

WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN THE MAGHREB

A start of a new future – Tunisia's and Morocco's women in politics, economy and society



The new constitutions of Morocco and Tunisia are characterized by the establishment of democratic principles that include the guarantee of equality between men and women. Their implementation however, depends on the understanding of the role of women within the societies in both countries.

CHALLENGES

Morocco's relatively weak performance in the Human Development Index (Rank 123 of 189) results from the poor health and education outcomes outside the urban centers, particularly for women. In rural regions, characterized by subsistence agriculture and low-income levels, girls often attend only primary school due to a lack of educational infrastructure and a traditional understanding of gender roles. Many of them are married before they reach the age of 18.



In structurally weak regions of Morocco, HSF Partner El Amane Association for Women and Children is raising awareness for constitutionally granted rights for women.

Despite significant progress has been made, women in rural areas still have limited prospects regarding their personal and professional development. Moreover, female participa-

tion remains low in politics and in the labour market. Since the foundation of the first Tunisian Republic, Tunisia has benefited from a Personal Status Code (entry into force: August 13, 1956), which significantly promotes and protects the rights of Tunisian women. The enforcement of these rights is mainly ensured by numerous local and national civil society organizations, which vehemently oppose any attempt of its restriction. However, concerning their role in the political sector, Tunisian women remain largely marginalized. Especially at the local level it is important to enhance the presence of female representatives and to strengthen their role in shaping local politics.

APPROACHES

King Mohammed VI initiated a new phase in the modernization of Morocco with the revision of the family law in 2004. It has significantly strengthened women's rights, in particular regarding divorce, prosecution of sexual violence and the containment of polygamy. Furthermore, gender equality and the protection against gender-based discrimination are also extensively enshrined in Article 19 of the 2011 Moroccan Constitution. In this context, the Hanns Seidel Foundation has been explicitly promoting the strengthening of women's rights in Morocco since 2014 and is working together with its local partners for greater political participation and the activation of women. The principal goal is to support the socio-economic inclusion of women in structurally weak regions and promote secondary education among the female population in rural areas. Tunisia took significant steps



Participants of a three-day workshop on local law and local administration in the south of Tunisia

in terms of women's rights in 2017 when the parliament passed a comprehensive law for the protection of women and girls against violence. In addition, the municipal election law, which was approved by the Tunisian parliament in spring 2017, provides equal representation on the electoral rolls. Therefore, the HSF office in Tunis supports women's empowerment in the Tunisian public and in the political sphere by offering education and training programs, which aim at preparing young female graduates for future activities in the newly emerging municipalities across the country. Participating in multi-day training courses in the fields of municipal law and administration or communication and management of municipal development projects a maximum number of women is trained in order to be a qualified political candidate.

IMPACT

Every year, the Hanns Seidel Foundation in Morocco trains more than 500 women from civil society and potential female mandate holders to provide them with the necessary expertise for political engagement at the local level. Numerous female trainees have been successfully elected to municipal councils. Overall, the number of female representatives elected in local and regional elections doubled to 6,673 seats from 2009 to 2015. After the national parliamentary elections in October 2016, the number of women deputies also in the national parliament has risen by four percent compared to the previous legislative period and currently stands at 21 percent.

Awareness-raising campaigns in disadvantaged regions of Morocco have also reduced the number of marriages of underage girls. Furthermore, the number of self-employed women active in agricultural cooperatives is steadily incre-

asing and thus allows for sustainable human development. In Tunisia, 700 women have so far been prepared for their future role in their home communities in the above-mentioned training programs. More than 80 percent of the participants now see themselves in a position to analyze the deficits in their municipality and to advocate confidently for citizens' concerns. 61 of those women trained in cooperation with the Ministry of Woman, Family and Childhood and other partner organizations, were elected to the new municipal councils in the local elections on May 6, 2018. Overall, women cast 47 percent of the votes in the elections. On July 3, 2018, the members of the Municipal Council of Tunis elected Souad Abderrahim mayor of Tunis. She is the first woman in the country's history to hold this office in the Tunisian capital. Nationwide, women filled 19.5 percent of the mayor's offices (68 out of 350).

However, there is still a lack of further training opportunities for the newly elected municipal councils, which highlights the relevance of the training programs, offered by the Hanns Seidel Foundation once more.

Mokhtar Hammami, Minister for Local Affairs and Environment in Tunisia

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