



**Background Note
Briefing to the Executive Board
Second Regular Session 2016**

“Operational Response at Country Level: Morocco”

Summary: In a context marked by major upheavals in the MENA region in the wake of the "Arab Spring", the new Constitution adopted by Morocco in 2011 has provided an important framework for promoting women's human rights and for the advocacy of civil society organizations in favor of the effectiveness of principles and norms enshrined therein. The institutionalization of gender-sensitive public policies is a key aspect of the Morocco MCO's work. The presentation will thus be structured to focus on gender mainstreaming in public policies in the following impact areas (i) leadership and political participation (ii) women's economic empowerment (iii) ending violence against women and (iv) planning and budgeting.

UN Women's country level operational response in Morocco

Throughout recent years, and taking into account the transformations affecting the region as well as the persisting challenges in terms of gender equality in Morocco, the country engaged in a wide reform process with special regard to expanding civil liberties and promoting women's human rights. This process started with the adoption of a new constitution that includes, in particular, the primacy of international conventions over domestic laws, the prohibition of discrimination, including based on gender, and the consecration of equality and parity between men and women in all areas. In the framework of these reforms, national duty-bearing institutions set, as major objectives, the implementation of international norms such as the CEDAW and the Beijing DPA, as well as the mainstreaming of gender and women's rights in public policies ensuring effectiveness in the upholding of rights and institutional accountability with regards to the rights of women and girls, especially those belonging to the most deprived social groups. The Governmental Plan for Equality (2012-2016), led by the Ministry of Solidarity, Women, Family and Social Development was launched in order to coordinate public policies implemented by the Government in terms of GEWE.

The office's strong relations and past partnerships, allowed the Morocco MCO to position itself at the heart of the main ongoing reforms and engage in the strengthening of institutional partners' capacities through direct technical support to help them achieve these reforms. With almost half of its 2015 programming in Morocco funded by the government, the office supports the implementation of the government's commitments in the field of GEWE while ensuring the programming's sustainability.

The main objective of the MCO's strategy is to consolidate efforts to build substantive equality between men and women, through (i) harmonizing national legislation with international norms as well as advanced constitutional provisions relating to women's human rights; (ii) promoting parity in all fields through significant strengthening of women's representation within elected bodies at the national and local level as well as decision-making bodies; (iii) strengthening women's economic empowerment as well as their access to the formal labor market and to decent work and; (iv) establishing efficient institutional accountability mechanisms for women and gender equality advocates.

During this presentation, UN Women Morocco MCO will focus on the following four key impact areas: leadership and political participation, women's economic empowerment, ending violence against women, and gender-sensitive planning/budgeting.

1. Leadership and Political Participation

As part of its efforts on the implementation of the constitutional provisions and their translation into organic and ordinary laws, a key focus of UN Women's work in Morocco is increasing women's political participation. UNW Morocco MCO addresses the issue of women's participation in different forms including via advocacy work for an increased quota in local elections, women's access to the public administration, and to companies' boards.

A major achievement in this area took place with the institutionalization of the "Parliamentarians for Parity and Equality" working group within the House of Representatives. In fact, this entity, which brings together representatives of the eight parliamentary groups – majority and opposition – has been integrated into the internal rules of procedures of the House of Representatives, which gives the group an official recognition within it. Thanks to the group's advocacy work, a one-third quota for women in decision-making bodies of the House of Representatives has also been integrated within the Parliament's internal rules. This provides an opportunity for legislative progress in favor of gender equality but also to promote greater accountability for the country's national and international commitments on gender equality. In fact, UNW's technical support to the working group for the conduct of analyses of the draft organic law of the Law of Finance, the Criminal Code with regards to violence against women, and the law on the establishment of the Authority on Parity and the Fight Against Discrimination contributed to ensuring gender mainstreaming in key draft laws for gender equality.

Moreover, UN Women has been supporting the Ministry of Interior on the mainstreaming of gender in the General Directorate of Local Governments (DGCL), promoting women's participation in the management of local affairs, and strengthening gender-sensitive local governance. UN Women's support to the DGCL in the organization of regional conferences on women's leadership has, since March 2013, benefited over 4.500 elected women and high administrative managers who strengthened their capacities in terms of leadership. This partnership was strengthened after three laws relating to the planning and conduct of local and regional elections were adopted. The laws contain new provisions aimed at increasing the number of women elected at the local and regional level. In fact, women currently hold 22% of seats in local councils (up from 12% after the 2009 elections) and 38% of seats at the regional level (more than the 30% required quota).

Similarly, UN Women has been supporting the Interministerial Coordination Network, led by the Ministry of Public Administration, in becoming a powerful advocacy mechanism for promoting women's access to decision-making positions within the public administration, as well as in drafting and following up the implementation of a gender strategy for the Public administration

2. Preventing and Ending Violence Against Women

There has been increased awareness from the government on the issue of violence against women in Morocco, particularly thanks to the data made available on this phenomenon through the first national prevalence VAW survey¹ as well as women's rights NGOs' awareness-raising and advocacy efforts to address this issue. This violence is exacerbated for certain categories of girls and women that are exposed to various forms of violence and exploitation, including minors coerced into forced and/or early marriages, domestic workers, migrant women, and victims of trafficking.² Thus, UN Women has provided support not only to relevant governmental institutions in implementing the governmental plan's measures related to EVAW (including coordination of stakeholders' actions in terms of the Family Code implementation, capacity-building of social assistants in family justice sections, national campaigns to raise public awareness) but also to CSOs to propose memoranda for the reform of the penal code, improve access of

¹ The National survey on the prevalence of violence against women, High Commissariat for Planning (with the support of UN Women), 2009 revealed a prevalence rate of violence of 62.8%,

² The particularly worrying situation of migrant women and/or trafficking victims was recently highlighted in a report by the National Council for Human Rights, entitled: *Foreign and Human Rights in Morocco for a radically new asylum and immigration policy* (CNDH, 2013).

women survivors of violence to counselling services, and raise public awareness to minors girls marriage and domestic work.

In terms of women's access to the justice system, UNW works on strengthening the legal provisions enhancing women and girls' protection against violence by supporting the Ministry of Justice on the implementation of the National Charter's provisions relating to women's human rights and through capacity building and service delivery to enhance the protection and support of women and girls' victims of human trafficking. UNW Morocco MCO focuses on developing the capacities of gender equality experts and advocates to ensure adequate protection, counseling and support to women survivors of violence.

Moreover, the MCO contributes, in the framework of the Safe Cities Programme, to the promotion of women and girls' safety in the public space in two cities in Morocco: Marrakech and Rabat. In Marrakech, UNW Morocco has achieved significant results working with key stakeholders at different levels. First, through its partnership with city council and local authorities, local elected representatives and civil servants were trained on violence against women in public spaces in order to adopt and implement local measures for Marrakech to become a safer city. Secondly, a capacity-building programme targeted various stakeholders (bus drivers, taxi drivers, journalists, students, grassroots organizations) to empower them to develop their own local responses to sexual harassment. Additionally, grassroots women were also directly involved as actors of change, through safety audit walks, in the formulation of recommendations to local authorities. Also, a large awareness-raising campaign was organized that saw men, boys, and artists performing in public spaces as part of an effort to raise awareness via arts and sports. Finally, an unprecedented partnership with the ALSA transportation company resulted in the broadcasting of animated videos on sexual harassment and in the training of professional drivers throughout the national territories within their accredited training center. In Rabat, the scoping study conducted with the City Council identified key priorities that have started to be implemented in 2016 with central and local authorities, including public transportation, and through innovative partnerships with CSOs.

3. Women's Economic Empowerment

The activity rate among women in Morocco is not only about three times lower than that of men, but decreased from 28.1 % in 2000 to 25.5 % in 2011 and to 24.7% in 2013.³ Even when employed, women often work without remuneration and without status, and thus without benefiting from social protection. Hence, UNW Morocco MCO works to promote women's access to social protection through a gendered analysis of the social protection system and the identification of obstacles and measures to ensure women's access to these services.

UNW MCO also supports the development of innovative approaches in terms of promoting women's economic empowerment and entrepreneurship. The office's work is centered around supporting women in rural and urban areas (including single mothers) to increase their income and promote the production and use, by CSOs, of advocacy tools on women's access to collective lands and to inheritance.

Rural women as users, preservers and managers of agro-biodiversity, hold the key to the future of agricultural systems and food and livelihood security through the roles they play in seed selection, the management of small livestock and the conservation and sustainable use of plant and animal diversity. UNW conducted a project to include women in developing a sustainable, equitable, and solidarity-based economy.

Similarly, rural women manage natural resources and are particularly vulnerable to climate change impacts, which puts them on the frontlines of climate change. Considering the significant impact of climate change on women, UNW Morocco MCO supports various projects aimed at strengthening women's capacity in poverty reduction and food security at the household level, especially in rural areas.

³ Moroccan women in figures - Trends in demographic and socio-professional characteristics, High Commissariat for Planning, October 2012 and "Moroccan Women and the Labor Market", High Commissariat for Planning, December 2013

4. Governance, Planning, and Budgeting

UNW Morocco MCO partners with several Ministerial Departments (including the National Machinery for women's rights, the Ministry of Employment and Professional training, the Ministry of Communication, the Ministry of Public Administration, the Ministry of Environment, the Water department, and the Ministry of Interior) on institutionalizing gender equality in their strategies. UNW also supports the Ministry of Justice and Liberties in the reform of the Justice sector relating to women's access to justice.

As the main food producers and consumers, the drought has a direct impact on women. It is in this context that UNW Morocco MCO has worked with communal councils to promote gender-sensitive local planning in order to strengthen the mitigation of natural disasters and the use of innovative technologies for rural women in order to better adapt to climate change.

UN Women has been supporting the Ministry of Economy and Finance since 2002 for the mainstreaming of gender equality into public finance management and for the implementation of a gender-responsive budgeting (GRB). In this framework, a gender budget report is annually presented to the parliament as part of the Finance Bill. Moreover, the new Organic Finance Law, issued in 2015, has institutionalized this report and called for the introduction of gender indicators in the performance reports of sectoral departments, hence reinforcing accountability mechanisms for the achievement of gender equality. UNW thus works with the Ministry of Economy and Finance's GRB Center of Excellence in order to increase the number of Ministerial Departments using gender-sensitive indicators for planning/monitoring budgets, but also to promote south-north and south-south exchanges on GRB, in particular with African countries. Morocco has pioneered in the area of gender responsive planning and budgeting with over a decade of experience and the Center was established as a progressive GRB learning and expertise developing platform to link various GRB stakeholders at the national, regional, and global levels.

UN Women's work on normative issues is cross cutting all the five impact areas, as it supports the application of normative frameworks based on Morocco's ratification of international conventions and processes (CEDAW, the Beijing Platform, UPR, Special Procedures, etc.) and the harmonization of the national legislations with these frameworks. In this regard, the MCO cooperates with the Inter-Ministerial Human Rights Delegation (DIDH), the National Human Rights Council, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation.