim Brotherhood), or by the Congress Party (party in power) another problem we're facing in Yemen is that the large scope of power enjoyed by local councils has led them to coercion, abuse of power, social conflict between tribes .

(Civil society woman activist, Yemen)

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122. Mohamed Salah Slimani, National Report on Decentralization and Gender in the Republic of Yemen, February 2014, p. 13.

2.4.2. The impact of decentralization on gender

Based on the internal social and cultural impediments specific to the Yemeni society, the "first local council elections were held in Yemen in 2001 after the publication of the Local Councils Code in 2000. Women won 0.6% of the seats. In 2006, the number of women members of the provinces " محافظة " was seven members out of 407 total members, while in the same period the number of women in directorates boards reached 29 out of a total of 6,771 membesr in the Republic of Yemen,[123] reflecting the very limited presence of women in the Yemeni political landscape as confirmed by several other reports"[124]. The reasons preventing Yemeni women from benefitting fully from decentralization policies are legal, structural, social and cultural:

- Citizens willing to run for the election of local councils must collect signatures from more than 300 voters; this requirement does not serve women as they have limited social connections and networks outside their homes. Women could not profit from opportunities available to men;
- The high illiteracy rate affecting women in particular, in addition to women's ignorance of their legal rights, prevented them from enjoying their civil and political rights;
- The absence of any form of positive discrimination act in the law (quota) which would otherwise help women overcome some obstacles, mainly cultural ones;
- Media institutions do not convey successful stories and experiences of women leaders, which could reinforce women's role in the management of local affairs;
- The existence of certain banking requirements and systems in Yemen prevent women from enjoying a wide range of credit opportunities, and hence the possibility of having access to the public economic domain;
- Considerable distances and poor transport effectively separate public institutions from men and women citizens, hence discouraging them from participating in public affairs;

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123. National Commission for Women, *Report on the Status of Women in 2010*, the Republic of Yemen, the Supreme Council for Women, 2010, p 105.
124. Women's Affairs Higher Council, National Gender Draft Strategy 2002-2005, Women National Commission, Yemen, p. 10.

- Some senior officers are appointed by the central government, reflecting the lack of clear political will[125];
- The influence of interpretations of religious texts, which are often inaccurate and wrong, and their manipulation often serve to limit women's participation in many fields.

Box 3. Evaluation of Yemen's Decentralization Experience -

for us in Yemen, we did not see any change .. all local councils and structures are still operating as usual as they cannot address citizens' different concerns but they are limited to cleaning streets and planting trees. In Adan and Mansoura, they almost have no clear role, but they sometimes even play a negative role the evaluation of Yemen's experience in decentralization is affected by politicization, the interference of partisan and political interests in the composition of local councils, which may sometimes lead to real conflicts and fights between partisans of various parties.

In addition to this, the creation of local councils was not supported by regulating laws defining administration styles and the management of allocated funds. This explains the fact that the creation of local councils was more a political decision to appease tensions and to extend the power of the Conference Party by granting more liabilities to local councils

(Civil society woman activist, Yemen)

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3. Decentralization in Jordan

3.1. The characteristics of the administrative division

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is divided into three main geographical districts. Each district is composed of 12 provinces, and each province has a local council, a municipal council and a village council[126].

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125. CAWTAR, *Arab Women and Local Governance in Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Tunisia and Yemen*, 2006.
126. Khaled Zaabi, *Constitution of local councils and its impact on their liabilities;* Jordan University Press, Amman 1989, p. 14.

Local councils have financial autonomy and all legal rights as provided for by current legislation. Half of the council's members are elected while the other half are appointed by the Prime Minister's Office. The councils are concerned with a wide range of cultural, economic, social, infrastructure and healthcare issues.

3.2. Previous studies about decentralization in Jordan

As the decentralization experience in Jordan is relatively developed compared to other Arab countries, studies and reports focusing on decentralization and gender are of considerable importance. A study entitled Jordanian Women in Municipalities[127], prepared by the Jordanian National Commission for Women's Affairs, reviews the situation of Jordanian women elected to serve on municipal councils. This study relies on the focus-group technique. About 15 individual interviews with women and men in municipal and local councils in Jordan were conducted. The study reveals issues of concern to elected women local officials, the obstacles they encounter and how local politicians perceive the performance of elected women. The main barriers identified by the author are the lack of confidence in women, the non-recognition of their skills, the lack of resources and exclusion by men.

This study demonstrates how the ongoing division of work at the local level is made on the basis of male or female attributes, since politics is considered to be a male activity while women are confined to social activities. This social representation of feminine and masculine roles is highly detrimental to Jordanian women serving on local councils. These representatives are primarily interested in services to citizens and social and environmental issues. These priorities are largely rejected by men, who on the whole discredit these elected women because of their access to these positions through quotas.

Several studies had been carried out by the Government of Jordan on decentralization, as follows[128]:

127.   ايمان بشير الحسن (2009). اردنيات في المجالس البلدية. عمان : اللجنة الوطنية الأردنية لشؤون المرأة. 47 ص

128.   Nada Wer, *Jordan National Report on Gender and decentralization*, 2014.

- The Future of Decentralization in Jordan: The study suggested two stages to implement decentralization:

  1. Administrative Decentralization: through the devolution of some functions and powers from the center to the branch ministries, governorates.
  2. Promotion of the concept of management and local governance.

- Regional Development Planning and Decentralization, Jordan: The objective of this study is to build institutional capacity in terms of follow-up, monitoring, and development impacts evaluation on the local level through participatory planning approaches.

- Decentralization and Women's Participation in Jordan:

  1. A consensus decentralization vision between the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs. The study aims at the following: 1) Establishing a System of Decentralization Indicators, and 2) establishing a Federation of Municipalities.
  2. The study suggested that the approach to decentralisation in Jordan should be a gradual step-by-step development, so lessons can be learned and improvements can be made in an ongoing process. At first, the municipalities and governorates should be supported; later, it could be considered to delegate more functions from line ministries to governorates and to transfer (devolve) more functions from governorates to municipalities. The suggested approach entails a two track approach: one for governorates and one for municipalities.

- Decentralization and Local Governance Improving Local Governance and Decentralization in Jordan : the recommendations of the study are the following:

  1. Decentralization should be implemented in three phases: (deconcentration, delegation, decentralization);

2. Building capacity of employees ;
3. Giving powers to monitor performance with a focus on the method of trial and error.

3.3. Background of decentralization in Jordan

Jordan, since early 2011, has accelerated the pace of its political reform process, which has been crucial to its stability during these critical times. The Government strongly believes in the need to continue strengthening the country's democratic and good governance beliefs. Recent reform efforts aimed at further institutionalizing measures needed for the evolution of a democratic, multi-party political system, in response to people's aspirations for accountability, transparency and for an effective voice in the decision-making process.

The concept of decentralization in Jordan emerged between the years 2004 and 2005, when King Abdullah II announced in a plan to give more power and autonomy to the local communities, concentrating on the idea that "political developments should start at the grassroots level, and then move up to decision making centers and vice versa."

In this context, King Abdullah II appointed a Royal Commission in January 2005 to examine the Decentralization Project and to set recommendations for implementations. Further, the Project was reexamined in 2007-2008 by a request from the King who formally advocated the policy in his speech from the throne in October of 2008.

"Our vision for social and economic development goes hand-in-hand with our vision for political development which aims at expanding participation in decision making and implementation, and at anchoring the principles of participation and accountability and equal opportunities. Participation in decision making and implementation, especially in the governorates, requires envisioning a local administrative system that tends to be decentralized and that guarantees quick and efficient implementation. Within that context, we formed a specialized Royal commission to lay down the best concept for local government administration in the Kingdom's regions on the basis of these regions' needs and priorities. It is important to emphasize that reactivating local government administration is the best means to expand the basis of public participation and to foster political, economic and social development. Today, it is rather necessary for the government, in cooperation with your esteemed Parliament, to re-study the recommendation of the regions' commission and draft legislation, based on those recommendations that aim at empowering local communities to define their developmental needs and programmes and follow up on their implementation."

King Abdullah II.

Nevertheless, the Government did not reach consensus regarding steps for implementation.

In 2009 the Government formed an Inter-Ministerial Committee and a Technical Working Group on Decentralization in order to plan and draft a National Strategy for Decentralization and Local Governance. Since then, a draft law has been prepared for implementation of the Decentralization Project.

3.4. Jordan's experience in decentralization

3.4.1. Evaluation of the experience of decentralization in general

The social, economic and political situation in Jordan is not much different from other Arab countries, characterized by regional and local gaps and disparities and the increase of marginalized communities and social groups in urban and rural areas. Therefore, decentralization has become a requirement in planning and policy design to overcome regional imbalance. In other words, Jordan's experience in the field of decentralization is closely related to planning and designing development projects, both social and economic, based on the bottom up approach.

> **Box 4. Jordan's Experience in Decentralization -**
>
> Our decentralization experience in Jordan is characterized by the independence of municipalities from an administrative and financial point of view and even at the level of decision making. The Mayor and members of the municipal councils are elected by the citizens with the exception of some representatives of the State Large Ministries. Municipalities' budgets and other financial resources are provided by the Ministry mainly from energy revenues.
>
> At the provincial level, a "Provinces Development Commission" was created by the central authority, to identify development projects, examine appointments in various state positions such as in education, industry and agriculture   and suggest exceptional projects to address specific issues. Budgets of different provinces are determined by the Ministry of Finance and approved by the Parliament. The Governor represents security and reports to the Ministry of Interior .
>
> (Civil Society woman activist, Jordan)

3.4.2. The impact of decentralization on gender

In relation to an assessment of Jordan's experience in the field of decentralization and gender, it could be argued that the development of legal and administrative proceedings and the activation for political decentralization has contributed to the development of gender indicators in general and the presence of women in many of the bodies and local councils in particular. Therefore, these points are important compared to other aspects of the development, according to many interlocutors as confirmed through individual and group interviews.

Box 5. Evaluation of Jordan's Experience in Decentralization and Gender -

I think that Jordan's experience in decentralization is very important especially after merging small municipalities into bigger ones. As a result, municipalities protect other ones mainly to respond to the special needs of the citizens. The merge was supported by a change in the law concerning women's participation in the composition of municipal councils, and increased the quota from 20% to 25%. The requirement to hold elections everywhere reinforced women's presence in small areas

I consider our experience in decentralization good and important but I hope municipalities will be more independent as many decisions still depend on the central government or on related Ministries

(Civil Society woman activist, Jordan)

Despite many reforms, Jordan remains a centralized government with high aims to implement the decentralization scheme by overcoming obstacles such as a lack of institutional capacity at the local level and a lack of funding. Other obstacles still impede women's progression, including the following:

Social culture prevailing in Jordan, mainly related to men expecting women to make mistakes in order to confirm that women are inefficient and cannot participate in local matters;

The functional efficiency of the local and municipal councils is considered to be limited and inefficient because local councils include uneducated women with no experience in the field. This perception factor reinforced men's presence at the expense of women, as it is known that the female illiteracy rate is high in Jordan.

4. Decentralization in Libya

4.1. The characteristics of the administrative division

The administrative division of Libyan territories is similar to the administrative division adopted in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan since its inception dating back to 1951. Libyan territories were divided into three major regions: "Tripoli ", "Fezzan" and " Berga " that were autonomous. However, the constitutional amendments and political transformations witnessed by Libya since the mid- sixties (1963) led to the division of the regions into 10 provinces[129]. Thus, the local government system becomes based on three different levels: a national level, the regional level and local or municipal level. However, after the political change in Libya in 1969 and the arrival of Colonel Muammar Gadhafi[130], the boundaries of some provinces were redefined and the names of some of them were changed.

In 1975, the provinces and departments were cancelled by law but remained until 1983 when a new administrative system was adopted: the "municipal system", based on the philosophy of the people's authority. This system was launched through 46 municipalities till 1988, when it was reduced to 25 municipalities. Libya gave up the municipal system in 1995 and reorganized into 13 popular committees (شعبية) that attained the number of 26 during the administrative reform in 1998 and 32 in 2001[131].

129. http://www.libyaallyoum.com/?p=26366 (Consulté le 14-04-2013)
130. François Burgat, *La Libye*, Que sais-je, PUF, 2003.
131. تقرير اللامركزية في ليبيا. المنظمة الدولية للتقارير عن الديمقراطية. أغسطس 2013. ص 13.

The administrative division in Libya since 1998 was linked to "the announcement of the people power" and embodied in the "Basic People's Congresses" and "the General Conference of the People", which served as the legislative authority in the political system of the Libyan state[132]. What distinguishes the administrative division of Libya is the lack of clarity precisely at this stage. The pattern of administrative division was changed since February 17, 2011. The system of «popular committees» was abandoned and was substituted by «local councils[133]» according to the "law of the local administration system" for the year 2012, issued during the transitional phase. Councils enjoy several extensive powers including in all areas related to citizens at the local level: social, economic, security, politics and religion[134].

4.2. Previous studies about decentralization in Libya

The radical and numerous changes in the areas of political and administrative organization in Libya over the five past decades is one of the key factors that prevented the accurate determination of the administrative system in Libya. Previous studies on the experience of decentralization in Libya are considered rare and unavailable, which is due mostly to the fact that policy and management of public affairs are linked to the philosophy of "The Green Book" which is the intellectual reference adopted by Colonel "Muammar Gaddafi" in governance in Libya since 1963, and to the system of "direct popular power." However, the revolution of 17 February 2011 has contributed to changing the political, administrative and social situation in Libyan society.

Due to the lack of literature and references about the experience of decentralization in Libya, the report "Decentralization in Libya" (2013)[135] is most important and is the most recent publication dealing specifically with this issue. It analyses the development of the local government system in Libya since independence until

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132. محمد زاهي المغيربي. المجتمع المدني والتحول الديمقراطي في ليبيا. تقدم سعد الدين إبراهيم. مركز ابن خلدون للدراسات الإنمائية. القاهرة. 1995. ص 63.
133. http://lcr-libya.blogspot.com/ (Consulté le 10-04-2014)
134. *Ibid*, (Consulté le 10-04-2014)
135. المنظمة الدولية للتقارير عن الديمقراطية. تقرير اللامركزية في ليبيا. أغسطس 2013.

the revolution of February 17, 2011. This is in addition to dealing with obstacles and difficulties that hinder the consolidation of this system based on the results of a field research which included many of the then-current political, social and civilian actors.

4.3. Background of decentralization in Libya

While the local government system in Libyan society dates from 1951, what distinguishes the issue of decentralization in Libya is its link with radical political and economic history, namely Qadhafi's authoritarian regime. Therefore, the democratic transition undergone by the Libyan society is considered to be among the country's most important challenges. Civil society and political efforts oscillate between reviving and developing the foundations of former local government and establishing a rationalized system of decentralization which would serve all citizens and activate the principles of democracy and achieve social justice.

Based on the characteristics of political and social history of the Libyan state, the emergence of the term "federalism in Libya predates the emergence of the concept of "decentralization"[136], According to the report of the Arab League on Democracy, the experience of "federalism" in Libya is a "specific type of decentralization[137]" related to the autonomy of three provinces.

The strengthening of the system of decentralization in Libya dates back to the year 1977 when several legal changes to "the application of the power of direct popular participation" were set up[138], linking political participation and democracy in Libya to the mechanisms of direct popular participation in governance processes and empowering people to exercise authority without intermediaries or deputies, through "popular congresses[139].

136. تقرير اللامركزية في ليبيا. المنظمة الدولية للتقارير عن الديمقراطية. أغسطس 2013. ص 8.
137. نفس المرجع. ص7.
138. أم العز على الفارسي. المرأة والمشاركة السياسية في ليبيا (1977 - 2005). مركز الحضارة العربية. حقوق الإنسان والديمقراطية. القاهرة 2007. ص 161.
139. المنظمة الدولية للتقارير عن الديمقراطية. تقرير اللامركزية في ليبيا. أغسطس 2013. ص 30 - 31.

It is considered to be one of the most important periods in the history of the Libyan state due to the implementation by Qadhafi of a " triennial planning " (1973-1975) for economic and social development aimed at modernizing the Libyan society and improving the living standards of citizens[140]. Men and women were in the management of public and local affairs according to the determinants of people's powersystem. At that time women's participation and representation were evaluated through their presence and participation in the "People's Public Congresses" and not on the basis of the number of seats occupied by women in parliament and decision-making positions[141].

Conclusion of Part II

What can be seen at the end of this section is that the experiences of decentralization vary from one country to another in terms of the techniques and methods of application. The nexus between gender and decentralization were not the absolute priorities in these experiments. They dealt with the importance of women's participation in public affairs, and their representation in the local councils during different periods of time and in different legislative contexts. It is possible that the differing proportions of women's political participation are the best proof of the existence of this contrast.

140. عائشة محمد بن مسعود فشيكة, المرأة والتنمية في المجتمع العربي الليبي, مركز جهاد الليبيين للدراسات التاريخية, سلسلة الدراسات المترجمة8--, 2004, ص73.

141. الهيئة الوطنية للمعلومات والتوثيق, التقرير الوطني للتنمية البشرية 2002, ليبيا, 2002.

PART THREE: FIELD RESULTS OF FOCUS GROUPS AND INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

1. Perceptions of civil society activists and CSOS about decentralisation

The study of perceptions held by civil society activists, decision makers and officers in charge of execution and implementation has enabled us to reach a preliminary conclusion, which is that most activists hold various perceptions about decentralization policies, knowing that they all share one definition of decentralization, "the political, economic and administrative independence of the regions", in the sense of reducing the dependency of local authorities on the central authority in general.

Most cognitive information raised by activists may be classified in large categories, the most important of which are the following:

Local management of public issues:

In addition to the civil and modern notions of decentralization, some believe it constitutes a new administrative management style used by State agencies in general. It was very often believed to be:

- The balanced distribution of the State tasks and functions, through which the State gives up all specific decisions to leave more room for independent and objective decision making at the local and regional levels;
- A way to provide opportunities to build the capacities of the State's local administrations in order to empower them and solve problems that may be hard to deal with by the central government;
- A management style aimed at ensuring social justice and the fair distribution of local wealth and resources;

- An opportunity to valorize political activism in smaller areas and regions and encourage all citizens to become politically active so as not to limit this to central cities. This is because most areas were prevented in the past from being politically active on a voluntary and free basis;
- A chance to provide participation opportunities in the management of local affairs;
- A way to provide men and women citizens easy access to public services, including healthcare and education.

Enforcing Democracy:

Perceptions held by activists about decentralization relate specifically to local democracy as they believe that decentralization:

- Ensures the representation of men and women citizens in all local entities, councils and institutions based on elections;
- Enhances participatory democracy as it implies some freedom and independence at the level of decision making and the definition of programs and local or regional priorities;
- Offers opportunities to enforce principles of local governance where men and women citizens represent the main focus;
- Reinforces the election principle and ensures legitimacy of decisions and empowerment of men and women citizens to hold responsibilities.

Reinforcing local development:

- Some men and women activists in the civil society believe that decentralization constitutes a pillar of local development in general as it focuses on the following:
- Consideration of the local and regional social and economic characteristics in a global national development plan without prioritizing the national aspect, which would otherwise marginalize regional characteristics;

- Prioritization of men and women citizens' daily concerns and needs instead of defining long term goals in programs and plans designed by the central government;
- Bringing of public services close to men and women citizens regardless of how far they are from the central government;
- Transfer of large prerogatives from the State to the regions and attribution of a number of responsibilities to smaller administrative and geographic areas;
- Distribution and full use of local resources based on mechanisms and methods ensuring social justice between the regions and the right of different regions to benefit from their resources.

Ensure equality between genders:

Gender and its various indicators have been used to explain the decentralization process. Some respondents identified decentralization through its positive impacts on the ground including:

- the guaranteeing of both men and women's participation in their social context according to their daily lives and their social and family obligations in general;
- a real representation of women in public institutions at both local and national levels;
- encouragement for women to play a role in public and political life alongside men;
- the provision for equal opportunities for all women, rural and urban, to participate, whether resident in populated coastal regions or in the interior.

2. Decentralization: local stakeholders

The debate about the institutional stakeholders and local authorities involved in decentralization did not include all State public institutions and structures but only public entities operating at the local level having direct interaction with citizens. The following figure shows the stakeholders involved in decentralization.

Graph 1: The most important actors in local decentralization

Source: Field Work

This diagram reflects two elements: the perceptions, opinions and attitudes of all participants in the focus groups on decentralization and the integration of gender perspectives. The arrows indicate relationships between key actors in decentralization policy. There are two major representative stakeholders - delegations (districts), municipalities and local councils on the one hand and governorates, provinces and territories on the other – which will play a role in ensuring the success of decentralization, according to all focus group participants.

Governorates / Provinces: the governorate or province is central to the success of decentralization. This institution, in fact, ensures the independence of local councils or municipalities in carrying out their tasks and duties away from the central government, as it works on harmonizing regional and local projects with the State's national objectives, thereby ensuring national cohesion. Most activists consider that the independence of governorates / provinces constitutes a realistic indicator reflecting the implantation and success of decentralization, as they believe that specificities and characteristics are regional first and then local.

Municipalities/Directorates (Municipal Councils): Municipalities and municipal councils constitute major institutional entities of a public/governmental nature, directly impacting men and women citizens and being of particular interest to them. They represent the forum where citizens can participate in decision making, the management of public affairs and the settlement of problems and issues facing them on a daily basis. Municipalities and local councils offer the opportunity to practice participatory democracy and local governance, to implement parity between men and women, in addition to gender representation, as they can ensure large popular participation and citizen mobilization to participate in public life and to take part in political and public actions in general.

Local Councils (for development): A local council's prerogatives vary in the countries of the sample, ranging along consultation, analysis and execution. As a result, this particular tier of government was of considerable interest to our respondents as it plays a major role at the local level, ensuring the legitimacy of decisions. Local councils are supposed to ensure fair representation; they are the only institutional tier open to all the various social categories, urban and rural, and particularly the poorest and most marginal groups.

References to the various local actors who have a direct relationship to the implementation of political decentralization, according to opinions and attitudes of the participants in the interviews and focus group, have been confined to public institutions of the state in particular. Note that there are other social actors who have a key role in activating decentralization, including civil society organizations, local pressure groups, youth clubs and women's alliances and networks of voluntary organizations.

3. Decentralization and gender: opportunities

The group discussions focused in part on ways of directing decentralization policy towards gender questions in general and women's concerns in particular. The following list, essentially an overview of the central themes in the data, features some of the more realistic options:
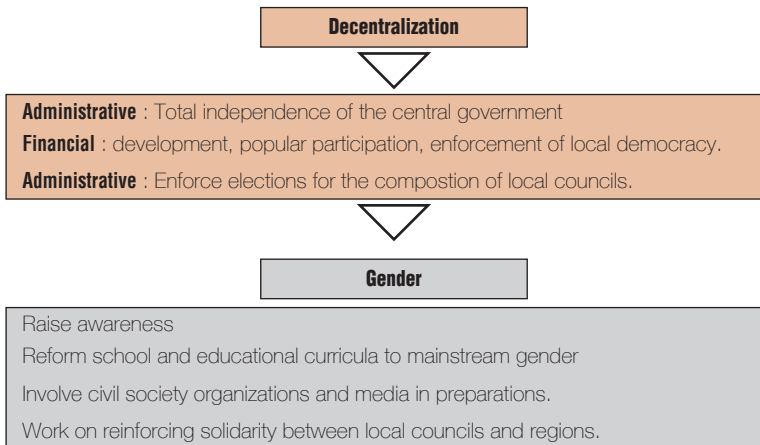
- Increasing women's participation rates in all fields at the local and regional levels first, and then at the national level;
- Valorization of skilled women at local and regional levels through involving them in the socio-economic development of their localities, as a way of ending their marginalization by the central authorities;
- Enabling women to contribute to the design of general policies and strategies at the local level in order to facilitate local development;
- Offering of serious representation opportunities to women in local and village institutions, commissions and structures, thereby reinforcing parity and gender representation;
- Enabling women to participate in the definition of strategies and plans of action to address local and regional issues based on priorities they define;
- Implementing solutions and suggestions made by women to address issues facing them in their social environment without waiting for the central government's approval or clearance;
- Enabling women to overcome geographic obstacles including long distances from central authorities in order to help them to enjoy their right to vote and to have representation, and to have access to all administrative services without limits;
- Increasing the access of women to important decision-making positions and to leading functions at all levels. In a decentralized system, the local level should offer training and learning opportunities for women, allowing them to acquire the experience which will eventually give them access to more important posts.
- Increasing the participation of women, especially rural women, in local politics according to their family, professional and civil occupations. The success of some women at the local level may in principle encourage other women to join and participate;
- Avoiding the expansion of the "social status" issue applied by political parties when selecting people to constitute the core of their local branches. By doing so, women will have equal opportunities with men in small areas and districts:
- Increasing women's ability to participate and take part in electoral campaigns or in political parties' activities held nearby their homes;

- Preventing dual discourse at the level of political parties' electoral programs, which are modernist when presented and traditional when implemented;
- Reducing the gap in terms of opportunities offered to urban and rural women by providing appropriate space for participation, suggestions and follow up;
- Acquiring necessary experience in the management and administration of public affairs at the local level first, and then at the national level;
- Raising the awareness of men about the value, role and position of women in terms of participation in and management of local affairs based on principles of participatory democracy which would reduce cultural and family obstacles and impediments;
- Women's valorization of the cultural and economic characteristics of their local environment would help them to actively contribute to production channels and to benefit from the resources. In other words, women's ability to absorb and understand the peculiarities of the economic and social environment in which they live has become one of the pillars that allows them to use all available resources in a positive way in light of the consolidation of the decentralization policy;
- Recognizing women's significant contributions to the development process and promotion of the State's efforts in training and counseling programs targeting working women. When decentralization is adopted as a local administration process, local people will feel the necessity to participate and hold responsibilities, as they will indirectly improve their economic and social conditions.

4. Progressive strategy: from development priorities to gender mainstreaming

Based on the cultural, tribal, social and economic characteristics prevailing in most Arab countries, in addition to some major challenges facing decentralization when implemented, there is a need to take into consideration all the various and possible impairments, including the gender approach, in enforcing decentralization policies, according to a phased strategy:

Graph 2. Strategy to entrench decentralization and gender inclusion

Decentralization

Administrative : Total independence of the central government
Financial : development, popular participation, enforcement of local democracy.
Administrative : Enforce elections for the compostion of local councils.

Gender

Raise awareness

Reform school and educational curricula to mainstream gender

Involve civil society organizations and media in preparations.

Work on reinforcing solidarity between local councils and regions.

Source: Field Work

Many respondents agreed that the enforcement of decentralization, providing full financial and administrative autonomy, granting freedom in the management of local public affairs, both social and development-related, and devolving decision-making powers will be a process offering considerable challenges. Obstacles will include the lack of adequate financial resources and widespread financial and administrative corruption in the absence of appropriate and effective control mechanisms.

Such problems may be avoided by adopting a progressive strategy, chiefly as regards the equal distribution of local wealth and resources. Evidently, it will take time for regional imbalances in terms of access to resources to be reduced.

In this respect, most respondents believe that it would be necessary to adopt a phased approach in implementing gender-based decentralization by prioritizing development issues and first improving all citizens' living conditions, regardless of gender. With this achieved, the focus can switch to gender issues, and notably participation, representation and access to public services. This view is based on the theory that real interest in public life depends on the fulfillment

of basic needs such as education, healthcare and employment. Once these needs are successfully dealt with, then awareness of gender and the importance of participation in public life to solve common issues can be promoted. The progressive strategy for the implementation of gender-based decentralization relies primarily on the following:

• Promulgation of bold and effective legislation to speed up the pace of development, especially in socio-economic terms in an initial phase, to be followed by the promotion of women's participation in all areas;
• Adoption of a phased approach in the field;
• Launching of awareness-raising campaigns on decentralization, its importance and objectives, targeting both men and women citizens;
• Starting with development and economic issues first to ensure some justice and balance between the regions, and then focusing on other issues such as participation and representation.

Box 6. Decentralization's implementation strategy and the inclusion of gender according to perceptions and attitudes of civil society activists –

I think that decentralization should first focus on development as if decentralization started by political participation, this would constitute a risk and a serious challenge we know from other countries' experiences such as Canada that there is division between the Nation's Constitution and constitutions of the provinces, and this opens the door for bargaining I am concerned about this matter as Western societies have clearly separated religion and politics and we aren't there yet. Therefore I think that linking decentralization with gender would be a real adventure. We should first focus on development through administrative decentralization, independence at the level of decision making, providing access to public services such as healthcare, education, development projects, etc efforts of civil society organizations in all regions and of all media must work on raising awareness and conviction of the people about the importance of this societal project for both men and women. These factors will change mindsets and social perceptions, and also influence political decision-makers and educational, cultural and school programs. With this program, we will be able to build real decentralization based on equality between genders, the ability of all citizens to participate in and contribute to their local communities.

(Woman civil-society activist, Tunisia)

5. Gender in the decentralization process: from quantitative to qualitative participation

According to most respondents, mainstreaming gender in decentralization has been related to the social and cultural context in general. The issues of skills and experience of men and women citizens at the local level are considered to be key success factors. As illiteracy rates and limited instruction generally affect

women and more specifically women in poor areas, it was clearly suggested that decentralization should take into consideration these two elements. In this regard, the local and popular participation should be more qualitative in a first stage, and then becomes quantitative in a second phase. The gender challenge will hence primarily concern men and women already skilled and experienced in management, and in the framework of activating the principle of quota, as this approach will favorably impact the decentralization process by providing equal opportunities to both men and women.

6. Main challenges facing decentralization and gender

Previous experiences of Arab countries in the field of decentralization and gender and the opinions shared by civil-society activists have enabled us to identify a number of very real problems. Such challenges are not just related to decentralization's mechanisms and requirements but also include a number of social, political, economic, and cultural issues and financial resources available to tackle them. Some of the challenges associated with gender-inclusion are linked to the specific nature of a given country's economic institutions.

6.1. Challenges related to decentralization in general

- The deterioration of economic and social conditions in general limited decentralization to the delivery of public services, as was the case previously, without including the ability to take decisions or the need to involve citizens from the initial phases of its implementation. This constitutes a major challenge, which is caused by the lack of a clear and direct political will;

- Poor solidarity and cohesion between the regions, which results in social dispersion and weakens the State's ability to control and govern. Reinforcing local governance mechanisms does not match the State's overall national challenge;

- This fear is reinforced by citizens exclusively relying on the State without sharing responsibility;

- Limited solidarity and the low-level of economic transactions between regions increases social and income disparities, the issue of monopolizing local resources and personal interest;

- Fear on the part of political stakeholders of the consequences of decentralization, a policy which requires real political will for effective implementation;

- Many political parties also fear decentralization with the claim of the lack of local resources and their imbalance between the regions and local areas;

- Lack of efficient local institutions and structures in poor underserved areas as compared to other regions close to the capital, impeding the establishment of an all-encompassing local governance system;

- A general lack of experience of decentralization on the part of civil servants, both men and women; such public employees need to have responsibility for making improvements based on the analysis of local conditions, the development of new planning initiatives and programs which may also involve civil society;

- The distance of public services from men and women citizens is a major structural challenge; the remoteness of services discourages citizens from participating in public affairs and monitoring issues raised. In other words, some citizens will not be able to participate according to the standards because of the distance between homes and local authorities' headquarters;

- Lack of both the experience and expertise necessary for the management of local affairs in many regions, especially in the field of financial management and logistics due to the limited level of instruction of a large portion of the population and the absence of suitable opportunities in the public sectors, especially in underserved and poor areas remote from the central government;

- Lack of management experience of local stakeholders, and absence of training on self-decision taking which prevents them from holding full responsibility; male and female citizens face problems in accessing local authorities, thereby reducing real local participation and representation. Local actors often lack the necessary experience in management and are not trained to take the necessary decisions individually – hence they are unable to take full responsibility.

- Limited State financial resources for the implementation of local governance policies and the empowerment of regions in terms of finances and decision-making;
- The administrative division currently applied is not suitable for decentralization, especially with regard to the unbalanced distribution of local wealth and resources between the regions;
- Poor economic turnover and limited local production in many regions, which may lead to considerable indebtedness in several areas according to many politicians, and hence affect the national economic growth and economic balance;
- Various local and regional products, in terms of quality and quantity, ranging between agricultural, industrial and natural products, which would impede the balanced distribution of products between the regions and also disturb investment strategies from the regions up to the national level.

6.2. Challenges related to gender

- Rejection by men of the parity principle or the fact that women may have access to leading or decision-making positions in the civil service and other public structures;
- Limited commitment on the part of political activists to women's empowerment and to increasing their access to leading positions in parties, especially at the grass-roots level;
- Limited awareness of women about their political and economic rights, preventing men and women alike from increasing their political participation;
- Unserious and unfair treatment of women both during elections and in commonplace activities as compared to men;
- Exploitation of women candidates for electoralist reasons during elections. Women candidates are to be considered as true activists with specific expertise and not simply as electoral fodder used to satisfy the requirements of gender quotas enshrined in would-be progressive electoral law;
- Limited liabilities and the scope of work of the local and municipal councils, as some focus only on the environment, the delivery of social services

and the execution of programs instructed by the central government without contributing to the design of development programs and strategies responding to the citizens' expectations;

- Lack of appropriate legislation in many areas, and in particular those concerning women, including notably employment, salaries, education, access to public and financial services (ex bank loans), land ownership, property and inheritance;

- Limited binding force of some pieces of legislation defining the nature of decentralization policies, rendering them both inconsistent and contradictory.

CONCLUSIONS

Decentralization has been experienced differently in Jordan, Libya, Tunisia and Yemen, leading us to a number of conclusions. Integrating the gender dimension within development, economic and social policies in the framework of a decentralized system in each country requires taking into account a number of objective and structural variables. Despite the contrasts between each specific experience, improving and consolidating the political participation of women in local councils is closely linked to the existence of a 'higher political will'.

Findings from the focus groups showed that despite the existence of certain incentives, there are considerable obstacles to the inclusion of gender as well as to the expansion of women's benefits from decentralization in each of the countries.

In Tunisia, the level of women's participation in local councils and broader politics has remained limited despite the 'voluntary' quotas applied during the municipal and general elections held under the Ben Ali regime, and as well as the fact that decentralization initiatives go back to the 1970s. However, the new post-revolutionary constitution, approved in 2014, includes a number of clauses designed to increase women's participation in local affairs. Decentralization has, in fact, been constitutionalized as an approach to local government.

In Yemen, gender indicators affirm the weakness of women's representation, especially in the absence of clear political will to include gender perspectives in the local government system. Women's participation in politics and their representation on local and provincial councilss remains remarkably weak.

The experience of decentralization in Jordan has had a positive impact on both the status of women in general and on their chances of participating in politics. Elected local councils are characterized by a certain level of freedom as well as a financial and managerial independence. The development of legal and administrative processes and the activation of decentralized management mechanisms are among the factors that have contributed to the development of gender indicators.

The experience of decentralization in Libya is characterized by its uniqueness, especially under Qadhafi's regime. 'Direct popular power' constituted a distinctive feature of the former political system. In fact, decentralization consisted in 'giving people the power of legislation and implementation during the people's congresses and local committees'. It then reduced women's participation in all public areas to the number of women attending a conference group, hence making the measurement and evaluation of gender indicators in the structure of local popular committees complicated. However, the revolution of 17 February 2011 has had a major impact on the political system and local governance. A new form of local council has emerged.

Despite the varying maturity in the Arab countries' experiences of decentralization and despite the variety of obstacles preventing the overall success of decentralization policy, recommendations were made by civil society activists and local administrators. The creation of opportunities in order to strengthen gender perspectives may be considered valuable.

The first basic step in implementing decentralization is to achieve development at all levels, thereby bringing about real improvement in living conditions, fair wealth distribution and equal access to public services. Integrating a gender dimension, including women's representation and participation in political and public affairs should come at a later stage, according to some respondents. Ensuring redistributive justice at all levels would have a positive impact on women's living conditions, making their contribution and participation necessary. These respondents call for an 'incremental strategy' in entrenching decentralization as a local governance system. The inclusion of gender is seen as a step to change conservative attitudes and perceptions.

Challenges to the application of political decentralization and gender inclusion in the four countries, especially Yemen and Libya, are associated with cultural, social, political, structural, legislative and administrative features of these countries. However, circumventing these obstacles remains possible by involving civil society and the media on the one hand, and by pushing for the development of 'a true political will' involving all political actors, whatever their orientation, on the other hand.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO ENABLE WOMEN TO BENEFIT SIGNIFICANTLY FROM DECENTRALIZATION POLICIES

In terms of the main benefits of decentralization and with reference to previous experiences, a focus was put on the points which might further reinforce women's chances of benefitting from decentralization policies. This contribution aims at compensating for some of the negative results and structural difficulties raised by previous decentralization experiences in Arab countries, especially at the level of women's contribution and their access to leading positions especially at local and regional levels. The errors and failures of previous experiences may be reduced or avoided by classifying the key elements under five main headings, as follows:

1. Legal and legislative requirements:

Focus on legal and legislative matters aims at providing the binding aspect on legal texts and also providing enforced legal references by:

- Promulgation of laws and decrees to reinforce the quota system. This quota system is to be applied only temporarily so that it does not turn into an upper limit defining percentages of women in local councils. Some participants felt that maintaining the quota system in certain local councils is necessary at the very beginning of the decentralization process;

- Including the legal aspects of women's rights in various sections of the Constitution; such binding fundamental laws are difficult to alter as compared with current legislation;

- Defining political parties' scope of work with laws and the special legislation obliging them to appoint women in their local and regional chapters, and to enable these women to be efficient and have access to leading positions and not to exploit them temporarily during elections. The full empowerment of women to be politically active will consequently encourage other women to participate and follow the track of the first.

2. Bold political will for social actors (political parties, decision-makers)

Linking decentralization and women's benefits with the need for a real political will on the part of political stakeholders, activists and leaders is mainly based on some successful experiences in the field of decentralization, as has been the case in Jordan. The increase in the number of elected women in local councils and their access to senior positions are the consequences of brave political decisions through the creation of additional laws to strengthen women's political participation. Therefore, mainstreaming gender in decentralization requires the following:

- Political activists and political party leaders should assume responsibility for improving women's opportunities to take on the role of political leaders and to play a role in elections;
- Politicians should support women politically in different leadership positions at local and regional levels. Women should also be given full freedom in terms of choice and activities.

3. Role of media and civil society:

- Media and civil society institutions should work to facilitate decentralization tools and principles and promote their impact on both men and women citizens;
- Focus must be put on women's skills and women leaders active in civil society in order to enable their access to posts at the local and regional levels and to constitute models in terms of both management and political leadership;
- The concept of decentralization should be popularized and its practical implications explained;
- The awareness of stakeholders of the importance of decentralization should be raised at all levels;
- Networks between NGOs should be set up so that they can lobby for decentralization and reinforce women's participation in local affairs;
- Civil society institutions should promote human rights and address legal illiteracy, a problem which affects women to a great degree.

4. Social and cultural requirements

- Include gender and equality between men and women in school curricula to prepare future generations to accept the principle of women's participation in public affairs;
- Work on reducing social differences in terms of regional and tribal diversities in order to reduce geographic divisions; raise men's awareness of the need to take on the household tasks and responsibilities culturally attributed to women in order to enable the latter to play a role in public life;

Hold training sessions to empower women and familiarize them with participation mechanisms and acquire political skills, thereby reducing men's dominance in politics; such training would also address women's self-exclusion due to their lack of confidence in their skills.

5. Economic requirements:

- Include the gender issue in the design of local budgets by defining priorities required for the general improvement of women's conditions;
- Involve women in preparing development plans and strategies so that they can play an active and responsible role at all levels, including conception, monitoring and accountability;
- Facilitate women's access to public services, and in particular to loans allowing them to set up revenue-generating activities, thereby making it possible for them to participate in economic life, initially at local and regional levels and subsequently at the national level;
- Design and improve women-specific development programs including women's structures and commissions (women's affairs commission, women's development/promotion commission, etc.) at all local levels along with the overall regional development plan.

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Appendix I

Focus group moderator's guide

1. What is decentralization according to you?
2. What are existing policies of decentralization in your respective countries?
3. What are the related achievements?
4. Is there any form of resistance / conflicts between stakeholders (local authorities, the state, civil society, etc.)? At what level? And what are the reasons?
5. Is there integration of the gender dimension in the design of the decentralization process? If so, how is it achieved? Who are the initiators?
6. What do you think of the integration of the gender dimension?
7. Are there effective results in terms of women's access to decision making positions/ political participation (in case of actual implementation of this policy)? What are these results?
8. What are the weaknesses?
9. Do you have any recommendations with regard to decentralization implementation / with regard to gender inclusion?

Appendix II

Focus Group n° 1
Tunis, December 19, 2013
(Moderated by Maryam Ben Salem –CAWTAR-)
List of participants

Participant	Sexe	profile	Country
S B	F	Department of women's development	Yemen
A S	F	Deputy director ⁻development and cooperation minister	Tunisia
M A A	F	General director of women's development	Yemen
H A G	F	----	
N A	F	Civil society activist	Yemen
AA A	F	Law advisor	Yemen
E SA	F	Supervisor	Jordan
A S	M	Administrative advisor	Libya
A Y	F	Teacher	Jordan
I A	M	-	
I O	F	Executive director	Libya
F H	M	Member of the national congress	Libya

Focus Group n° 2
Tunis, January 23, 2014
(Moderated by Noujeil Héni –CAWTAR-)
List of participants

Participant	Sexe	profile	Country
I F	F	Civil society activist	Tunisia
S O	F	Civil society activist	Tunisia
I Z	M	Secretary general of trade-union	Tunisia
S G	F	Tunisian human rights league's member	Tunisia
F CH	M	Member of employer's trade-union	Tunisia
M F	F	Political activist	Tunisia
S A	F	Public-accountant	Tunisia
A H	F	Teacher	Tunisia
L CH	F	Political activist, coach	Tunisia

Focus Group n° 3
Tunis, January 23, 2014
(Moderated by Slim Hedhli –CAWTAR)
List of participants

Participant	Sexe	profile	Country
M J	F	Human development trainer/ teacher	Yemen
M H	F	Human rights trainer	Yemen
I H	F	University professor	Jordan
A H	F	Civil society activist	Libya
F B	F	Inspector	Libya
G GH	F	Political activist	Yemen

Focus Group n° 4
Tunis, February 18, 2014
(Moderated by Maryam Ben Salem –CAWTAR)
List of participants

Participant	Sexe	profile	Country
H A	F	Advisor	Jordan
H F	F	Professor	Libya
Z A	F	President of an association	Libya
B K	F	Trainer	Jordan
K	F	Engineer	Libya
H M	F	Professor	Tunisia
S O	F	Civil society activist	Tunisia
S	F	Disabled rights expert	Yemen
S K	F	Civil society activist	Tunisia
N T	F	Civil society activist	Tunisia

Focus Group n° 5
Tunis, February 18, 2014
(Moderated by Noujeil Héni –CAWTAR)
List of participants

Participant	Sexe	profile	Country
B R	F	Civil society activist	Jordan
K A	F	Civil society activist	Libya
H M	F	Political activist	Tunisia
E A	F	Civil society activist	Tunisia
S T	F	Human rights trainer	Yemen
F M	F	Ministerial advisor	Yemen
D B R	F	Civil society activist	Jordan