Policy Report

Gendering Youth Empowerment in Arab Mediterranean Countries

Center of Arab Women for Training and Research

CONTENTS

Abstract

The objective of this report, "Gendering Youth (girls and boys) Empowerment in Arab Mediterranean Countries (AMCs)" is first to identify the inequalities of empowerment among young people of different genders; secondly, the efforts already made by governments and civil society in the AMCs to empower young people; thirdly, it describes positive experiences that may be generalized and reproduced in other countries. Finally, the report points out the disparities and inequalities present in programmes for capacity building addressed to young women and men. Recommendations for fixing such unequal treatment will be made to stakeholders in order to encourage them to better mainstream a gender perspective in the implementation of their programmes and action plans in favour of youth empowerment. Accordingly, the report is based on the qualitative and quantitative data and information provided by the SAHWA project in the Arab Mediterranean Countries (AMCs) of Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia: The National Case Studies, the policy papers, and the Ethnographic Fieldwork dataset 2015 based on narrative interviews, focus groups and life stories collected. Thus, and in line with the SAHWA gender equity approach, the report attempts to tackle the socioeconomic factors leading to the exclusion of women, exploring a number of pathways that could foster equality between men and women. The cross-cutting research questions are: "How do gender relations in the daily life of Arab youth affect and are affected by the outcomes of education, employment, cultural values and practices and political participation?" and, "To what extent do civic action and public policies take these dynamics into account?"

Keywords: Empowerment, AMC youth; gender equity, Education, Employment, social inclusion, migration

1. Introduction

The UN Security Council Resolution on Youth, Peace and Security (Dec 2015) states that there is an urgent need to engage in youth and youth-led initiatives as important partners at all levels of decision-taking in the political, economic, and social processes that affect their lives. It is highly important that this resolution be developed in the AMCs (Laine 2016, SAHWA), where the economic situation, the standard of living, jobs and the educational system, terrorism, democracy and human rights are just some of the challenges that youth in Tunisia, Lebanon and Egypt have identified (SAHWA Youth Survey 2016). As stated during one of the ethnographic interviews: "There is a gap in the youth's representation … they are excluded from the sphere of decision-taking" (National Case Study Algeria, 2016). Other concerns are related to the inclusion and empowerment of youth in the Arab Mediterranean Countries (AMC) in political, social and economic life as young women and men are not sufficiently involved in the policy cycle and find themselves trapped in an observer status, with little opportunity to shape policy outcomes in their favour.

The nexus between employment and social inclusion is expressed in a number of ethnographic interviews: "I think that the key element is employment, since young people feel [that in this way they may] gain independence from their parents and then switch to another stage (marriage, future and other issues that are necessarily problematic for youth)" (MA_FG_3: 3, 2015).

Furthermore, rising social inclusion, especially of women in the educational systems, is continuing in the employment/labour market (Tholen 2016, SAHWA). Thus "the exclusion of girls from school is the basis for a second gendered exclusion in the labour market" (NCS_DZ_1)

To address young people's aspirations to engage in society, important elements for highlighting are the impact of the marginalisation of the young due to the absence of political tools to influence the management of state affairs and resources; and the grave challenges to the attainment of aspired life chances due to structural obstacles to entering the labour market. There is thus a need to open up new horizons of non-violent civic engagement for young people and to facilitate confidence-building measures by offering meaningful roles in public debates and decision-taking processes without the risk/fear of negative repercussions.

Thus the main goal of the paper is to understand how young women and men in the AMCs view their status in society, and the main factors that promote their social inclusion. Through a gender perspective, it tries to examine how education, employment and political participation (identified by the youth as the principle of social integration) have different effects on young women and men. Accordingly, the paper is divided as follows:

The first part of the paper aims to conceptualize the main terms used within the context: empowerment, gender equality and youth participation in society. It presents the main theoretical discussions of major scholars in development and draws from the SAHWA reports and interviews.

The second part looks at youth aspiration in AMCs for engaging in society. It tries to compare the different aspirations and challenges that females and males face in society. According to SAHWA data, education and employment were identified as the main challenges to youth participation and social inclusion in the AMCs. Increasing numbers of young people are considering migration as a solution to the social integration challenge.

The third part demonstrates the enabling of an environment for political participation and the legal framework concerning youth in AMCs. It highlights the main legislations relating to gender equality and the impact of the laws and legislations on females and males, underlining the gaps to achieving gender equality.

The fourth part demonstrates the institutional environment. It identifies the measures taken by the AMC states to strengthen women's empowerment via gender institutionalization, and sees whether available institutions are effective and efficient enough to help empower youth.

The fifth part analyzes the different opportunities, educational, economic, political and migratory, offered to young women and men to transfer into adulthood and integrate into broader social trajectories. It is mostly based on the empirical data collected within the framework of SAHWA surveys and reveals the opinions and feedbacks of the young participants, comparing and analyzing the different opinions from a point of view of gender.

The conclusion states that youths in the AMCs are a heterogeneous category. Although in general most youth feels socially excluded, the ones who feel most excluded are those from underprivileged areas. Furthermore, the gender gap between young people still exists, socially more than legally. Therefore we recommend that much more should be done in terms of empowering youth in society and bridging the gender gap.

2. Conceptualizing empowerment, gender equality & youth participation in society

2.1 Youth and Empowerment; the theoretical discussion

Empowerment is a process or approach that aims to enable individuals, communities or organisations to increase their ability to act upon and intervene in decision-taking processes with the aim of strengthening their influence on their environment and their lives (Bridge 1997; OECD 2012). Empowerment is not only about accessing decision taking; it also includes favouring processes through which people perceive themselves as able and entitled to occupy the decision-taking space (Rowland, 1995). Empowerment is also demonstrated by the quality of people's participation in the decisions and processes affecting their lives. In theory, empowerment and participation should be different sides of the same coin. In practice, much of what passes for popular participation in development and relief work is not in any way empowering to the poorest and most disadvantaged people in society (Oxfam 1995). Thus, groups which face discrimination in society generally have simultaneously low

access to political, social and economic opportunities and benefits, a combination known as social exclusion. Social exclusion keeps people in an inequality trap, with high rates of intergenerational transmission of poverty (Tucker 2012; OECD).

The concept of 'Youth Empowerment' also relies on the development of individual ability and on providing them with the needed opportunities for the sake of focusing on creating greater community change. A 'Youth Empowerment Theory' was developed which aims to connect individual wellbeing with the wider social and political environment. The theory suggests that people need opportunities to become active in community decision taking in order to improve their lives, organizations and communities." The theory was developed as part of the 'Youth Empowered Solution' (YES!) initiative, a three-pronged approach that effectively engages young people in work that challenges them to develop skills, gain critical awareness and participate in opportunities necessary for creating community change. (2013 Youth Empowered Solutions).

AMCs' concepts of youth and empowerment revolve around social inclusion understood to be the ability of young women and men to build a family. According to participants in the SAHWA Youth Survey interviews, the Algerian socio-cultural structure acts decisively on the symmetry between the empowerment of the young person and being able to establish his or her own family. Social inclusion and a place in society is achieved primarily through work, that is to say, decent and permanent work which allows them to glimpse their future. Their argument is based on the fact that their empowerment in economic terms is the key to becoming a social being in the full sense of the term (DZ_FE_1). In Egypt, the idea of a man having more children was not only to give them a feeling of empowerment but also to give them support in agricultural activities (FE_EGYPT_1).

> When asked: 'Why get educated?', participants in Egypt agreed that the reason why the certificate is important lies in society's influence; either to get married or to gain status in society… "Why is the certificate important?'… they reasoned that it was 'because of society'.

> "In order to have a status in society, you need to have a certificate or a masters certificate or a diploma, only to have a status in society' (National Case Study Egypt).

It seems that young men still believe that women's main role is reproduction as expressed by one of SAHWA's participating groups: "… on women's employment, all participants said that their parents encouraged them, but married men in the group said that they would not let their wives work even if the father had previously agreed". This is further echoed in the SAHWA Youth Survey 2016 statement: "Should a married woman have the possibility of working outside the home if she wants to?", where young people's attitudes and views on the issue of gender relations and gender equality in the labour market and in institutional politics are less cohesive and more fragmented, and the ideal of full equality between men and women still meets resistance (Cherubini 2016, SAHWA). This resistance is clearly highlighted in one of SAHWA's interviews in Algeria:

…. Women should not practice politics in all its forms. In return, they have their right spaces where they can work and raise their competence; in this case the sectors of education and health. Decisions taken cannot go against the natural division of labour between men and women. The world has always worked well (DZ_FG_4).

Considering that participation and empowerment are correlated (Zimmerman 1995), it should be noted that the gender gap in access to education, employment, social and political participation exists in the Arab region. This reflects social injustice and unequal opportunities offered to young men and women, mirroring major obstacles to women's empowerment.

"There is discrimination, there are companies which prefer to recruit women rather than men. While the man has a family of which he has to take care, he needs more money than the woman. She does not need a lot, she is preferred during recruitment and is paid less" (DZ_FE_2).

Empowerment is thus key to the achievement of greater equity and to enabling poor and marginalized people to break out of poverty and inequality traps and play greater political, economic and cultural roles in society. At the same time, severe underlying inequities in access to income, services and growth opportunities must be tackled if people are to seize new opportunities, so the two must be dealt with hand in hand. Equity must be, alongside empowerment, at the forefront of donor activities (Tucker 2012; OECD).

2.2   Gender equality and empowerment

While empowerment is promoted through increasing women's decision-taking powers, the support of income-generating activities and the provision of skills and education for women (UNDP Gender in Development Goal), it should be taken into consideration that income-generating activities and training programmes aimed at empowering women do increase their decision-taking powers and/or control of resources rather than increase their workload and burden.

The concept of empowerment can be explored through three closely interrelated dimensions: agency, resources and achievements. Agency represents the processes by which choices are made and put into effect. It is consequently central to the concept of empowerment. Resources are the medium through which agency is exercised; and achievements refer to the outcomes of agency. The indicators to monitor progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goal Three, "Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment", included: closing the gender gap in education at all levels; increasing women's share of wage employment in the non-agricultural sector; and increasing the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments. Thus each one of the three 'resources' implied by these indicators: education, employment, and political participation, is considered essential to the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment. (Kabeer 2005).

Considering empowerment is essentially a bottom-up process rather than something that can be formulated as a top-down strategy; gender equity and empowerment are also correlated. Understanding empowerment in this way means that women must empower themselves (Bridge 1997). Equity and empowerment become important in improving the "enabling environments" for poverty reduction and pro-poor growth as they can increase access to opportunities and enhance democratic processes (Tucker 2012; OECD).

The empowerment of organisations, individuals and movements has certain requisites. These include resources (finance, knowledge, technology), skills and leadership training on one side; and democratic processes, dialogue, participation in policy and decision-taking and techniques for conflict resolution on the other... Within organisations, open and democratic processes are essential in empowering women to withstand the social and family pressures that result from their participation. Thus the long-term viability of the organisation, and the growing autonomy and control by poor women over their lives, are linked through the organisations' own internal processes of shared responsibility and decision-taking. (Sen and Grown 1985).

In this regard, women in the AMCs feel less empowered than their male counterparts, for male presence in the labour market is more dominant than female. While exclusion from school has a clear negative impact and leads men into the informal market (56% of juvenile labour), it leads women to inactivity. Women in the AMCs are even more excluded in the rural areas than the cities (SAHWA National Case Study on Algeria). Besides the educational level, other factors contribute to female Labour Force Participation Rates (LFPR): the specific role of women in their families, influenced by religion, historical definition of the woman's role, tribal cultures etc. Cultural and social trends are contributing to specific gender roles as explained by a young woman participant from Algeria:

> For females, exclusion from school is even more detrimental in that Algerian society fails to give young women access to the labour market through vocational training. This explains the high inactivity rate among girls in such circumstances. In comparative terms, when girls interrupt their studies, they become prey to a double exclusion (NCS_DZ_1).

Issues of gender and access to the same rights were often connected to perceptions of obligation that were also quite tense and conflicting. ..."women still don't have all their rights…women are working to help men but there isn't a word of support to help women in the house" explained one female interviewee from Lebanon … young female interviewees from Lebanon conveyed mixed sentiments concerning work. Many felt a sense of empowerment about entering the labour force but at the same time expressed a desire for their future partners to support them – especially when they planned to have children. (LB_FE_1)

It is therefore not surprising that female workers make up only about a quarter of the workforce in the five AMCs, whereas the norm elsewhere is over 40%. Thus a rise in the

economic activity of women in the coming decades can only boost labour supplies, intensifying competition over scarce jobs (Tholen 2016, SAHWA).

2.3   Description of the context

Over the past decades, the Arab region has experienced unpredicted growth in the youth population. One out of five people in this region is aged between 15 and 24 years, and more than half of the population in these countries is below the age of 25 [3]. In Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, Lebanon and Algeria, the percentage of youth aged between 15 and 29 years calculated on the total of population is respectively 29.7%, 28.9%, 25%, 23.6% and 20% [4]. These proportions explain what the World Bank describes as the "youth bulge" (WB 2012), which is used to describe the rapid growth of the youth population in comparison to other age groups. This demographic data is of the utmost political relevance, and the current youth growth is the most significant in the region's history [3]. However, this region suffers from the lack of clear and strategic vision to develop this youthful and positive energy with the goal of having meaningful civic, economic, social and political participation.

After the latest popular movements in the AMCs, social demands and citizens' expectations have dramatically exploded, specially for the youth. Governments in these countries are facing more risks of instability if the needs of their population and particularly of the youth are not addressed. This is particularly true for the educational system of the AMCs, which must become more relevant to the (little) employment opportunities offered to the youth, also in consideration of the explosion in demand for employment [5].

Gender equalities in general remain persistent in the AMCs, as women suffer from conditions of disadvantage in the labour market, education, in the political and legal spheres and in the family. Many Arab Mediterranean countries have in place family laws that confer upon women the status of dependent subjects when it comes to marriage customs, divorce legislation, inheritance law and child custody. Moreover, women are associated primarily with their domestic role as caretakers. The cumulative effect is gender-based discrimination and second-class citizenship for women, albeit in varying degrees across the different countries, socioeconomic statuses and generations (Cherubini, Leccardi & Rivetti, 2015). There is a… 'gender bias and girls are less privileged than boys when it comes to job opportunities and working conditions. It's easier for a young boy to find a job' (EG_FG_1), as indicated by one of the ethnological focus group discussions in Egypt.

3. AMCs' youth aspirations for engaging in society

3.1   Educational characteristics of youth in the AMC countries

During the last two decades, a considerable improvement was observed in educational indicators in AMCs, with high levels of school enrolment in Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco. In these countries, the rate of registration in primary school is hovering around the 95% mark according to the World Bank [8]. Literacy rate for youth in these countries is also experiencing an important peak and has attained its maximum level in these past few years to achieve a high rate exceeding 93% and 95% respectively for Morocco and Egypt [8].

If we break down the statistics by gender, however, disparity emerges. For instance, youth unemployment is a serious problem in Egypt and much higher among females (89.57%) than males (39.32%) (SAHWA Youth Survey, 2015). Egypt shows a 4.8% disparity in the rate of school enrolment for girls and boys [6]. This gap is particularly evident in the Upper Egypt area and predominantly rural regions like the governorates of Minya, Assiut, Marsa Matrouh and Beni Suef, where the disparity varies between 11.5% and 15.8% [6]. This is the case for Morocco, Tunisia and Lebanon too, according to the World Bank's statistics. In Tunisia, the illiteracy rate for the population aged 10 years and over is 18.8% but it is 25% among women [7]. In Morocco, the literacy rate for men is above 82% against 62% for women [8].

These disparities reflect a social trend built on the tradition that men are seen as the breadwinners and support the family, while women are perceived to be more concerned with household activities (SAHWA Policy Paper, Egyptian Youth 2016).

According to the SAHWA Youth Survey, young women's positive performance in the education systems often results from their ability to oppose the gender discrimination they face within their family and the education system rather than from the absence of gender discrimination. It follows that indicators on women's improved performance in education should be taken as an indicator of the women's agency and the cultural transformations that are currently underway and that need to be supported by specific policies rather than as a consolidated outcome. On the other hand, young people's attitudes and views on the issue of gender relations and gender equality in the labour market and in institutional politics are less cohesive and more fragmented (as further explained below).

Therefore, enrolment in university slightly favours women. In Tunisia, for example, 55% of the population aged between 19 and 24 years registered in university is female. This could be explained by the fact that women engage later and less in economic activity than men do, or by the fact that they perform better at exams in high school and have higher grades than men, or by the fact that women are less likely to drop out of higher education or go abroad for studying [9]. A very large number of Algerian youth have a high academic level, with 41% of boys and 59% of girls in universities and higher education institutions. The main concern for young people is employment, because more than 32% of them, mostly women, are unemployed (SAHWA Youth Survey, 2015). Yet when it comes to women's access to

the labour market, 42% of young women with a higher educational level (university graduates) are unemployed in comparison with only 20% for young unemployed men [11].

Indeed, despite the efforts deployed to improve the educational level, some gaps remain, reflecting the defaults of the actual educational systems in these countries as higher pupil dropouts from primary education, especially for girls in rural areas [12]. According to the SAHWA Youth Survey 2016, the main reason that pushes girls to leave school at an early stage is the difficulties encountered in their studies. Here we can point to the standardized education system generally offered in these countries, which is not suitable for the specificities and needs of all learners. In addition, teachers' attitudes and the adopted punishment system have an impact on whether girls remain in school or leave it.

> "There are schools where teaching is bad ... the teacher merely gives explanations on the surface, so they take private lessons, but someone who has no money to pay is lost" (NCS_DZ_1).

Exclusion from school has a clear negative impact on their (youth) integration into the labour market and differs according to gender. Although the excluded are some of the most vulnerable in society, they are less supported by vocational training and employment policy. In fact, this social phenomenon leads young men into the informal market and girls to inactivity (NCS-DZ-1).

Also, the poor economic situation of some families that makes them unable to bear the expenses of schooling as they become higher is one of the main reasons that encourage girls to leave school, especially in rural areas where parents prefer to invest in the education of boys than investing in girls' education. Some girls also say that they have left school either to prepare for marriage or to take care of household affairs in the absence of their mothers.

Knowing the efforts made to encourage girls to pursue the entire schooling process, the deterioration of educational quality which produces a poor educational outcome and the general mismatch between educational curricula and the labour market's skill demands [5] will form an obstacle for young women to have sufficient opportunities for accessing the labour market.

3.2   Youth Employment in AMCs

Despite the improvements in the educational level of the youth and their achievements in the scientific domain such as medicine and engineering in AMC countries, analyses point to the existence of a big mismatch between the demands of the labour market and the profiles of young men and women newly graduated from university. The same mismatch is valid for those who left school to look for a job, especially for those who do not follow a vocational training course. This is classified as one of the main reasons making the transition from school to work difficult for young men or women in the AMCs [10].

> … the government has implemented a number of devices to create employment

for the youth category. However, for many of these young people, the ANSEJ device (national support agency for youth employment), for example, is too demanding, to the extent that a lot of them are holders of no adequate qualification to benefit from bank loans and therefore to realize an economic project in this context. The other slot, in the services sector, has quickly become saturated (transport of passengers and goods) – (DZ_FE_1).

This can explain the imbalance between labour supply and demand, with the peculiarity that the greatest job seeker proportion is first-time applicants who do not have any professional experience. Labour supply outnumbers labour demand, in particular for qualified and skilled labour. In Tunisia, officially 691,969 job applications were registered in 2014 but only 100,486 jobs were on offer [13].The growing number of 'educated unemployed' underlines the weak links between the education and training system and the labour market. The specific skills required to enter the labour market do not appear to be provided by national education and training systems. The changing nature of the labour market, plus the new skills required by the market, need to be reflected in the programmes of the education and training systems, as soft skills become increasingly important for young people to access and maintain employment [14].

Unemployment rates are particularly high, especially among the youth. In Tunisia, one in three young men in rural areas and one in five in urban areas is a job seeker or is considered to be inactive or a homeworker. This rate is higher for young women. One out of every two women in rural areas is classified as a job seeker or as inactive. In urban areas, this is the case for one out of three women [15]. Tunisia is no exception in the region; the case is similar in Morocco and Egypt, where the unemployment rate among women is around 24.7% against 9.6% for men [64].

Some researchers believe that these rates [16] [17] are underestimated by official agencies because they include informal activities pursued by young people. In Egypt, the informal sector, and for a number of reasons, attracts the most active women, with 60.3% of female workers in 2010 working in the informal sector without pay against 11.7% for men [18]

In fact, young Arab women are confronted with a double burden: their age and their gender. In Arab countries, the conflation of these two factors has resulted in significant gender gaps in terms of unemployment due to cultural, social and economic gender segregation. Studies indicate that only 30% of women of working age participate in the labour market, and those who do find work are limited to low–paying jobs in the private sector, whether formal or informal [18].

There is a lack of or poor quality of education and critical skill mismatches between what is studied in school, especially for girls, and what the private sector demands. Employers often perceive women as more costly and less productive than men. For their part, women have

concerns about their reputations and safety in private sector jobs[1], as is obvious in an interview with a male employer in a rural area of Morocco:

> 'He' prefers to work with young men "because for this activity men are tougher". Yet for other activities 'he' prefers to work with young women because "they are more docile and know better how to work than young men" (MA_LS_2).

The issue of women's work was one of the more controversial issues between those who support women's work, arguing that it has become necessary for women to work to help the family in the living costs, and those who say they should stay in their homes and that men should assume work. Meanwhile most young people state that employers prefer to recruit women over men (DZ_FG_2).

Labour laws in some Arab countries, however, do not explicitly discriminate against women. But privatization and the trend towards a market economy have damaged the status of women in workplaces; especially opportunities for work have dropped due to fears of women's absenteeism, access to consecutive holidays, pervasive family duties.

In addition, unemployment rates tend to increase with educational level, particularly for women, and are highest of all for female university graduates [19]. For example, 4% of the unemployed population in Tunisia are young women with a lower educational level while 23% of that unemployed population is young women educated to secondary or university level [11].

In fact, and according to the obstacles detailed above, young women are less likely to access the labour market than young men. And if they succeed in taking this step, they are generally engaged in the informal sector or are working in a discontinuous manner.

3.3   Youth Participation and social inclusion in AMCs

Surveys and studies, in addition to the Youth Empowerment Theory, highlight the importance of giving young people training and work as fundamental drivers of success and social integration [16]. While education was not necessarily the best means of success for young men, a stable economic status was usually listed as key for social inclusion and empowerment [20]. Assuming that the economic status of individuals is the basis of social status as noted by [Goldthorpe and McKnight 2004] [16], it is easy to understand why work is at the centre of youth demands.

It should be noted that the employment issues faced by young people and described above are not only an obstacle to the economic and financial stability of society but also threaten all forms of social regulation that allow young people to make their voices heard and have an active role in their social environment.

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1 World Bank – Closing the Gender Gap (2013)

Social integration is more difficult for young women who have to negotiate their independent income, their freedom and their ability to decide for themselves given the socio-cultural gendered norms prevailing in the region, as one young female participant from Morocco explains:

> For young women (in Morocco), the (work) experiences are often paradoxical. They have to negotiate their independent earned income, their partial freedom with the sociocultural gendered norms prevailing in the region (MA_RP).

After the popular movements of 2010 and 2011 in the Arab region, studies reveal that young men and women are more than ever aware of the importance of their participation in social and political life and its relevance for their future [21]. However, the inefficiency of the public systems set up after these uprisings between 2010-2013 and the inability of the states to ensure equal opportunities for all citizens have frustrated youth and contributed to limiting their participation in decision-taking processes. Youth is excluded from the parliaments of more than half of the Arab countries and also from all other local governance institutions [5]. The youth therefore feel that there is no opportunity allowing them to act as citizens or to express their needs and ambitions.

> Young people wish to be part of the whole of society and reject the idea of exclusion and marginalization (NCS-DZ-1).

Studies carried out by Keddar and Bou Makhlouf [22] [23] show that young people, especially young men, believe they are marginalized and excluded by authorities from the management of their cities' affairs. This figure resonates with findings from the SAHWA survey which shows that more than 93% of young Arab men and women think that they are being excluded from institutional politics, mirroring the low level of confidence in political institutions and national political systems.

The relationship of youth in Morocco with political engagement and participation shows that 76.3% is not involved at all in any sort of political or societal organisation, 82.9% does not participate in or initiate demonstrations, 84.9% does not take part in any political activity online, and only 11.6% participates at least once a month in a political meeting or gathering (NCS_Morocco_1). In demographic terms, it is noteworthy that despite the high numbers of young people in Algerian society, we see an ageing political class. This means a big gap in representation or at least young people's exclusion from the sphere of decision taking within the domain of politics in Algeria (NCS_DZ_1).

In fact youth in the AMCs believes that governance structures, at local level, are not sufficiently democratic or participative to allow their voice to emerge. In their opinion, this is the first source of their exclusion. This sense of exclusion is reinforced by the economic and unemployment conditions, which is increasing frustration among young people [24]. This frustration leads to emigration, even of the illegal kind, in order to find a better situation [25] [26] [27].

3.4   Youth attitudes to migration in AMCs

Because the labour market gives young people a very limited number of options in these Arab Mediterranean countries, many of them start to aspire to emigrating to find decent work… According to the SAHWA Youth Survey 2016 in Tunisia, Lebanon and Egypt, the four most often selected options included "the economic situation" and "people's standard of living". In Tunisia "jobs" was the biggest problem and it was also one of the four chosen in Egypt (SAHWA Policy Report).

According to the SAHWA survey results, 52.8% of Tunisian youth is likely to emigrate or re-emigrate. In Lebanon, Egypt and Algeria, the percentage ranged between 17% and 30% with an overrun of 15% for young men over young women. The idea of emigrating comes from the fact that national countries can no longer shelter young people. Their countries are incapable of offering them a decent life. Young men specially are attracted by the social advantages and the way of living in the host countries (for Lebanese youth, 63% of young men wants to migrate to European countries in reason of their social advantages against 36% for young women – according to the SAHWA survey).

Although gender is a factor when considering migration, as more men than women are likely to migrate probably driven by the urge to find a well-paid job to be able to live a decent life and return for marriage (NCS_LB_1), women are also increasingly considering this option. For Egyptian youth, migration is temporary and revolves around financial issues as one of the female participants explicitly says: "My dream was to actually migrate for a short period of time to make a decent amount of money and then return" (National Case Study Egypt).

In Tunisia and Algeria, a good proportion of young women and men intending to emigrate do not rule out the possibility of illegally emigrating if required, in consideration of the fact that emigration is not an easy process. 22%, 14% and 12.4% respectively is the rate for Algerian, Tunisian and Lebanese young men who accept to illegally emigrate if the opportunity arises. However this rate is lower among young women and does not exceed 5% according to the results of the SAHWA survey.

To emigrate, clandestinely, at the risk of one's life, may be seen as a solution by the most vulnerable category of young people, because of their poor assets in social inclusion [28].

Testimony of a young Tunisian

Unemployment of young people leads to more or less dangerous adventures of which Wajdi is aware: "I am going to tell you what young people think of: illegal migration (*harqa*), theft, drug dealing, which is the easiest way you can kick off the sale with 1,000 dinars, there are also raids, there are many things, but all these lead to prison, May God protect us against them!!" He classified these young people into three categories: there are young people who still have some hope, there are others drawn

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into despair, and others who live from hand to mouth" and what about him? "I still have some rays of hope (laughter)".

He knows some people whose life has totally changed because of *al-harqa* (illegal migration). They built a house and helped their parents. In brief, they live well. His only attempt in 2012 was a failure. "Things take place as follows, you are in a café, and you speak to your friends and tell them that you want to migrate illegally, later on someone comes to fetch you, personally I was at home and someone came home to fetch me.

I was asleep, I put on my clothes, and then I went with him to the café. At the time I had little money. He told me that there would be al-harqa or illegal migration for 2 thousand dinars. We went to Sfax, we met *al-harraq* (the young men who facilitate illegal migration). They should be ready, fill the tank with fuel, prepare food … prepare *al gouna*" This term indicates the place where they meet to watch out for the frontier policemen, forecast the weather (TN_LS_1: 7).

Testimony of a young Algerian

According to Sofiane, young people want to "live well". For them, this means first having material means: an acceptable income, a house and a car. With this, of course, they want to have their freedom. The project to migrate out of the country is considered by Sofiane. He even asked for a tourist visa from the French consulate which was refused. He was willing to stay in France after the term of the visa. So it is the lack of job opportunities in the country that pushes young people to consider a migratory project, even an illegal one: "*When we see our elders, ten years older, how they live and how we will live, and those who are younger than us, there's nothing! There is no future, you have to try your luck abroad, and here there is no opportunity"*.Sofiane has a pessimistic view of the future for young people (DZ_LS_7: 6).

Testimony of an Egyptian youth

(When asked about his approach to migration) Ahmed started off by saying that it is indeed something that has increased over the past couple of years. The main reason is basically that the job market is saturated; there are no new opportunities. The youth pursue a higher educational degree, and finish their military service and want to work.

According to Ahmed, the main reason for migration is lack of job opportunities. « Imagine that a person is married with two kids, and has no job. How will he feed his children, it is very simple, he will travel abroad for a year

and will earn five years' worth of working in Egypt. The youth will also migrate to help their parents back home, every month they will send them a sum of money, Ahmed notes that there are a lot of families who live off the remittances of a migrating family member who helps his parents to socially improve, others save up for their future ».

When we asked Ahmed if illegal migration by boat was worth the very high risk of death: Ahmed notes that «yes indeed, it is worth the risk because if one arrives in Italy for example his wage will be around thirty thousand Egyptian pounds which is the equivalent of four thousand Euros. Even if one spends two thousand Euros a month, one still gets to save around sixteen thousand pounds. Ahmed says that this fortune is worth the risk and that if I arrive there, my living standard will be transformed. Even if the risk is 99.9% that one will not make it, one can still bet on the .1% that can change anyone's life completely» (NI_EG_4)

According to the descriptions detailed above, young people need to work, to feed themselves and get married, that is to say, positively negotiate their entry into the adult world and gain a social identity that enables them to be socially included and effective in their environment as discussed in the following SAHWA National Case Study for Algeria.

Algerian Youth and the Issue of Marriage

In Algerian society, marriage is one of the main institutions. The social rule dictates that men and women enter into an official union and for it to be recognized by society. Marriage is a very important moment in the individual's life as confirmed by this interviewee's statement: "Marriage is first to comply with religion, secondly the human being has to form a family and make children and give them a good education, and inshallah we shall have children which is advantageous and profitable to society".

As regards the question of marriage, the survey data shows a high level of celibacy among young people. More than 80% of them declared themselves to be single at the time of the survey: 85% of boys and 75% of girls… Among the young singles, about 60% do not intend to get married. This rejection is stronger among boys (65%) than among girls (53%). In reality, young people aged between 15 and 29 years in Algeria are generally integrated into school, university or a system of vocational training. Without forgetting unemployed young people and another category, a minority, of young people who are at the beginning of their professional career. The difficulties in securing housing (to purchase or rent) and unemployment are the most important obstacles young people are facing in forming a family. The recurring reactions of young people translate this reality: "We want jobs and housing to be able to start a family".

The fact that a majority of young people refuse to form a family is predictable because of the unfavourable socioeconomic context (SAHWA National Case Study Algeria).

Observations of Arab societies allow us to perceive that in addition to all the difficulties that the youth encounter in this region, young women are facing more worries in terms of abilities and available opportunities. This is due to social norms that promote segregation between genders and impose a division of tasks and responsibilities according to sexual characteristics, whether one is a man or a woman. SAHWA studies and case studies reveal a change, due to the impact of education, in the definition and representation of women's role in society when speaking about issues of work and economic capacity.

> Regarding gender differentiations: "If we talk about the Casablanca-Rabat axis and the major cities, there most women have access to education and several things, parents are open in general, so women can do a lot of things in terms of participation and have opportunities. But when talking about "the real Morocco", women are faced with a lot of problems. We talk about the culture of "hchouma" and "hram". A woman can't do this or that, it's a matter of culture, it's "the profound Morocco" (al maghrib al 3amiq). And for me, these regions are the "Real Morocco", not Casablanca-Rabat even though the majority of Moroccans are concentrated in that axis" (MA_FG_3).

However Arab societies do not see women's work as a key driver for social change, rather as a way to ensure a better level of family income. The same logic is adopted when speaking of women's participation in public life. Bochloh [29] explains that young men think that it is inconceivable and unacceptable that women assume positions of responsibility in politics.

> …. Women should not practice politics in all its forms. In return, they have their right spaces where they can work and raise their competence; in this case the sectors of education and health. Decisions taken cannot go against the natural division of labour between men and women. The world has always worked well (DZ_FG_4)

Unfortunately a good proportion of young women adopt the same position, as explained above. Data show that young men feel excluded from public life and claim active participation in the decision-taking process, while young women do not pay much attention to the importance of having an active role in public life, as the idea of full equality between men and women still meets with resistance. Therefore, in response to the statement that 'Women should have the possibility of going into politics', agreement with this statement was as follows: Algeria 31% male vs. 56% female; Egypt 35% male vs. 69% female; Lebanon 69% male vs. 79% female; Morocco 67% male vs. 72% female; Tunisia 75% male vs. 89% female (SAHWA Youth Survey 2016).

Therefore, it is insufficient to merely introduce a youth policy aimed at finding the appropriate way to retain young people in their countries and persuade them to adopt economic projects that will ensure social identity and active status.

Now, with all the added value that women can bring to society and to social balance in this environment, policies, laws and programmes must support more specific actions for women and a reflection based on more equality of opportunities and empowerment in terms of gender relations between men and women.

4. Political Participation and the Legal framework

Knowing that gender inequality is a universal phenomenon that is still devastating all over the world until this day, great efforts have been made in terms of legislation and laws in an attempt to limit the negative effects of this phenomenon, specially on women.

This work started as early as the 19th century, when inequality, lack of rights, discrimination and subordination of women were denounced. Such challenges have enabled women to acquire certain rights and build a development agenda.

In this context, some legislative texts were produced and have been implemented with the aim of guaranteeing a better situation for women in terms of rights and access to public services.

In the AMCs, government failures in creating an efficient institutional and legal framework for inclusive growth, specifically addressing young men and women, has left the youth on the margins of society. Facing the highest youth unemployment levels worldwide and restricted access to quality public services, the youth of AMCs report significantly lower levels of trust in government than the older generation. With the serious deterioration of the security situation, a whole generation of displaced youth is facing an even greater risk of exclusion. According to an ethology focus group interviewed in Algeria:

> Youngsters are not interested in politics and do not trust the political parties or associations, as they serve their interests and not the interests of the community. They don't want any change because they have witnessed that the so-called Arab Spring is only a scheme to wreck and destroy Arab countries (DZ_FG_2).

Understanding the role of women in the ongoing political, economic, social and cultural transformation to the significance of states and institutions in reproducing and maintaining existing inequalities, a number of scholars and experts have expressed particular concern over the impact of the Arab Spring on initiatives to support women's public participation in the region, and the lacking and emerging conditions for establishing social justice in gender relations as well as the socioeconomic factors leading to the exclusion of women.

4.1   What are the main legislations relating to gender equality?

MENA governments have also developed national gender equality strategies that focus on preventing gender-based discrimination and on strengthening the economic empowerment of women: The Egyptian National Council for Women (NCW) Strategy for Gender Equality; The National Strategy for Women in Egypt (2011 – 2015); National Strategy for Women in Lebanon (2011 – 2021); and Stratégie de la lutte contre la violence à l'égard des femmes au sein de la famille et de la société in Tunisia. However, the strategies tend to lack specific gender-equality standards, principles and objectives, narrowing women's role in society and constraining women's empowerment in economic and public life (CAWTAR/OECD).

Just like the transitions of the region's countries are operating in a regional and international context also marked by a series of mutations, AMCs are challenged, like other countries in the Middle East region and Africa, by the reform movement prevailing in this region. Thus the MENA region has been subjected to unprecedented pressure for reform, focusing particularly on democratic governance problems, educational systems and the status of women [30] in the last two decades.

In this context, a wave of reforms and legislative formulations swept these countries with the aim of aligning them with international changes.

In Tunisia, the first government after independence in 1956 had modified the Family Code to prohibit polygamy, promote consensual marriage and introduce equal divorce proceedings. This was reinforced by the reforms carried out in 1993 through the Personal

Status Code, the Labour Code and the Penal Code in order to give women more equality compared to men in terms of sociocultural, economic and political rights [31].

Tunisia ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1993, with reservations in Article (9) allowing a woman to give her nationality to her children. These reservations were withdrawn in 2014 by the new Tunisian constitution, with the exception of non-contradiction with Tunisian law [31].

In Morocco and Algeria, family code reforms were more symbolic than anything and had no real consequences.

In Morocco, the new Family Code reformed in 2004 gives equal rights to women and men within the family. The review of the labour code in 2003 provides for a non-discrimination rule in employment and wages between males and females [32].

> In Morocco [...], the concepts of "female citizen" and "male citizen" are multiplied in the constitutional text to clarify political rights. The same Constitution also limits more equal political rights but states in Article 19 that "men and women enjoy equal rights and freedoms in civil, political, economic, social, cultural and environmental …". Beyond the constitutional recognition of parity, the same article also provides for the institutionalization of the protection of parity through the creation of a High Parity Authority. In addition, the preamble also states that "The Kingdom of Morocco undertakes to fight and banish all discrimination against anyone because of sex." (Freedom House, Morocco 2010).
>
> In Tunisia, the Constitution guarantees the equality of citizens in rights and duties "equal before the law without discrimination" in Article 21. Article 34 of the Constitution requires the State to ensure the representation of women in elected assemblies. Article 40 states that "every male citizen and every female citizen has the right to work in decent conditions and with fair wages". Note however that this reference to citizenship can be a way to define equality in the public sphere. Article 46, specifically dedicated to women's rights, is enshrined in the Constitution. It protects the gains of women, the principle of equality and fights violence against women [50] (Freedom House, Tunisia 2010).

Algeria ratified international conventions on the promotion of gender equality, such as CEDAW, The Arab Charter of Human Rights and the Additional Protocol to the African Charter of Human and People's Rights relating to the rights of African women. However, the ratification of CEDAW was accompanied by significant reservations mainly on sections contradicting the Algerian constitution [33].

The legislative provisions in the countries of the Arab Maghreb have mostly emphasized the genderization of educational systems and female literacy as an initial measure for

strengthening women's capabilities. Therefore, the education of boys and girls over the age of 6 has become mandatory by presenting it as both a right and a duty. Subsequently, the inclusion of pre-school education was made obligatory in 2001 and 2004 respectively in Tunisia and Morocco.

Also, the review of the Family Code provided for the sharing of parental rights, eradication of the "repudiation" concept, equal right to divorce and the right of women over 18 years old to freely manage their property [34].

The new labour code in Morocco gives women equal right of access to business activities and special jurisdictions ensure the strengthening of women's economic rights. The same code also stresses the protection of women by establishing special rights that take their reproductive functions into account [34].

This code has recognized sexual harassment in the workplace as an offence against women. In this context, some training activities were carried out to raise awareness of the specific problems of women at work [34].

Tunisia which has always been regarded as one of the most advanced Arab countries in terms of women's rights, reflects a new push in the rights of women with the development of Tunisia's new Constitution in 2014, insisting on equality of rights and duties between citizens, men and women, and the guaranteed representation of women in the elected assembly as provided by Article 40 [31]. Although the constitution does not set forth ground-breaking new rights for Tunisian women, it does however guarantee their already celebrated status. Importantly, the constitution also gives international treaties priority over domestic law (art. 20). On the other hand, and in spite of the constitution's progressive language, women still face legal discrimination in a number of key areas, including their ability (i) to inherit, (ii) to obtain citizenship rights for a foreign spouse, (iii) to obtain custody of their children in the case of remarriage after divorce, and (iv) to receive protection in situations of domestic violence. Women who work in the private sector also face challenges because of uneven implementation of labour laws (Norbakk 2016).

4.2 What impacts do laws and regulations in AMCs have in terms of gender equality?

Law and justice impact people's capacity to access rights and resources, act as free, autonomous agents, establish their own project and live as active members of society. In fact, The World Development Report (WDR) 2012 on Gender Equality and Development highlights the relevant role of law and justice in achieving gender equality. Indeed, the impact of the introduced legislations and laws described in the previous section on women's situation can be illustrated on three levels: Education, Employment and Participation.

The first level is educational, where indicators recorded a significant improvement showing evolution in the literacy rate for females in the AMCs, which jumped from 61% in 2000 to 72% in 2011 [66]. In Tunisia, the schooling of children aged between 3 and 5 years is becoming equal between girls and boys in both areas, rural and urban. 69% of young women

achieved the basic education cycle and 60.6% had achieved the secondary cycle in 2014 [11]. Illiteracy rate has already improved, with 6.9% registered for women aged between 15 and 35 years compared to 66% for women aged 55 years or more. In Egypt, also, 73.4% of young women were registered as having a higher educational level than their mothers in 2014. For Morocco and Algeria, the national enrolment rate for primary education increased from 50% to 90% in just a decade for girls and boys. Most impressive is the improvement registered in the range for rural females, where 73% of rural women aged between 15 to 21 years were enrolled in primary education compared to only 40% for females aged between 22 and 29 years.

> **On a very positive note, Morocco has made substantial gains in education in recent years.** Young men and women are more educated than their older counterparts. For example, among those aged 15-21 years, many of them had attended school for longer than those of 22-29 years, which reflects recent improvements. This applies to both sexes, in rural and urban areas. The improvement in educational level among young rural women was the most impressive. For rural women aged 22 to 29, only 40% attended school, while this percentage rises to 73% among rural women of 15-21 years. Although rural areas remain down compared to urban areas, they seem to have registered significant improvements [51] (World Bank 2012).

As previously mentioned, women in the AMCs have increased their improvement in comparison to their male counterparts in terms of school achievement. In Morocco, 12% of young women graduated from higher education compared to 9% of young men in 2014. In Lebanon, the net attendance ratio in secondary school participation for young females in 2012 is 85.4% compared to 77.4% for young males [69]. This is in line with the results of the SAHWA qualitative and quantitative inquiry, which shows high levels of agreement with the idea of gender equality in training and education. Large portions of surveyed young people reject the idea that "education is more important for boys than for girls". While agreeing on the fact that "the same upbringing should be given to both boys and girls", a percentage of between 47% and 87% of young respondents disagree or strongly disagree with the statement that "education is more important for boys than for girls", while agreement with the latter is even stronger.

	Education is more important for boys than for girls _				The same upbringing should be given to both boys and girls		
Algeria	**Male**	**Female**	**Total**		**Male**	**Female**	**Total**
Agree strongly	18.0%	13.3%	15.8%		32.8%	53.2%	42.3%
Agree	27.9%	16.2%	22.4%		49.4%	36.3%	43.3%
Disagree	37.3%	33.1%	35.3%		14.6%	8.1%	11.6%
Disagree strongly	16.9%	37.5%	26.5%		3.2%	2.4%	2.8%

Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Egypt	**Male**	**Female**	**Total**		**Male**	**Female**	**Total**
Agree strongly	19.7%	15.4%	17.6%		61.5%	60.4%	61.0%
Agree	17.0%	14.1%	15.5%		35.5%	36.5%	36.0%
Disagree	35.6%	33.4%	34.5%		2.5%	2.3%	2.4%
Disagree strongly	27.7%	37.0%	32.4%		0.4%	0.8%	0.6%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Lebanon	**Male**	**Female**	**Total**		**Male**	**Female**	**Total**
Agree strongly	3.2%	1.7%	2.5%		36.2%	51.3%	43.7%
Agree	12.7%	8.6%	10.7%		54.2%	42.5%	48.4%
Disagree	50.0%	43.1%	46.6%		8.1%	5.3%	6.7%
Disagree strongly	34.0%	46.5%	40.3%		1.5%	0.9%	1.2%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Morocco	**Male**	**Female**	**Total**		**Male**	**Female**	**Total**
Agree strongly	22.6%	25.7%	23.7%		27.8%	33.7%	29.8%
Agree	32.0%	24.0%	29.2%		46.6%	40.6%	44.6%
Disagree	33.1%	34.9%	33.7%		21.8%	19.6%	21.0%
Disagree strongly	12.3%	15.5%	13.4%		3.8%	6.0%	4.6%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Tunisia	**Male**	**Female**	**Total**		**Male**	**Female**	**Total**
Agree strongly	14.9%	9.4%	12.3%		51.1%	58.6%	54.9%
Agree	18.8%	10.4%	14.6%		42.8%	37.4%	40.1%
Disagree	35.3%	35.7%	35.5%		4.4%	2.3%	3.4%
Disagree strongly	30.9%	44.6%	37.8%		1.7%	1.7%	1.7%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

(Cherubini 2016, SAHWA)

Educational attainment is an important determinant cause, considered to be the first entry point into the labour market. In fact, improvements in women's positioning in the labour market have also been registered in the past decade. In Tunisia, the rate of employed women went from 24% in 2004 to 28% in 2014. For Morocco, the portion of salaried female workers evolved from 28.3% in 2000 to 33.4% in 2014. And for Algeria, the proportion of females in the labour force increased form 15.8% in 2000 to 21.2% in 2014 [71].

Most of the young people participating in the SAHWA survey think that "government should promote equality between men and women in education": 93% of young people in Tunisia, 91% in Lebanon, 88.7% in Morocco, 86.5% in Algeria and 82% in Egypt. However, the level of agreement with "should women have the possibility of going into politics?" was quite low: 69% Algeria, 45% Egypt, 32% Lebanon, 33% Morocco and 24% Tunisia, reflecting that the idea of full equality between men and women still meets with resistance (Cherubini 2016, SAHWA).

At the 'second' economic level, and reflecting an achievement in women's empowerment (as identified earlier), it is noteworthy that the ability of women to acquire, manage and dispose of assets in their own name already develops their economic capacity to earn financial independence. In 2014, 19.4% of working women were presented as the head of their households in Tunisia. Equally in Lebanon, where 14.2% of all households were headed by a woman in 2006 [70].

Also, access to credit, which in turn can be translated into an economic opportunity such as setting up a micro-enterprise or investing in an existing project, has enhanced women's ability to have more freedom of movement and make choices. This is shown in women's responses in the Tunisian Family Health Study, where 60% of women believed that it was possible to take care of their families and work at the same time; 47% believed they enjoyed a better status with their husbands than their mothers had; and 46% believed that working women had more say in their households than non-working women [67].

Yet despite the enhancement of the educational level for young women, which has had a slight impact on their position in the labour market, young women are much more likely to fall into the NEET category than young men. In Egypt, 49.5% of young males have achieved their transition to work or are looking for a job compared to only 9.3% for young girls [72]. And if young girls succeed in their transition process, they are generally targeting specific domains. Indeed, outside the agriculture sector, working women are concentrated in gender-specific occupations. Women are usually hired in family businesses or in a salaried position as teachers, nurses or secretaries but are less likely to be hired in management or technical posts. Particularly outside the public sector, women rarely reach a higher occupational level in comparison to male workers. Also, in entrepreneurship initiatives, women are less likely than men to start their own business. In Egypt, 7.4% of male youth have established their enterprises in comparison to only 2.1% of female youth [72]. In fact, female youth is much less likely to complete the transition to a stable professional position [19].

Nevertheless, the efforts made to reduce the gap in the educational and employment level between men and women in AMCs have had an impact on women's social and political participation, where positive trends in the inclusion of women in representative bodies have been improved with the aim of taking into consideration women's demands and services in the legislative and policy-making process.

Most of the males and a smaller yet significant percentage of female respondents think that "when there is not a lot of work, men should have a greater right to employment than women". The percentage of respondents who "agree strongly" or "agree" with this idea are, respectively: 56.2% and 30.3% in Tunisia, 40.4% and 41.8% in Egypt, 42.4% and 36% in Algeria, 25.1% and 45.1% in Morocco, 23.3% and 55.5% in Lebanon. Young women also show high levels of agreement with this cultural norm, although young men tend to agree more in all the countries (except for Morocco, where the male and female levels of agreement/disagreement are quite similar); in Tunisia 90.9% of young men agree or strongly agree with this idea versus 79.2% of young women, and the same is true for 85% of male and 70% of female respondents in Algeria, 87.5% of young men and 77% of young women in Egypt, and 87.1% of young men and 70.4% of young women in Lebanon. This means women's participation in the labour market is often seen in competitive terms and subordinated to the male breadwinner role. Women's political participation meets similar yet more restrained resistance: it is seen as quite desirable, mostly among female respondents (Cherubini 2016, SAHWA).

The third 'participation' level shows that women's participation in representative bodies has improved in AMCs. In Morocco, representation of women in parliament jumped form 10% in 2008 to 17% in 2014. In Tunisia, this representation went from 22% in 2008 to 28% in 2014. For Egypt there is no improvement, where female representation was 3% from 2008 until 2014. But in Lebanon, female representation in parliament was 5% in 2008 and dropped to 4% in 2014. This rate, however, is still far from reaching the 30% critical benchmark. But it should be noted that Algeria is the only country in the region that succeeds in reaching this level in its National People's Congress [66].

Nevertheless, until August 2015 no woman in the AMCs had held the position of parliamentary president except in the Tunisian case, where a woman was named vice-president of the National Constituent Assembly established in 2012. It should be noted that for the first time in the history of Arab countries a women presented her candidature for the presidency in the Tunisian 2014 presidential elections.

This shows women's ability to hold top positions in the executive branch of power, where several women were appointed as ministers or ambassadors in Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco and Egypt. However, the proportion of women holding this position is still lower and hovers around 8% in these countries [66]. However, the presence of women in certain structures generally dominated by men, such as the interior or justice ministries, has been markedly improved. This translated into the evolution of the female workforce to the rank of judge, by 28% in Tunisia, 23.5% in Algeria and 20% in Morocco.

At civil society level, a notable evolution in women's participation has been registered. Often women are more likely to adhere to civil organisations due to accessibility and the informal forms of engagement. Also, the cultural acceptance of civil organisations' activities had an impact on women's motivation to engage in this type of activity. However, women in leadership positions remain limited in civil society organisations [66].

4.3   What are the gaps to gender equality in the AMCs' legal framework?

The 2012 World Development Report (WDR) on Gender Equality and Development highlighted that in 155 of 173 examined countries gender-based discrimination is still embedded in law. As described above, a great deal of legislation was introduced in recent years in terms of gender equality with the aim of promoting women's rights in the AMCs and of enhancing their position in social, economic and political life. Despite this, some domains are still not covered by specific legislation and many women suffer from inequality. Women in Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt and Lebanon are still exposed to unemployment and vulnerable employment. Even Tunisia, which has the highest percentage of female participation in non-agricultural activities, lags behind the average of developing countries. What makes this more concerning is the fact that this share has remained relatively constant in the last two decades (Tholen 2015, SAHWA).

Democratic transformation will have no chance in the long run if the current level of economic and social exclusion in the five AMCs is not reduced. For the lower the rate of social inequality, the higher are the chances for implementing democratic rules and thus for social and political inclusion, especially of young people (Tholen 2015, SAHWA).

In Morocco and Tunisia there is no specific law criminalizing violence against women. In cases of rape, for example, the rapist is punished by 5 years' imprisonment but the possibility of escaping punishment is always there if the perpetrator agrees to marry the woman he raped. This is already applicable in all Arab countries. However, marital rape is not recognized in the penal code [31] [32]. In Tunisia, 53.5% of violent acts was detected or reported in public spaces or 46.5% of these cases was reported as happening in private spaces. Knowing that spousal assault is usually treated by justice as a personal matter, it encourages violence against women. In this regard it should be ensured that the law is properly implemented and cases of violence against women are treated not as a private matter but as a serious cause for concern.

Unlike the Arab Maghreb countries, Egypt has not yet ratified the Protocol of the African Charter of Human and People's Rights relating to women's rights. Thus the Personal Status Code still allows polygamy and allows the husband to divorce his wife without her consent. In fact, it is only in the past decade that Egyptian women have won the right to proceed to divorce without their husbands' consent (Khul) [35].

However, women in Egypt do not need their father's or husband's consent to obtain a passport, but they still cannot leave the country without their authorization.

In Lebanon, divorce law varies depending on the religious group to which the man and woman belong. Catholic law does not permit divorce except where the marriage is subject to cancellation under certain conditions. In the case of Muslims, men find it much easier to divorce than women.

Moreover, the law does not allow Lebanese women the right to pass their nationality to their children born from a non-Lebanese husband, but men can pass their nationality to their non-Lebanese wives as well as to their children [37].

While explicit discrimination in law is not the only factor responsible for non-equality between genders in terms of opportunities and access to services, the issue of gender roles and relations within the family is the one causing the most evident gender-based division among respondents, although other social cleavages such as social class, educational level, rural or urban origin matter too. However, the sociocultural relevance of social statuses such as having a family, being married or parenting are not questioned by young people (as reflected in National Case Studies: AUC, 2016; CAWTAR, 2016; CREAD, 2016; HEM, 2016; LAU, 2016).

In terms of the distribution of positions in the labour market, women tend to work in the traditionally feminized areas. In all AMC countries, women are over-represented in the service sector in comparison to the other sectors. In addition, women generally find it easier

to access middle management posts than higher management positions in their work. This is due to the explicit interpretation of what is and what is not acceptable for women as a type of work in terms of number of hours and place of work. This is sometimes translated by some legislation into restricting women from accessing some domains where jobs are considered hazardous and morally damaging. However, the definition of 'hazardous employment' is not standard.

Indeed, all AMC countries have acceded to the main international labour conventions on gender relevance, but some legal legislation in these countries remains in contradiction with a range of these conventions. For example, all AMC countries provide some maternity leave for pregnancy or birth, length of leave and level of benefits but these tend to be much lower than recommended by the ILO convention. Formally, maternity leave is set at 14 weeks by the ILO convention and this has been established by Algeria and Morocco, but in Egypt, Lebanon and Tunisia, the duration of leave allowed by law is much shorter and set respectively at 12, 7 and 4 weeks [65]. While these countries have established the length of maternal leave in accordance with ILO standards with some restrictions, no countries have yet included legislation providing paternity leave to support parents in their work and family responsibilities. This is one of the factors that makes childcare arrangements one of the critical elements in determining access to the labour force for married women of childbearing age. However, more flexibility in terms of working time, including alternative work schedules or telework, can give parents more control over when and where they can do their job. This will give women more freedom in terms of work choices and commitment to their professional careers. Unfortunately, this kind of practice is not always adopted in these countries. Indeed, the review of legislation and the introduction of new regulations are not sufficient to overcome inequalities and ensure that women have equal access to services, resources, economic opportunities and political participation in practice.

An institutional infrastructure must be in place to ensure proper implementation of these regulations and give regular feedback on their impact on the target population, i.e., institutional support systems and networks available to women entrepreneurs, including agencies and organizations offering facilities and services in a given geographical area to encourage the establishment, growth and development of women-owned SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises); furthermore, institutions to promote equal opportunities and gender equality via encouraging researches and activities that promote women to leadership positions (Cherubini 2016, SAHWA).

5. Institutional environment

5.1   What are the state's measures and institutional mechanisms for strengthening women's empowerment?

Consistent with the legislative reforms undertaken to promote equality of men and women in the region, institutional mechanisms have been developed to make that promotion effective. In this regard, a set of institutions responsible for women's affairs has been implemented.

In Tunisia, the Ministry of Women and Family Affairs is the governmental structure responsible for the promotion and protection of women's rights in Tunisia. This structure, which was created in 1993, has always suffered from the lack of financial and logistical resources to be able to fulfil its mission, as its share of the budget does not exceed 0.4% of the annual national budget [31]. This institution has implemented its own structures at regional and local level for the achievement of its programmes and projects.

After the revolution of 2010-2011 in Tunisia, a strong collaboration between the NGOs of civil society and the different regional structures of the Ministry was established to better implement programmes for young people.

However, the absence of priorities and a good planning strategy defining the areas of intervention in each region make the impact of the ministry interventions on the situation of women really superficial, especially in the country's inland regions [31].

In Algeria the creation of the Delegate Ministry for the Family and the Status of Women (MDCFCF) had a positive impact on the development of national women's rights policies. Under the Algerian Constitution (amended in 2008), for example, it is stated in articles 29 and 31 that women enjoy the same civil and political rights as men and have the status of full citizens (OECD SIGI).

This dynamic is reflected in the implementation of a national strategy against illiteracy among women, the adoption in 2008 of a national strategy for the promotion and integration of women, and the definition in 2007 of a national strategy for fighting violence against women. Note that a gender focal point has been appointed in all government ministries to act as a relay with the MDCFCF [33].

In Morocco, an interdepartmental network for equality between men and women has been created within the Ministry of Public Service and the Modernization of the Administration. This structure is responsible for coordinating activities relating to the institutionalization of equality between men and women in the public service structures, mainly those relating to human resources management [32].

In Lebanon, the Department of Women's Affairs already attached to the Ministry of Social Affairs had as its main objective to fight against gender-based violence. In addition, the Ministry of Social Affairs is committed to introducing in all its programmes and policies the principle of gender mainstreaming and the promotion of women's participation at local level [37].

The national council for women, which was created in 2000 as an independent institution in Egypt, aims to promote women's status by tackling economic, political and social aspects. This institution is acting for the review of laws relating to women and even provides draft acts [35].

Indeed, these gender institutions devoted to promoting gender equality and mostly located within public services, especially in units responsible for human resources management, have implemented policies to check and enable accountability for ensuring equal employment opportunities, pay equality and merit-based recruitment, seeking to guarantee equal opportunities for women and men when competing for positions. For example, proactive approaches to strengthening gender balance in the public sector that aim to reduce the representation gap, especially in public sector organisations, are found in Egypt and Morocco. However, some initiatives of gender-responsive budgeting were adopted by some governments and ministries as an effective way of ensuring that government programmes account for gender differences. Morocco is a leading example in the region, where its Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Women's and Family Affairs coordinate to plan for a specific gendered budget. Other initiatives, such as in Egypt, have introduced important elements of gender budgeting in their public structures [66]. Yet there are still few such initiatives in the region.

Other institutions, especially non-governmental ones, are working to reinforce women's access to the decision-taking process. In this direction, some consultation activities were designed and attended by specific groups of participants (such as groups of young men or young women only, or groups of migrants composed of men or women only, etc.) to raise awareness of the importance of participation in the decision-taking process.
Also, developing capacity in terms of resources acquisition was undertaken to support specific groups that are less involved in the policy development process (rural women, young female graduates, etc.) [66].

However and regardless of whether or not they belong to a public structure, these institutions face significant challenges such as lack of resources, inadequate budget allocation, limited number of qualified staff, weak capacity and skills in gender mainstreaming and mainly a low level of cultural and organizational support on gender issues that lead to weak coordination and cooperation between gender focal points and other structures. These key factors must be addressed in order to make the effect of these activities in gender-focused institutions more widespread and effective. Tailored policies need to be put in place in order to: i) reach out to diverse social constituencies; ii) acquire a focused understanding of "gender equality"; and, iii) address their actual needs through effective policies.

5.2   Are available institutions effective and efficient enough to help empower youth?

Implementing policies and programmes to promote youth is of great importance. Youth policies will help integrate the concerns of girls and boys in various sectoral ministries and within the international, regional, national and local strategies.

However, while some countries in the Arab region have recognized the need to renew the approach to the Youth issue, such as in the case of Morocco, other countries are not committed to this goal [38].

By late 2000, some governments took measures to confront youth issues and the potential threat they pose to social stability if their energies and specificities are not accommodated in a positive way [38].

In Morocco, since 2008 a process of developing a participatory and integrated approach to youth has been implemented by the Ministry of Youth and Sports. The strategy's objective is to develop a participatory planning and programme framework for youth, involving all policy sectors. Since then, youth is no longer considered a "sector" but a a population that needs the concrete and coordinated mobilization of a wide range of stakeholders such as state institutions, organizations from civil society and private-sector partners [39].

In Algeria there is no integrated strategy for young people. But various programmes and regulations have been implemented over the past few years for the benefit of the youth. The Ministry of Youth and Sports, created in 1964, headed by a cabinet minister and supported by the "Secretary of State in Charge of Youth", is primarily responsible for youth programmes in Algeria. However, the common perception is that the Ministry has predominantly focused attention on sport rather than youth [40].

In 2009, Tunisia developed a national youth strategy with the goal of strengthening the support to youth groups. This was made possible thanks to their involvement in the field of development, information and communication technologies, improving awareness of health issues and risk behaviour, strengthening their participation in public life [41].

After the popular movements of 2010-2011, the Ministry of Youth and Sports, which is responsible for the implementation of youth policies in Tunisia, is in the process of formulating anew the main demands and claims of young people that were already expressed during the movements of 2010-2011[41].

It should be observed that the results of the national youth consultation conducted in 2010 by the Youth Observatory in Tunisia were taken into consideration in preparing the five-year development plan drafted by the Tunisian government, which explains the strategic direction of the country for the next 5 years. Tunisia has also ratified the African Youth Charter [41].

In Egypt, a national policy for youth was launched in the 2010 Human Development report. This policy was implemented by the National Council for Youth in 2009. Employment, education, health, political participation and other domains were covered by this policy. But so far there is no indication that this policy has been adopted on a national scale [42]. The Ministry of State for Youth Affairs is responsible for child and youth development in Egypt.

Its strategic goals for 2013-2017 include enhancing political participation of youth, building cultural awareness and developing training of and research on youth [42].

In Lebanon, a national organisation composed of youth NGOs and youth wings of political parties called Youth Forum for Youth Policy proposed in 2012 a youth policy draft outlining recommendations on labour and economic participation, demography and migration, education and culture, health, social integration and political participation. In the same year, the policy document was approved by the Lebanese council of Ministers [44]. Since then, this organisation collaborates closely with the Ministry of Youth and Sports formed in 2000 and responsible for youth affairs in Lebanon [43].

In recent years, the efforts of these institutions have been devoted to enhancing youth skills by offering them training with the aim of facilitating their integration into the labour market. Many entrepreneurship and financial education programmes have been implemented with the cooperation of international organisations as a way to give youth a better start in the labour market and to strengthen young people's long-term employment prospects. But, and as shown above, entrepreneurship initiatives among young people are still scarce. In addition, with the public sector already unable to formally hire any more skilled graduates, young people are moving more and more into the informal sector.

In Tunisia, the Ministry of Youth, Sports, Women and Families is responsible for the implementation of youth policies. Services to young people are delivered through centralized administrative units and a network of youth centres. Amongst its many responsibilities, the ministry focuses mainly on the sports sector while youth centres focus on the cultural programmes for youth (World Bank 2014).

In Morocco there are around 500 youth houses to support the capabilities of registered youth organisations and encourage the social inclusion and participation of young people in local sport, cultural and leisure activities. "With an annual budget of less than EUR 300 the youth houses suffer from inadequate capacities to provide the kind of services and activities that young people hope to have access to", the report explains (OECD, 2015).

Also, the efforts made to create and strengthen youth representatives in decision-taking structures in such a way as to give them better-adapted opportunities to participate in public life remain ineffective and generally untapped. Popular belief portrays young people as an uncommitted category, not interested in getting involved in the decision-taking process.

Commenting on this phenomenon, one young man said: "When you talk to an old politician, he doesn't hesitate to reply, "what do you know? How can you change things? You cannot" (NCS_DZ_1).

Contrary to the widespread thought that young people are not interested in politics, the SAHWA survey shows that a good proportion of young people are more and more interested in politics. Following the SAHWA survey results, especially in the countries which witnessed popular movement, the rate of young people who regularly follow political news varies between 31% and 23% in Tunisia, Lebanon, Morocco and Egypt. This rate is weaker

in Algeria, where it is limited to 13%. This does not mean that young people are encouraged to have an active participation in existing political structures, knowing that their levels of trust in these institutions is very low.

According to the SAHWA survey results, the level of confidence that the young accord to political institutions and politicians is very low. In Tunisia, Algeria, Lebanon and Egypt, more than 50% of young people do not have any confidence at all in political institutions and elected local officials. Confidence in political institutions is shown as follows (SAHWA Youth Survey 2016).
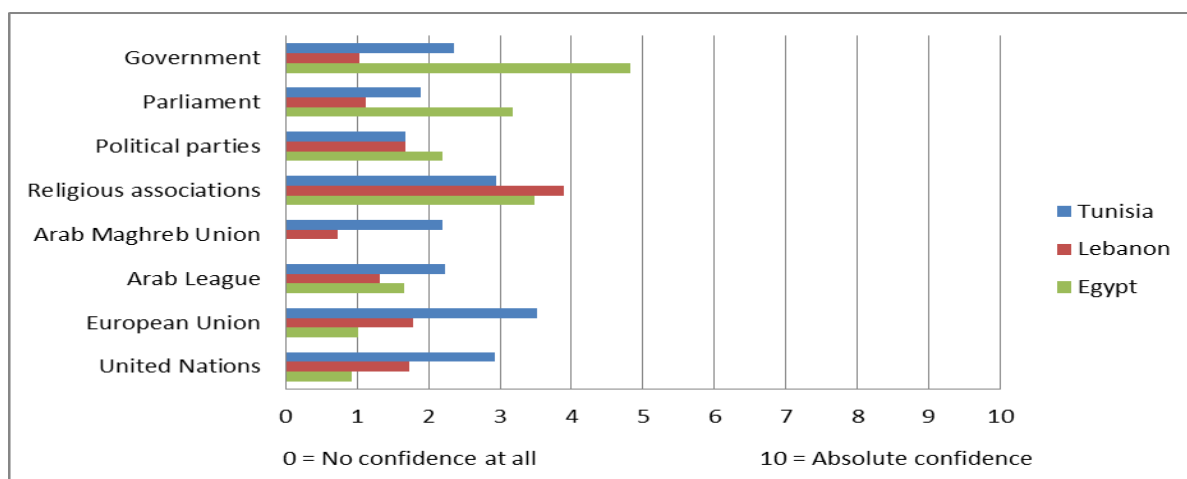
This finding can be explained by the feeling of disappointment that youth generally expresses towards state politics and its institutions and existing mechanisms to drive change [73]. This is evident in the trend of participation in elections. Young people are less likely to have participated in the last election held in their countries. According to the SAHWA survey results, less than 30% of young people had participated in the last elections held in their countries except for Egypt, where the rate of youth participation in the last election is hovering around the 44% mark. The main reason given by young people to justify abstaining from voting is their disinterest in the election process. This clearly shows the level of alienation that exists between youth and the political process, which does not respond to their aspirations and so they are not encouraged to actively engage in it.

Indeed, the lack of significant added value in the youth situation explains why the existing legal texts, the operating methods of the public institutions and the way they implement policies on young people influences the opportunities available to young people in the political, social and economic domains. But in the absence of an integrated framework to define the "why", "how" and "what for" of youth policy, government interventions tend to be symbolic [73] and have no effect on this population.

6. Unequal opportunities offered to youth (girls and boys)

6.1 What are the changes in the structure of opportunities and constraints in youth transitions from education to employment and from parental family to a family of their own in the changing societies of AMCs?

This part focuses on the unequal opportunities for young people (girls and boys). We use the term "empowerment", both in terms of "idiographic" logic (or intentionality) [45] to reflect the process of "acquisition of powers to conduct and the ability to control their life" [46] and in terms of "nomothetic" logic (or intentionality) [47] marked by "democratic semantics: to feel involved in, and collectively or individually emancipate with shared power, to be able to mobilize for a shared cause" [48].

In this perspective, we will present some examples of the different opportunities offered to young people in AMCs (Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon and Morocco), enabling youth to strengthen their skills and power to act. Do girls and boys enjoy the same opportunities? What are the disparities between girls and boys in terms of ability to access resources, given that what Weber called "life chances" [49] are different?

Empirical data collected within the framework of SAHWA surveys (collectée dans le cadre des différentes enquêtes de SAHWA) revealed that girls and boys do not have equal access to social capital (access to information, legal texts, education, utilities, etc.). This unequal access to opportunities and resources is accentuated by the geographical appartenance (urban / rural) and the educational level. Indeed, resources and opportunities are not the same in different youth groups of both sexes. They depend on geographical location, age, socioeconomic status, educational level and other factors affecting young people's ability to access resources.

But first of all, what opportunities are available to young people in this phase of socio-political transformation?

Several actions could offer young people the opportunity to strengthen their power to act and their engagement capabilities. It is about the democratization of education, the right to vote, the right to work, access to culture and leisure, etc.

However, the situation in the AMCs is not homogeneous; indeed, in certain countries (such as Egypt where the effects of religious references are very sensitive when it comes to women's status and rights in the private sphere) measures must be taken to improve the legal framework. In other countries, there is a lot of additional work that should be done to reduce the gap between legislations and implementation.

> « In the Egyptian Constitution, Article 11 also raises the issue of gender equality. Under this article, women can hold public office without discrimination. They must also be fairly represented in parliament, without establishing quotas. This equality principle must however be tempered by several factors, including the important role of religion and especially of Sharia in the same constitutional texts» [52].

Second: What is the impact of the changes on the youth's life experience in the AMCs, as part of broader social trajectories?

Following the idea of life trajectories, two main "transitional turning points" in AMCs can be described (Garcia 2016, SAHWA). 1. The transition to work or study at the end of obligatory education; and 2. The transition from higher education to work.

According to the results of the Sahwa Youth Survey and Ethnographic Fieldwork dataset, the transitional turning points in the region are established mainly between 25 and 29 years of age. This is when young people finish or leave high school and start the period of achieving some financial autonomy to manage their life. Life stories, such as biographical examples of transitional trajectories, reveal that boys are still subject to traditional rules for marriage, which involve the need to find stable and well-paid jobs to obtain the necessary assets to establish a new home:

> "For me marriage is nisf eddine (sacred religious duty), and the move away from the haram, they say live your life while you're young, I do not understand. What I want is to live my life with my wife ... But you know marriage is still a dream" (DZ_FG_2)

After the revolutions, new opportunities were offered to young people, including freedom of expression, democratization, citizen's participation (associative engagement, local engagement in neighbourhoods, proximity to media developments, etc.), ICTs. In all five countries we are witnessing, in varying degrees, an expansion of associations. In Tunisia, there were 19,131 associations in 2016 [53]. In 2014, there were over 6,850 [54] new associations created in the entire Tunisian territory covering diverse fields such as the environment, citizenship, election, development, promoting the role of women, etc.

Supporting women's organisations is one broad approach to promoting women's empowerment, which takes account of the collective aspects of empowerment. However, this can prove difficult, or backfire, if the availability of external funding and organisational changes which this brings about undermines accountability for membership or creates internal tensions. Women's organisations vary widely and may not always serve the interests of poor women or work in ways which support empowerment (Bridge 1997).

> « The proliferation of associations is also due to the introduction of a new legal framework governing associations. Decree Law No. 88 of November 24, 2011 has indeed been enacted to break with the old law of 1959 and especially with the system of authorizations and prior investigations.
> Decree-Law No. 2011-88 of the Constitution guarantees freedom of association and abandons any approval procedure and prior authorization.
> The association binds together people with Tunisian nationality or resident in Tunisia who are at least thirteen (13) years old [55]".

As for Morocco [74], the number of associations increased from 116,000 in 2014 to 130,000 in 2016 [56]. In Algeria, the number of associations reached 93,654 in 2012 [57]. However, it is observed that young men are more involved in associations

> […]with the exception of associations created by / for young people (Union of Unemployed Graduates, Chabab Net, Local Association for the Promotion of Youth and Employment) in Tunisia, researches revealed a persistent "lack of interest" among the youth for membership in the traditional forms of associations. However, some organizations recognize their own responsibility in letting their organizational weaknesses and the limits of their capacity affect the mobilization of this public. »
>
> Although the youth tends to turn away from traditional associations, it should be noted that many young people continue to engage spontaneously in various fields of activities, going from the cleaning of an archaeological site in Kef to other volunteer actions in the camps of Libyan refugees. So, if youth movements are therefore not institutionalized, their excitement and good acts show some desire for commitment, which should satisfy them through new forms of "associations" that are a better match with their profiles.
>
> […]This reality was confirmed by data collected during expository interviews. Indeed, official managers of associations remained after the revolution, positions mostly dominated by male members. Moreover, the participation of women in community action is mostly urban and concentrated in big cities. The creation of new associations and the opening of sections in the different regions in particular, by AFTURD and ATFD, introduced slight changes. In the offices of females associations, of the eight interviewed, we counted one woman among men as a leader.
>
> The same is valid for the number of adherents to these associations. Female presence is indeed very limited. Thus 51% of associations have no women among their members [58].

The 2009-2010 EMJM survey provides a similar table of youth's weak participation in civil society organizations.

This quantitative survey asked young people whether they participate in special civil structures (eg, the Houses of Youth) and about their access to recreational and social activities.

Based on their answers, broken down by the amount of time devoted to the association, youth participation in civil society associations appears indeed to be low in Morocco. Example: less than 1% of the youth reported having volunteered for at least two months [59].

Despite the distrust towards youth associations, young people are more engaged in civic action and volunteerism that in purely political activities [60]. Certainly, participation in social and political life allows young people to forge their identity. "Active citizenship" is fundamental for empowerment.

Testimony of a young Tunisian girl from Djerba

Participating as an observer of a party during the elections also satisfied a vivid curiosity of being a witness to the different steps in the poll. She observed and worked with a party that did not match her political convictions, the al-Mahabbah Party of the opponent Hashmi al-Hamdi, who lives in London.

She felt embarrassed to represent this party; when she remembers this, she laughs at herself, but she had no other choice. Her actions were not a sign of political adherence: «my father made it clear to them, it was just for the sake of experience, they were very nice to me because of my young age, they asked in which office I wanted to be the observer. I showed them the office where I was not allowed to enter in 2011 with the flag covering my shoulders! They talked a lot with me, with a sense of humour». This experience was in a way her initiation to politics; with great emotion she attended the opening of the poll.

As part of the same institution she defended a project, which consisted in founding the Youth Academy as suggested by a director of culture of the Manouba governorate.

It is about forming in every Youth House a group of «young guides» who represent their regions in different national or international meetings. But apart from these encounters, the group should participate in workshops with Youth House guides in their own region, to deal with one topic each time (women, environment, terrorism etc.). Visual documents are used, and each member has a portfolio where s/he takes notes of important information. Such notes will be evaluated to decide whether s/he deserves promotion within the Academy.

The academy allowed her to meet interesting people, to visit places, to attend discussions that enlightened her concerning different subjects. «During the last holidays, within the Young Guides Training Academy framework, we went to Sousse, Kairouan and Tunis, we represented Djerba in the International Social Forum just after the terrorist acts in the Bardo Museum. During two evenings, my parents were sitting in front of the TV watching me! They must be proud of me! My parents were

confident because we had mentors with us, within three days we went to Sousse, Tunis but we spent the night in Kairouan ».

In terms of cultural and leisure activities, testimonies of interviewed youth are quite different. For some, these activities allow them to flourish and to fulfil themselves, though requiring "tricks" to get around family prohibitions; for others, these activities are strictly prohibited. However, girls are aware that boys have more opportunities to access these resources due to predominant societal structures; as explained by one young woman participant:

I love my job very much, but women working in the field of sport suffer from a kind of pressure, the society where I live is patriarchal, it believes that some of the posts are reserved for men, people don't have a culture of women's sports and when I go out into the street I can see other questions in them: are you a boy or a girl? People are not accustomed to seeing a liberal girl who is different from other girls, walking with confidence in the street, especially because I don't wear a hijab (DZ_LS _7: 6).

Testimony of a young Tunisian girl from Kairouan

All of Khouloud's desires were pretexts to engage in endless duels with the father. Behind him, she saw the mentality of the region, which favours the boy and prohibits the girl the right to grow. The passion she had for coquetry aroused her father's anger to the point of asking her to wear the veil. Her refusal was radical because for her to stand up against the father was a way to resist the conservatism of the environment; but after a while she considers details that activated so many disputes as unimportant. Her father's severity was not able to stifle the flow of affection and the love that always lived in her. He spares no effort to give her what she asks for, vacations, and family outings...

She had to give up activities such as sport (handball) and artistic pursuits (dance) as a painful concession to obey her father. Khouloud could not go anywhere alone without the company of her mother, not even to visit her grandmother (TN_LS_2).

Testimony of a young Tunisian girl from Djerba

The cultural activities tolerated by her parents gave Syrine a freedom that was different from those the young girls in her area could claim. Her family, despite the conservative environment, gives Syrine and her brother a warm atmosphere in which to blossom. Both play sports, twice a week, Syrine goes out in sportswear running alone, and passers-by often remark

on this and report it to the father in his shop; but he remains indifferent (TN_LS_6).

Testimony of a young Tunisian boy from Djerba

Between classes at school, work (on Sunday in the souk, or with his father), dance and tutoring, Al'â has a rather busy schedule. He says that daily life in Djerba is so stifling, which is why he avoids remaining inactive; the dance sessions give him great pleasure: *"dance fulfils me, it helps to alleviate stress, after training you feel at ease, and last Saturday after training I was really happy! I told the trainer, my classmate, who was with me, had the same feeling."* Three sessions per week have become indispensable for his wellbeing. Indeed, his father does not know that he is a member of a dance group, using the paraphrase, *"artistic expression",* vaguely gave him the idea that this is a sport. The group members seem to benefit from the same word to practice the same activity in a fairly conservative sociocultural environment. Without this little "misunderstanding", it would be difficult for his father not to oppose his son playing music and tolerate his dancing.

The good reputation of the coach, the institutional framework of the activity give parents "moral guarantees" that discourage them from suspecting their children: *"Before their daughters start their training, they meet the coach, and impose their conditions, he too is from Djerba and is strict, he has always told them one must be disciplined, whoever wants to chat, or do anything, must do so outside the classroom.*

"Before joining the *group,* Al'â's *cousin* Nidhal *went to see the coach to talk with him because he does not allow everyone to join the group! Neither offenders nor those with a history ... Before accepting me in the group he asked me several questions about my family, my father, my cousins etc. because there are girls in the group whose parents require the coach to keep a correct atmosphere, he asked me several questions about my family, my father's profession ....* " This strictness gives young people the pleasure of practicing dance without making parents worry.

Besides, he said, for a period, his father started to make remarks not to oppose the "physical expression" but to express concern on seeing it encroach on the time devoted to studies. His sister, for example, plays in a handball team; she travels to participate in games. But could she practice other activities? *No! He answers, I talked with her, but she is a girl, what activity could she practice? How about music? My father opposes it! Maybe she could participate in book or language clubs!* "In fact, the

practice of music according to the father *is forbidden, "haram,* unlawful"*, but it's not an issue to listen to it. Al'â' does not have a computer at home, although computer science is his speciality in high school. To download the songs on his mobile phone he sits for two hours in a cafe that offers free access to Wi-Fi (TN_FG_4).

6.2   Does mobility and emigration offer opportunities for realizing projects and position a strong differential opinion between genders?

Geographical mobility could be a factor in social promotion for young people of both sexes. This mobility is, in most cases, an obligation (for continuing studies or seeking employment). The SAHWA National Case Studies and ethnographic fieldwork reveal that the youth in rural areas are more excluded than the youth in big cities, and women in rural areas are excluded the most. Furthermore, the youth who has not completed a degree, or has completed a degree but has no job, feels socially excluded.

Testimony of a young Tunisian girl From Kairouan

As a teenager, she could not believe that her father would tolerate one day her having the opportunity to leave the region to study in Tunis. Nevertheless, the course of events had forced changes.

In this region, says Khouloud, girls have to suffer in order to win. Such is not the case of the boys, who enjoy unlimited tolerance that eventually compromises their progress and leads to their failure in education. Khouloud's brother, Hussam, is an example that represents the germ of this educational model, which the parents reproduce blindly.

[…] Life on the University campus allowed her to practice two activities: taekwondo and dance. A kind of belated revenge on the prohibition imposed on her by her father during her adolescence. Indeed, she loved so much to play handball, she had even joined the local team in her region. But this did not last more than a fortnight; her father did not tolerate seeing her traveling to accompany the team to play games LS-TN-2e-KHOULOUD-F-20).

Testimony of a young Tunisian boy from Gafsa

Early on, when he was barely 15 years old, in 2004, Aymen engaged during the school summer holidays in the world of work. Although his parents were reluctant to allow him to go to Sousse to work on construction sites, he had the courage to do so. Later, in 2007, he went to work in Djerba with two classmates. The money he earned allowed him to

cover his expenses during the school year, but also to discover the pleasures Djerba Island offers its visitors. Every late afternoon, he and his comrades went to the beach to swim, then headed to discover leisure in the tourist area. They spent the rest of the night under the stars before the burning sun of the day woke them up to go to work. Aymen evokes these months with nostalgia, as they were his initiation into the social world of adults.

He then knew money and women. He was in a relationship with a Czech woman who offered him to go to Europe, *"but as always*, he says, *I think of my family ... how dare I go, go elsewhere and leave my father and my family in this situation*?" (FE-TN-1).

Testimony of a young Lebanese girl

Have you thought about leaving Lebanon?

In the past, I didn't like to think a lot about this…I love my country and being around and caring for my family …at the same time the way this country is going in terms of society and the psychology of this country…well of course one starts to think of leaving…

You think of leaving…but where and how?

Well I think of leaving for Canada for example….through migration.

Why Canada and not another place?

Well, there is already a Lebanese community there and I want to improve my job opportunities, plus housing options are better. But it depends on where: there are migratory options; or if there are opportunities in employment and living, yeah I would go there.

Do you think that there are ways to improve life in Lebanon?

Well, if they change the situation…but in my opinion no, there is nothing we can do to improve the situation (LB_LF_3).

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7. Conclusion

In conclusion, we focus on the obstacles that are the source of gender inequality in terms of empowerment. Following Naila Kabeer's analysis [61] of gendered empowerment centred on a personal or collective effort aimed at enhancing… women's capacity to have greater control over their lives …(Kabeer 2005), we distinguish three types of obstacles that require the intervention of different stakeholders (policy makers, civil society actors, in different

sectors such as education, employment and participation). The obstacles hindering empowerment (of both sexes and especially girls) are: access to resources (prerequisite conditions), initiative (the ability to use available resources to open up new opportunities, vindicate rights, etc.) and performance or achievements (perceived results in regard to abilities, self-esteem and environment recognition).

Youth policy in the region suffers from the lack of a whole-of-government approach and is poorly mainstreamed across key public governance areas (OECD 2015).

Encouraging the adaptation of national youth policies and national civic councils of youth organisations, namely national youth councils and Forums (Laine 2016, SAHWA) and ensuring that gender issues and concerns are mainstreamed in all processes.

The role of different civil society organisations in developing new forms of applied training or vocational schools that aim to bridge the gap between jobs and the youth should be actively implemented alongside local partners (Laine 2016, SAHWA).

Barriers to accessing resources in AMCs are, as just mentioned, principally related to the educational systems, which are weak due to two major factors:

- Their deficient quality: teaching approaches that do not encourage critical / analytical thinking or creativity, no priority given to scientific and technical education, politicized language, poor infrastructure and lack of minimum requirements, teaching workforce badly allocated, absenteeism and inadequate training, inappropriate teaching methods, unsuitable curricula for the local environment, etc. Girls are the first victims of the educational system, since basic socialization (essentially within the family) does not prepare them for taking initiatives and having the same opportunities as boys.
- Lack of equity: the return of illiteracy that affects mainly girls and rural youth who leave the system after a few years in school. Statistics show that girls from rural areas are those who have least benefited from educational efforts, organizational success, etc.).

This state first and foremost impacts the poor in rural areas.

We also highlight the lack of connection between branches of higher education and the requirements of new jobs generated in the economic field, which prevents young graduates from taking advantage of the opportunities offered by the labour market.

Barriers to taking initiatives refer to the increased difficulties of finding a decent job, gaining financial autonomy and accessing effective citizenship. Faced with such a situation, the informal sector remains the largest employer of youth. This is one of the main factors in social exclusion and precariousness among young people, who are vulnerable to exploitation and even crime. Many young women (most of whom are young) employed in the informal sector report exploitation and sexual harassment.

Barriers to achievement relate to the difficulty of entering adulthood, the deficit of young people's participation in institutions and public life, the rise in health risks, exclusion and violence.

Each of these dimensions relating to individual Empowerment can be read at an intrapersonal, intersectional and behavioural level [62].

8. Recommendations

As demonstrated above, several legislative and institutional measures have been put in place to improve the situation of women and the youth in the AMCs.

However, indicators and statistics still reflect a situation of precariousness and exclusion for these two populations.

This can be explained by the lack of implementation of policies that have already been introduced or the inefficiency of introduced measures.

It appears that some reforms made in respect of youth and women in these countries have been established under international pressure that pushed governments to take such steps, without being ready for such measures or having the ability to put them to work.

- The integration of the target population, women and youth in this case, into the analysis and planning process for better identifying needs, plus developing programmes adapted to their needs.
- Ensuring the involvement of the targeted population in the implementation of the introduced policies and measures as active players and not as passive actors subject to the decisions of others.
- Making effective the application of existing policies and strategies.
- Giving more support to organizations and institutions working in the field of female and youth empowerment with the goal of reaching the broader population and making actions and activities more effective.
- Establishing a legislative and institutional framework to better promote the rights of young women in order to make their social, economic and policy participation easier, taking into account the specificities of this population.
- Encouraging young people (of both sexes) to be involved and active in their immediate environment through supporting the local development of web radios and community associations;

> **An example of good practice: associative and community radios in Tunisia**
>
> After the 2011 revolution, associative radios in Tunisia have benefited from the liberalization of the media landscape. With a network that brings together 10 community radio stations which have obtained an FM license from the Independent High Authority of the Audiovisual Commission (HAICA) and the existence of several web radio projects, the Tunisian experience today presents a unique model of pluralism in the Maghreb and Mashreq countries. The emergence of this new wave of associative radios and their development was accompanied by a set of structural changes on several levels: legal, professional, technical, political, etc. [63].

- As concluded by the SAHWA Youth Survey 2016, further good practices include supporting youth centres and youth exchange programmes. For example, in Tunisia many youth and cultural centres are educational entities that offer young people opportunities to access a wide variety of leisure, training and awareness-raising activities, allowing them to express themselves and develop their imagination. These youth spaces could involve youth-led management and also bring together local employers and jobseekers (Laine 2016, SAHWA);
- Reviewing vocational programmes in ways to become more oriented towards the needs of the business and labour market;
- Implementing specific training programmes with the aim of developing the technical capabilities and managerial skills of young entrepreneurs, particularly young female ones;
- Encouraging decent employment and an entrepreneurial spirit among young people.
- Establishing communication and guidance structures for young people (girls and boys) in ways that make them more aware of opportunities available to them (in terms of training, entrepreneurship programmes and facilities, legislations, gender equality, human rights, etc.);

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Researching
Arab Mediterranean Youth:
Towards a New Social Contract

The SAHWA Project ("Researching Arab Mediterranean Youth: Towards a New Social Contract") is an FP-7 interdisciplinary cooperative research project led by the Barcelona Centre for International Affairs (CIDOB) and funded by the European Commission. It brings together fifteen partners from Europe and Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries to research youth prospects and perspectives in a context of multiple social, economic and political transitions in five Arab countries (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt and Lebanon). The project expands over 2014-2016 and has a total budget of €3.1 million. The thematic axes around which the project will revolve are education, employment and social inclusion, political mobilisation and participation, culture and values, international migration and mobility, gender, comparative experiences in other transition contexts and public policies and international cooperation.