



Meeting of Experts - Workshop Strengthening Capacities of Women Organisations

Amman, Jordan – 24-25 October

REPORT

2017

Organised by:



In partnership with:



institutional support of:



With the financial support of:



1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In line with the Council of Europe Policy towards Neighbouring regions and the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2014 – 2017, and responding to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (UN SDG) 5 that aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, the mission of the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe strives for the empowerment of civil society organisations, in particular, women, in Europe and the Southern Mediterranean region. Based on a bottom-up approach, the North-South Centre acts as a regional platform for cooperation, dialogue, partnership and solidarity and contributes to strengthen the capacities of institutions and organisations through peer-to-peer exchanges and networks.

The North-South Centre conducted a two-day activity in Amman, Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. An expert meeting was organised the 24 October 2017 with experts on women's rights and gender equality from Southern Mediterranean countries. Experts gathered to discuss and share their views on the challenges for the empowerment of women in the region.



Opening session of the Workshop on the 25 October, in Amman, Jordan

The following day, the North-South Centre organised a workshop on “Strengthening capacities of women organisations” in partnership with the Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development (ARDD), with the institutional support of the Jordanian National Commission for Women and financed by the Government of Portugal. Representatives of the *quadrilogue* (governments, parliaments, local and regional authorities and civil society organisations) and international organisations discussed the new challenges for the empowerment of women and shared best practices from Algeria, Cyprus, Jordan, Romania, Tunisia, the European Union and the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe, in order to encourage a participatory approach in designing and implementing reforms. Together, with the input from experts, they put forward recommendations aiming at empowering women civil society organisations to effectively contribute to deepening and broadening gender equality in the European and Southern Mediterranean countries.

2. MEETING OF EXPERTS

2.1 ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

The meeting gathered the experts from civil society organisations who attended the North-South Centre's training of experts on "The Human Rights Based approach in Combating Violence against Women", which took place in Tunis, Tunisia, from the 12 to the 14 July 2017¹. The aim of the meeting was to identify common issues for a collective action for women's rights based on current needs and challenges identified in Southern Mediterranean countries. These common challenges were mainly linked to the forms of violence against women in relation to legislation, law enforcement and cultural and behavioural patterns that perpetuate these forms of violence. The meeting allowed the North-South Centre to identify priorities and needs of women organisations in the region. The 16 experts present at the meeting drafted conclusions to be taken into consideration during the discussion session of the workshop on the 25 October.



Meeting of Experts on the 24 October in Amman, Jordan

2.1.1 Profile of the experts

Experienced workers, trainers and legal experts from Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia² in the field of women's rights and gender equality with a proven experience and expertise on preventing and combating violence against women.

¹ For more information: [https://www.coe.int/en/web/north-south-centre/activities-of-the-project-north-south-process-for-the-empowerment-of-women-nspew-#\(%2229476634%22:\[0\],%2229480128%22:\[0\]\)](https://www.coe.int/en/web/north-south-centre/activities-of-the-project-north-south-process-for-the-empowerment-of-women-nspew-#(%2229476634%22:[0],%2229480128%22:[0]))

² Experts from Iraq, Libya and Syria were not able to attend the meeting due to visa problems.

2.1.2 Organisations represented

Algeria:

- ◆ CIDDEF Fondation pour l'Égalité
- ◆ Association Action Bénévole pour la Citoyenneté et le Développement

Egypt:

- ◆ Egyptian Feminist Union
- ◆ Egyptian Centre for Women's Rights

Jordan:

- ◆ Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development
- ◆ Women Helping Women

Lebanon:

- ◆ KAFA (Enough) Violence & Exploitation
- ◆ ABAAD-WGSS

Morocco:

- ◆ Union of Women's Action
- ◆ Youth Forum for Democracy and Citizenship

Palestine:

- ◆ Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling
- ◆ Community Center for Training and Development

Tunisia:

- ◆ Association Femme et Citoyenneté El Kef

Regional:

- ◆ Inter Press Service



2.2 CONCLUSIONS OF THE MEETING

2.2.1 Challenges identified

- The major challenge faced is the effective implementation of the amended laws and constitutions;
- Urgent and general need to adopt a human rights-based approach and to consolidate the mechanisms and strategies to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence;
- Lack of cooperation between the government and civil society organisations and lack of coordination between civil society organisation themselves;

- Overall context “in tension” and the need for stability in the region as a new major challenge for civil society organisations and women's organisations, particularly in relation to refugee and displaced women and new forms of violence;
- Increase and encourage participation of “reluctant groups” in activities related to women's rights by developing a new strategy to better reach the target group and end beneficiaries at national, regional and international levels;
- Redundancies and inefficiencies in projects related to the empowerment of women, need of impact assessments and sustainability.

2.2.2 Conclusions

The experts present at the workshop the following recommendations:

1. Engage in a network representing Arab countries to operate at a regional level and develop innovative tools and methods based on a database to ensure continuity and sustainability;
2. Understanding the problems related to the manifestations of violence and its effects on women and communities in each Southern Mediterranean country;
3. Identify countries' needs in order to determine common priorities;
4. Take advantage of the Council of Europe tools, standards and methodologies, particularly in promoting a sustainable human rights-based approach in combating violence against women and domestic violence through prevention, protection, support, policies, follow-up and monitoring actions;
5. Promote a participatory approach for good governance through a bottom-up approach among women's organisations.
6. Capacity building of civil society organisations allowing them to handle emerging issues linked to the existing conflicts in the region (displacement crisis, refugee integration and safety, poverty, radicalisation, etc.);
7. Organise regional campaigns to combat violence against women;
8. Develop partnerships with the media sector and raise awareness about its impact on public opinion related to violence against women;
9. Raise awareness about poverty among women and promote a comprehensive and fair approach in achieving women's economic empowerment;
10. Involve men and youth in the planning, implementation and follow-up processes to achieve gender equality and to combat violence against women;
11. Working with men and women without any exclusion of any category in the society in order to change negative attitudes towards women's issues.

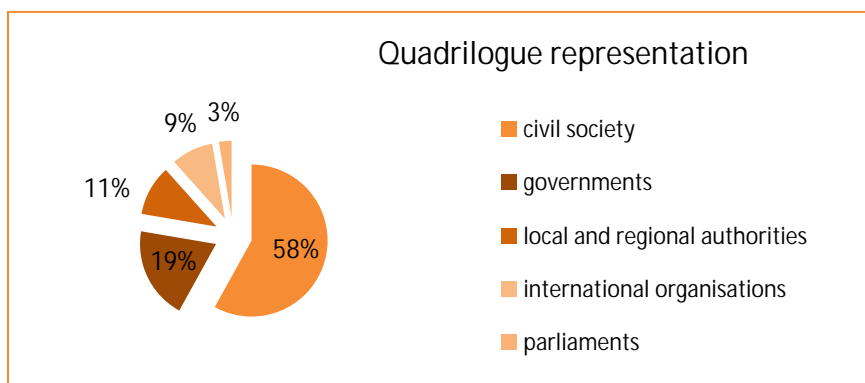
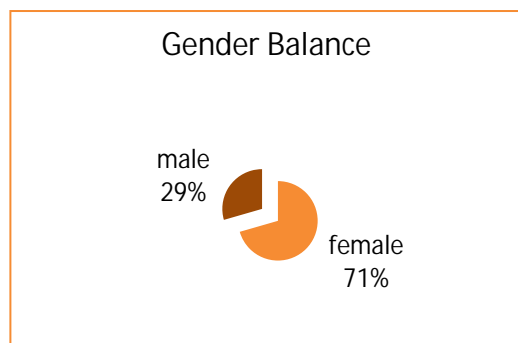
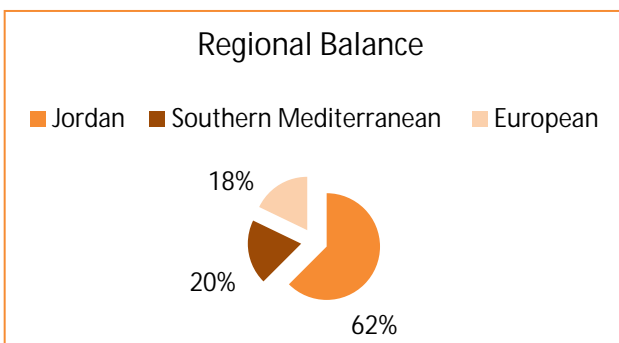
3. WORKSHOP

3.1 ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

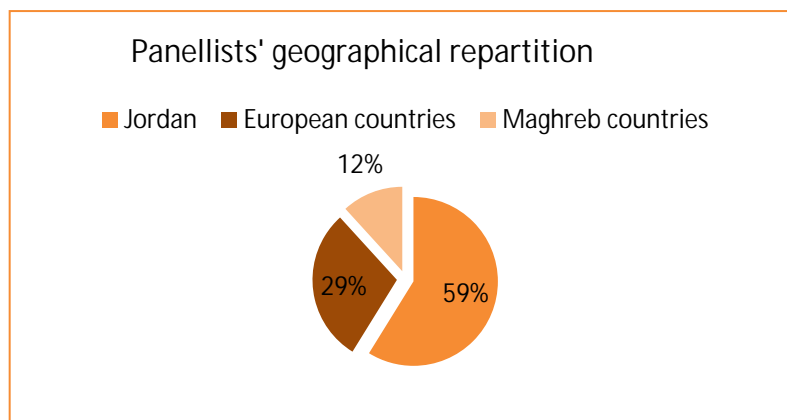
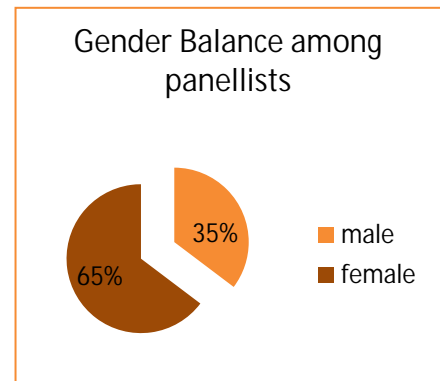
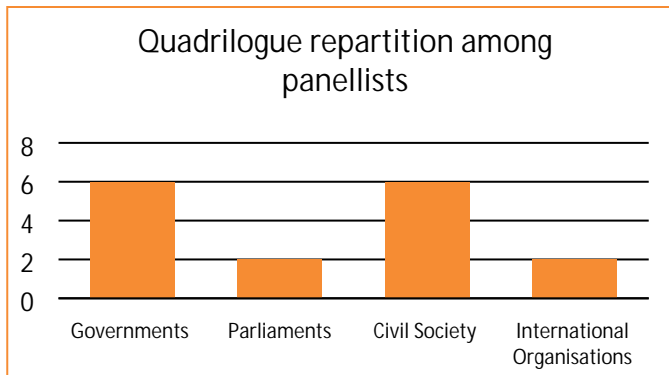
The workshop on “Strengthening Capacities of Women Organisations” gathered representatives of the *quadrilogue* from Southern Mediterranean and European countries to discuss the reinforcement of a participatory approach and multi-level and multilateral cooperation in fostering women’s rights and gender equality. In the framework of the current reforms in Jordan, and through the sharing of experiences at regional level from different perspectives, participants identified challenges and opportunities for the effective protection of women’s rights and means to confront them.

3.1.1 Activity at a glance

- ◆ 112 participants from Euro-Mediterranean region attended the opening of the workshop: 70 participants from Jordan, 22 from Southern Mediterranean countries (Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine* and Tunisia) and 20 from Europe (Albania, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and Turkey) as well as representatives from the Council of Europe and the European Union.
- ◆ *Quadrilogue* from Euro-Mediterranean region was represented as follows: 65 representatives from civil society organisations; 22 from governments; 12 from local and regional authorities; 3 from parliaments and 10 from international organisations.



- ◆ The *quadrilogue* representation, gender and regional balance among panellists was ensured as followed:



3.1.2 Programme

During one day, the workshop was divided into five parts:

OPENING SESSION

At the inaugural session, H.E. Ms Hala Lattouf, Minister of Social Development in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, representative of the Host Authorities, opened the Workshop followed by key speeches of H.E. Nafsika Krousti, Ambassador of the Republic of Cyprus, member state of the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe, the Jordanian National Commission for Women and the Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development representative. Dr Jean-Marie Heydt, Chair of the Executive Committee of the North-South Centre introduced the mission and objectives of the North-South Centre and its activities and

emphasised its bottom-up approach in fostering multilateral and multilevel dialogue.



From left to right: Dr Jean-Marie Heydt, Chair of the Executive Committee of the North-South Centre, Ms Nuha Zaidah, Jordanian National Commission for Women), H.E. Ms Hala Lattouf, Jordanian Minister of Social Development, Ms Nafsika Krousti, Ambassador of the Republic of Cyprus to Jordan, Ms Samar Muhareb Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development.

PANEL I: Promoting a participatory and transversal approach: the Jordanian case

The first panel allowed the presentation of the Jordanian case in fostering women's rights through a participatory approach and partnerships between the four levels of governance and the international organisations with contributions from the Jordanian *quadrilogue*, namely the Ministry of Political and Parliamentary Affairs, the Ministry of Interior (division of decentralisation issues), Durrat Al Manal for Development and Training organisation, the Jordanian House of Representatives and the European Union's Delegation in Jordan.



Dr Sawsan Majali, Durrat Al Manal for Development and Training, Mr Nasser Al Nsour, Ministry of Interior, Mr Baker Abbadi, Political and Parliamentary Affairs Ministry, Ms Wafa Bani Mustafa, Jordanian House of Representatives, Mr Andrea Matteo Fontana, European Union's Delegation to Jordan

PANEL II: The active participation of civil society organisations in the region

Building on the respective expertise and/or experience of invited panellists from the European and Southern Mediterranean region and international organisations, the second panel highlighted how and why empowering and collaborating with women can foster women's rights and gender equality. Examples of best practices of a participatory approach and partnerships between the different levels of governance were presented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania, the Algerian

organisation, CIDDEF Foundation for Equality, Tunisian Assembly of the Representatives of the People and the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe.



Ms Simona Granata-Menghini, (Venice Commission), Ms Nadia Ait-Zai, (CIDDEF), Ms Hana Al Arah, (moderator), Mr Nicolae Comanescu, (Ambassador of Romania to Jordan) and Ms Jamila Debbech Ksiksi, Member of the Tunisian Assembly of the Representatives of the People

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A third session was organised as a public discussion, moderated by Ms Nuha Muhreiz, President of Women Helping Women Network in Jordan. She opened a debate with the audience and the speakers on the main topics developed in the previous panels in order to draft recommendations on improving women's rights and gender equality.





CLOSING SESSION

Finally, during the closing session, the Jordanian Governmental Coordinator for Human Rights, Mr Basel Al Tarawneh, presented the Jordanian Comprehensive National Plan Human for Rights (2016-2025) and pointed out the achievements,

opportunities and challenges, as well as the major role of women organisations in Jordan. Dr Jean Marie Heydt concluded the workshop on the common thought calling for continued dialogue and cooperation.



Mr Basel Al Tarawneh and Dr Jean-Marie Heydt

The programme and the speakers' biographies are available in the North-South Centre website.

3.2 ACTIVITY OUTCOMES

3.2.1 Conclusions

The main conclusions of the workshop at the regional level issued from different national experiences were the following:

- ◆ There is a lack of complementarity between the work of the governments and the civil society organisations. Civil society organisations are often absent in the preparatory phase of national strategies for women's rights and gender equality;
- ◆ There are still laws restricting the work of civil society organisations;
- ◆ Women's issues are not properly addressed and taken into account in the media agenda;
- ◆ Civil society organisations are suffering from insufficient funding, which limits their active participation;
- ◆ Youth perspectives are often neglected and their needs are not taken into consideration in community issues at several levels from private to public spaces;
- ◆ There is no compromise between national strategies of European and Southern Mediterranean countries and Southern Mediterranean countries themselves;
- ◆ Despite the measures that have been taken in numerous countries to enhance women's participation, there is still a weak participation in decision making and policy making (at governmental and local level) and an obvious lack of involvement of civil society organisations' in influencing these processes;

- ◆ Absence of secular and democratic constitutions;
- ◆ The failure in the implementation of political reforms is rarely considered and responded to by governmental authorities from an early phase where it could be more decisive and effective;
- ◆ There is a crisis of confidence between the following sectors: government, private sector, civil society organisations and the media: i) Governments from Southern Mediterranean countries tend to consider civil society organisations only through their foreign policy agendas; ii) Lack of transparency in governmental selection processes of civil society beneficiaries; iii) Lack of substantial turn-over of beneficiaries from civil society.

3.2.2 Recommendations

In order to promote and implement an effective bottom-up and participatory approach to reinforce women's rights and gender equality, at national and international levels, the governmental, local and regional authorities and parliaments from European and Southern Mediterranean countries are called upon to:

1. Adopt an integrative approach to achieve a legislative and life-based system for women that promotes equality and guarantees justice as well as an effective participation of women "outside the plan" and on the ground;
2. Promote and coordinate dialogue and partnership between civil society organisations themselves;
3. Overcome the problems of distrust and deepen cooperation between civil society and government, as well as to recognize the leading role of civil society and media in achieving gender equality culture. The role of civil society organisations should not be seen only as complementary but as pioneers of the achievements made in the societies;
4. Develop and reinforce collaborative work with all private and public stakeholders (including formal and non-formal educational sectors) to improve the quality of education, promote intercultural dialogue, gender equality and democracy;
5. Decrease restrictions on civil society organisations and support them in building institutional partnerships at the local, national, regional and international levels, as well as fostering the integration of the marginalised civil society as a pressure social force into actions, plans and projects;
6. Initiate joint actions between governmental authorities, civil society organisations and media to challenge the stereotypical portrayal of the roles of women and men and to combat all forms of discrimination and violence to achieve equality and social justice;
7. Work on correction of erroneous religious concepts and promote the religious concepts advocating for women's rights;

8. Take into consideration opinions, recommendations and perspectives of youth in community issues and policy making. The role of youth needs to be highlighted and an enabling environment for their commitment in the organised civil society to support women's rights should be encouraged by building strong youth organisations;
9. Develop sustainable assessment and monitoring mechanisms on concrete women's needs based on accurate and verified information, research work, data collection and interviews operated by civil society organisations on the ground. These mechanisms will conduct the development of national strategies and reforms and include local specificities, contexts and realities to improve the impact on beneficiaries. To this end, a team of activists/experts will coordinate the identification and collection of beneficiaries' needs at the decentralised level;
10. Promote enlightened thoughts to ensure democracy, equality and justice without any exclusion of any category of people in the society in order to change negative attitudes towards women's issues. For this purpose, all community authorities such as local councils, municipalities, religious bodies, educational entities, grassroots organisations and local associations will be involved in all phases of policy development, strategies and plans to promote women's rights and protect women through, for example, public survey and hearing, call for proposals, public manifestation, etc.
11. Following the principles of rights and responsibilities, the role of civil society organisations should also be to assess the effective implementation of laws and regulations under the responsibility of governments;
12. Develop bold women leadership that promotes confidence in women's work and role models.

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