The Effectiveness of Foreign Aid to Women’s Equality Organizations in the MENA
Does Aid Promote Women’s Political Participation?

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Women’s political empowerment

- MDG3: promoting gender equality and empowering women.
- Gender equality has important implications for the targets associated with other MDGs.
- Progress towards achieving MDG3 has been ‘sluggish’.
- Women’s political participation can have significant impact in peace and political transition processes; e.g., Rwandan women parliamentarians using statistics on gender-based violence (GBV) to successfully lobby for a GBV bill (adopted by general consensus in 2006.)
The MENA Region

- In recent years, MENA has substantially reduced gender inequality in education and health outcomes.

- However, some countries
  - still have high inequality in employment (Klasen and Lamanna, 2009; United Nations, 2012).
  - tend to have highly discriminatory social and legal institutions—including restricted civil liberties, restricted physical integrity and discriminatory family codes—which put women at a clear disadvantage (Cerise and Francavilla, 2012).

- Total aid commitments to women’s equality organizations in Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia was about US$11.5 million in 2010, up from US$3.83 million in 2000, and reached a high US$71.33 million in 2011 (while the gross disbursements were about US$13.9 million in 2011).
## Women in Parliaments: Regional Averages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Single House or lower House</th>
<th>Upper House or Senate</th>
<th>Both Houses combined</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nordic countries</td>
<td>42.00%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe-OSCE member countries, excluding Nordic countries</td>
<td>23.00%</td>
<td>22.60%</td>
<td>22.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Americas</td>
<td>24.20%</td>
<td>23.80%</td>
<td>24.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
<td>21.10%</td>
<td>18.70%</td>
<td>21.70%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>19.10%</td>
<td>13.80%</td>
<td>18.50%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arab States</td>
<td>17.80%</td>
<td>7.70%</td>
<td>15.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific</td>
<td>13.10%</td>
<td>38.60%</td>
<td>15.90%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Inter-parliamentary Union (www.ipu.org)
Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments (PSHWNP) and proportion of women in ministerial level positions (PWMLP) in MENA

Source: World Development Indicators, World Bank 2012
Main findings

- Results suggest that ODA to equality organizations and institutions (WEOI) is in general effective.

  - The independent effect of ODA is between 0.015 and 0.02, suggesting that a $200 increase in ODA per 1,000 people (or $0.20 per capita) per year is associated with an increase in the proportion of parliamentary seats held by women by about 3 points.

- Study finds that autocracy has a significant negative influence on women’s political empowerment.

- Evidence of a robust negative effect from adolescent fertility on women’s political empowerment.
Implications for aid allocation

1. A critical mass of women in parliaments can create more push for gender equality. In this case, aid to WEOI could play a crucial role.

2. Studies (Franceschet et al. 2009) showed that “Increased female representation in politics is associated with significant changes in policy-making.” These changes can be more significant the higher the proportion of women in national parliaments. In turn, changes in laws and policies supporting women’s rights can enhance women’s political empowerment (virtuous circle). Foreign aid could have a catalytic role in this process (e.g., by funding women political leadership training programs.)

3. Given that there is documented evidence on the ineffectiveness of aid to family planning, it is worth investigating whether foreign aid to family planning would be more effective if allocated directly to WEOI.
Concluding remarks

The question this study addresses is relevant and timely for at least two reasons.

1. Women in the MENA region played an important role in the Arab Spring. However, the active participation of women has not been the same across countries, plausibly due to differences in gender equality (Tunisia, for example, versus Libya or Yemen).

2. The rise of Islamist parties that have secured de jure (and possibly also de facto) political power in some countries seems to create concern about the fate of gender equality in some countries.