

Action fiche for ENP South region Annual Action Programme 2012 (part I)

1. IDENTIFICATION

Title/Number	Political and economic empowerment of women in the Southern Mediterranean region (ENPI/2012/023-553)		
Total cost	EU contribution : EUR 7 million		
Aid method / Method of implementation	Project approach–Joint management with an international organisation, United Nations (UN) Women		
DAC-code		Sector	

2. RATIONALE

2.1. Sector context

Women in the Southern Mediterranean region have expressed their need for support to fully capitalise on the opportunity of the Arab Spring to reposition themselves in political and decision making spaces so that they can fully contribute to shaping the future of their countries. Central to these efforts is supporting the economic empowerment of women in the region, particularly the most poor and marginalised, to move out of poverty and provide for themselves and their families.

The change sweeping the Southern Mediterranean region has built new momentum and unprecedented opportunities for supporting women's political and economic empowerment in a region with the lowest levels of political participation and economic engagement among women globally.

At the national level, the programme is coherent with the Action Plans concluded with the majority of the Southern Mediterranean countries in the context of the European Neighbourhood Policy. It also complements the National Indicative Programmes, in particular in relation to gender and the inclusion of civil society. The objectives of this programme are also based on the two Joint Communications of the European Commission and of the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy "A partnership for democracy and shared prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean"¹ and "A new response to a changing Neighbourhood"². The programme will co-ordinate closely with other relevant non-EU and EU-funded projects.

At the regional level, the programme seeks to promote gender equality which is at the heart of the Euromed partnership. In its objectives to promote the political and economic empowerment of women, the programme will also comply with **the conclusions of the Ministerial Conferences of Istanbul and Marrakesh, in particular in relation to 'women's political and civil rights' and 'women's social and economic rights and sustainable development'**. Furthermore, the programme supports the commitments of the partner governments – all signatories of the Committee on the elimination of discrimination against women (CEDAW) – to work towards gender equality.

¹ COM(2011)200 of 8 March 2011.

² COM(2011)303 of 25 May 2011.

There is an important demand from organisations dealing with gender issues to lift reservations to the CEDAW and to strengthen ongoing reforms of the personal status codes in a number of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) South partner countries. Important legal reforms have been made in several ENP South partner countries during the last years, in particular those related to the nationality code and the penal code, according to which sexual harassment is now criminalised and penalties for sexual violence strengthened in several countries. **Despite these legal improvements, however, discrimination against women still exists.**

Women's economic participation in the region, despite a rise in recent years, also remains the lowest in the world at 28% of the adult female population. Employment constitutes an important issue in these countries and it must be considered as a women's right. Changing the nature of the employment market for women is a significant and urgent issue. Previously, the public sector has been a major employer for women. However, with the shrinking of this sector in the countries in the region, the private sector has become increasingly important. In contrast to the public sector, however, the private sector is not considered as 'women friendly'.

Marginalised women are particularly affected by economic exclusion. This is reflected in the high share of women active in the informal economy where they remain unprotected with limited access to resources, such as financial ones, training or any technical expertise required for their integration in the formal economic sector.

Another important topic is the image of women that is most commonly portrayed in those countries. Very often this image is not positive when it comes to perception of women in working environment, especially those few in power positions. Hence, **there is a general agreement among the women's organisations in the region on the need for measures supporting the positive image of working women.**

The interconnected areas of **economic empowerment and women's citizenship rights and political participation have emerged as the two key priorities and entry points for advancing gender equality** in support of the broader aspirations of the people in the Southern Mediterranean region for social justice, freedom and democratic governance.

2.2. Lessons learnt

The design of the programme takes into account recommendations of the results oriented monitoring (ROM) reports covering the years 2009 of 2010 of the previous EU Regional gender programme "Enhancing equality between men and women in the Euromed region". The reports showed three main points that need to be addressed in order to assure success: **strong sense of ownership, a reinforced regional dimension and a need for the creation of a steering committee.**

The current programme takes this into account and ensures high levels of involvement by the main programme partners, NGOs and community-based organisations, as active programme partners in identifying the needs of marginalised women and in developing specific national initiatives and projects as part of the national action plans, together with other relevant stakeholders. It is also in line with the findings of the field missions undertaken in 2011: *"change can only be effective when strategic partnerships among civil society organisations is established, at*

both national and regional levels, on the basis of consensus and supported by advocacy and awareness campaigns".

As for the regional dimension pointed out, the programme will ensure a regular regional dialogue that will guarantee the follow-up and monitoring of programme progress.

The current programme further follows the recommendations of the monitoring reports to establish a steering committee to ensure the smooth implementation of the programme and the effective communication among the programme partners.

Interviews conducted during the field missions undertaken under the regional Needs Assessment study carried out during the past months, revealed that **sustained impact of an intervention on gender equality and women empowerment requires the involvement of the main decision-makers in the region, i.e. men, as well as local authorities.** Only by involving men as strategic partners in an intervention will impact be enhanced and sustained. These findings have been integrated into the programme.

Furthermore, a review of the gender projects on governance and human rights and economic sectors reveals that the needs of marginalised women have not received enough attention. There are only 49 out of a total of 764 projects that explicitly address the needs of various groups of marginalised women, both in urban and rural areas.

The design of the programme provides for simultaneous activities in both sectors, i.e. the promotion of women's participation and economic and political empowerment of women, thus ensuring reinforcement and cross-fertilisation.

2.3. Complementary actions

At the regional level, the programme will take into account and co-ordinate with EU programmes, in particular current regional programmes targeting civil society and Euromed Youth. It will also co-ordinate with programmes dealing with enhancing women's rights and promoting equality under Investing in People thematic programme (namely gender) and European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights. Also it will co-ordinate with the regional programmes of UN Women, United Nations Populations Fund (UNFPA) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

In addition, the programme will ensure improved synergy effects through co-ordination among donors and with other relevant projects and programmes, in particular the recently created civil society facility.

In order to avoid overlapping with current ongoing bilateral or thematic programmes dealing with gender issues, beneficiary countries for this programme will be confirmed at a later stage.

2.4. Donor co-ordination

The activities included in the programme take into account the main regional and bilateral programmes implemented by the major donors in the region.

The analysis of the mapping of programmes funded by main donors in the region confirms that programmes and projects addressing women in the Southern Mediterranean countries have received substantial funding, in particular in relation to governance and human rights and economy sectors.

With 23 regional programmes, **the EU is by far the largest donor in the region**, followed by the United Nations (UN) agencies (14 programmes). Among the support at the bi-lateral level, Spain has been the most active EU Member State with a total of 13 projects and programmes at the regional level.

Despite the volume of funds and the attention given to these sectors by a number of donors, the impact has not been very evident and was more visible in urban areas. Moreover, the needs assessment has revealed that despite the substantial funding to these two sectors, most individuals interviewed in the various countries, still viewed these two sectors as pressing priorities that require urgent donor attention and support.

3. DESCRIPTION

3.1. Objectives

The overall objective of the programme is to **promote the access and effective participation of marginalised women in economic and public life**, by addressing the barriers that have impeded the access and engagement of marginalised women in these areas.

The programme will pursue the following specific objectives:

- (1) To empower women politically in order to assure women's active engagement in decision making spaces.
- (2) To empower women economically.
- (3) To enhance regional knowledge and experience-sharing on women's political and economic rights.

Community-based organisations **in co-operation with NGOs and government representatives, both at local and national level, will identify national priorities in relation to the political and economic participation of marginalised women.** Identified priorities will determine which groups of marginalised women will be included in the programme, and which economic activities will be addressed in particular, as well as the nature of the advocacy campaign that needs to be conducted in support.

Raising awareness towards women's situation, as well as advocacy to promote women's rights will be an important component throughout this programme. Promoting woman's participation in economic and public life among the general public will be central to the programme, in order to improve the image of working women in society. In that sense, media campaigns will be carried out, carefully taking into consideration each country specific political situation in order not to create a negative backfiring effect.

3.2. Expected results and main activities

Specific objective 1: To empower women politically in order to assure women's active engagement in decision making spaces.

The programme will involve capacity development for participating civil society organisations (NGOs and community-based organisations), as well as governing bodies and political parties, to implement a gender perspective in their structure, to

advocate for women's interests, as well as to identify gender needs of marginalised women.

The public institutions will build their accountability for women's rights through, for example, ensuring that constitutional review processes consider gender equality and meet international standards on women's rights.

The programme will ensure a greater participation of women in electoral processes, both as candidates and as voters.

Establishment of country advisory groups to assure locally-owned and sustainable change.

In each country civil society organisations (NGOs and community-based organisations) and key stakeholders (in particular community leaders when relevant and key male figures from various sectors of public life), as well as local authorities when relevant and intermediary organisations, will be invited to participate in country advisory groups. **The country advisory group will comprise EU Delegations in each country, UN Women, NGOs and government representatives.** Also, business associations, chambers of commerce and similar institutions will be involved in the country advisory group.

This group will have a key role at the national level, both as a decision-making and as monitoring body. It will oversee the identification of the needs of marginalised women by community-based organisations and the development and implementation of initiatives aimed at integrating marginalised women in the economy as well as the implementation of the national advocacy strategy tailored to the needs of marginalised women, as identified by the community-based organisations through the national action plans.

Attention will be drawn not to duplicate ongoing similar national plans in each beneficiary country. Specific needs assessment will be conducted in Libya and, provided conditions allow (see point 3.3), Syria. In addition, an advocacy strategy will be developed and adopted tailored to the identified needs and priorities.

Result 1 Civil society organisations (CSOs), as well as governing bodies have the capacity to advocate for change and implement gender perspective in their structure.

Related activities:

Capacity building on advocacy for community-based organisations (training of trainers) scheme to ensure multiplier effect.

Result 2 All stakeholders have the capacity to identify gender needs at the local level and national level and implement gender perspective.

Related activities:

Training in identifying gender needs provided to all stakeholders;

Capacity development to transitional bodies, government ministries and civil society organisations.

Result 3: Participation of women in electoral processes, both as candidates and as voters, is increased

Related activities:

Training for women in local councils;

Capacity building to electoral bodies;

Capacity development of civil society and community-based organisations on ensuring women's participation in electoral processes.

Specific objective 2: To empower women economically

This programme specific objective will benefit from strengthened community-based organisations capable of identifying the gender-specific needs of marginalised women, effective national advocacy campaigns and the enhanced awareness among the general public of the necessity to promote economic participation and empowerment of marginalised women.

The programme will target poor women, in both rural and urban areas, who have entrepreneurial potential but who lack assets, the required skills or are too poor to access financial and non-financial services in order to overcome barriers to entry into income generating activities and to effectively access economic opportunities. These women will be presented with a graduation scheme that includes capital development such as asset transfers, business mentoring and business development services with a focus on women in the informal sector.

Comprehensive assessments of the target beneficiaries' needs and the institutional capacities of the main implementing institutions will be conducted by UN Women at the country level and the package of services and the graduation scheme will be designed accordingly. Business associations and chamber of commerce (or similar institutions) will be fully associated in activities implemented under this specific objective.

The programme will also carry out a number of activities, at local level, focusing on career information for women, as well as employability perspectives.

Result 1: Marginalised women have improved access to the economic opportunities through the support to self-employment and micro and small enterprise start-ups.

Related activities:

Design of service packages (in consultation with relevant stakeholders) that will include the following adapted to local context:

- Grants for start-ups (provided through NGOs);
- Vocational and business development services, including training and marketing assistance;
- Asset transfers for capital development.

Result 2: The capacity of local partners and national governments to have an effective implementation of services towards poverty alleviation is strengthened.

Related activities:

Capacity development to ministries and NGOs to support women's economic empowerment;

Capacity development to support the gender orientation of poverty alleviation service providers at the national and local level;

Establishment of linkages between women entrepreneurs and NGOs and government service providers, business associations and chambers of commerce.

Specific objective 3: To enhance regional knowledge and experience-sharing on women's political and economic rights.

The programme aims at establishing a knowledge hub on women's citizenship and democratic transition in the Southern Mediterranean region at the regional level to ensure that national experiences are captured and shared in response to the high demand of women movements across the region to learn from each other in a time of increased sensitivity to foreign engagement.

This knowledge hub will serve multiple functions including: a) facilitating knowledge and experience-sharing between women's rights organisations and leaders across the region; b) generating research and analysis with an emphasis on women's citizenship rights, political and economic participation; c) supporting opportunities for high level advocacy at the regional level to increase the visibility of women's priorities and concerns; and d) generating a roster of regionally-based experts that can be deployed for rapid response as needed. It will also inform the ongoing design of country-specific action plans and facilitate the effective delivery of programmatic responses at the country level.

Activities and results will be based on country action plans and will be capitalised at regional level.

Result 1: Establishment of a regional knowledge and experience sharing on women's citizenship and economic rights.

Related activities:

Creation of a roster of technical experts to deliver expert advice as requested;

Comparative analysis of constitutions, laws and policies in the region and beyond;

Research, analysis and documentation of gender equality issues, as well as the documentation of relevant methodologies;

Platforms for the sharing of experiences between women movements.

3.3. Risks and assumptions

Risks

- Political instability or deteriorating security situation in one or more countries may disrupt the implementation of one or more components of the programme;
- Modification of the associational law or other regulations may undermine effective participation of civil society organisations in the programme;
- Disagreements among participating organisations and governmental entities may affect programme progress;
- Specific political developments in Israel, which are perceived as anti-Palestinian or anti-Arab, may lead to the withdrawal of one or more partners;
- The raise of conservative forces might lead to the withdrawal of partners;
- Conservative forces in the region may not support all regional networks active in the field..

Assumptions

- Political and security situation in all countries will allow the smooth implementation of the programme;
- Involved partners (civil society and government entities) are committed to participate in all activities throughout the duration of the programme;
- Male partners and community leaders are committed to the objectives of the programme and co-operate with other programme partners.

At the moment of writing, EU co-operation with Syrian authorities (government entities) is suspended. In the light of future decisions, the Commission shall assess the opportunity to involve Syrian authorities in the action's implementation.

The political instability and/or deteriorating security situation in Syria will be assessed prior to the implementation of the programme in order to confirm the feasibility/opportunity to: a) engage the stakeholders and b) implementing the activities.

Mitigating measures

The Regional Programme Steering committee plays a key role in providing strategic guidance to the programme and in problem solving to ensure smooth programme implementation.

The programme is based on transparent communication and continuous consultation and involvement of partners and thereby fosters an atmosphere of co-operation and ownership.

3.4. Cross-cutting issues

As a programme on gender equality and women empowerment the programme will contribute to the governance and the promotion of democracy. Equality between men and women occupies an important place in the activities of civil society in the Euromed partnership. The respect and promotion of human rights, as well as promoting freedom of association and assembly are also at the heart of this programme. Finally good governance is also taken into account by supporting civil society as a vehicle for democratisation.

3.5. Stakeholders

At the governmental level: National women's machineries

In most cases, national women machineries are not sufficiently equipped with the needed human and financial resources to undertake the responsibility of gender-mainstreaming national and sectorial plans and programmes. An additional need exists in raising the capacity and technical know-how of those already employed in these machineries, so that they are able to assume their functions in an effective manner. The credibility of national women's machineries can vary from country to country for different reasons such as their composition, functioning, degree of institutionalisation, political independence, etc. In countries where the regime has been toppled, the national women's machineries faced a change in leadership, and as a result a challenge to their continuity. Their involvement is to be considered carefully according to specific country situations.

At the civil society level: Civil society organisations and community-based organisations

Civil society organisations (CSOs) have often been the engine for change, especially as some of them enjoy a wide outreach. However, many continue to lack the capacity to successfully advocate for change and the ability to successfully network to build strong sustainable national coalitions.

In countries of transition and with the ensuing political change, associational space opened up and new CSOs have emerged. In addition, more non-traditional organisations were created, mostly led by young people. In these countries, CSOs have proven to be the key to reform. So far, civil society networks have often been fragmented and organised around certain issues, and thus, survived only on a temporary basis.

At the sub-regional and regional levels, there are networks that have built around certain themes, such as violence against women or nationality.³

A meeting with stakeholders, including NGOs, government counterparts and representatives from EU Delegations, was held on 24 November 2011 for consultation purposes.

4. IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

4.1. Method of implementation

The programme will be implemented via joint management through signature of contribution agreement with UN Women in accordance with Article 53d of the Financial Regulation. The international organisation complies with the criteria provided for in the applicable Financial Regulation.

UN Women is covered by the Financial and Administrative Framework Agreement (FAFA) concluded between the European Union and the United Nations. Moreover, UN Women and the European Union signed a partnership agreement on 16 April 2012. This Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) offers a very important potential to increase collaboration with the EU – with strong interactions both at technical and political levels, as well as headquarters and field levels.

UN Women has proven their added value based on the established partnerships with governments as well as civil society, in-depth knowledge of the gender-related issues in specific countries of the region, the ability to undertake country and cross-country analysis and assessments. They also have proven their expertise in areas like gender-sensitive budgeting, political participation and economic empowerment, which is fully in line with the main objectives of this programme.

Also, UN Women is doing excellent work on the issue of involving men and boys in gender equality, with a specific UN interagency initiative in Asia of which UN women is part, called Partner4Prevention. Even if the initiative is in Asia, lessons learned could surely be translated into initiatives in the South Mediterranean region.

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An example of a sub-regional thematic network is Musawah (with representatives from Jordan, Lebanon and West Bank and Gaza Strip). At the regional level, examples for thematic networks are SALMA – strong and healthy woman, living in a peaceful society, free from violence and discrimination, Arab Women’s Forum (AISHA), Equality without reservations, Collectif 95, the Arab feminist coalition as well as the Euromed networks.

UN Women's attention will be fully drawn to the requirement of involving community-based organisations and other grassroots organisations as active programme partners.

The implementation of the programme will be overseen by a steering committee to ensure the smooth implementation, to provide guidance in relation to programme objectives and content and to make sure that the quality of programme outputs is maintained. It will be composed of representatives from the European Commission and UN Women.

The change of management mode constitutes a substantial change except where the Commission "re-centralises" or reduces the level of tasks previously delegated to the beneficiary country, international organisation or delegate body under, respectively, decentralised, joint or indirect centralised management.

4.2. Procurement and grant award procedures

1) Contracts

All contracts implementing the action must be awarded and implemented in accordance with the procedures and standard documents laid down and published by the Commission for the implementation of external operations, in force at the time of the launch of the procedure in question.

Participation in the award of contracts for the present action shall be open to all natural and legal persons covered by the ENPI Regulation. Further extensions of this participation to other natural or legal persons by the concerned authorising officer shall be subject to the conditions provided for in Article 21(7) of the ENPI Regulation.

2) Specific rules for grants

The essential selection and award criteria for the award of grants are laid down in the Practical Guide to contract procedures for EU external actions. They are established in accordance with the principles set out in Title VI 'Grants' of the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget. When derogations to these principles are applied, they shall be justified, in particular in the following cases:

- Financing in full (derogation to the principle of co-financing): the maximum possible rate of co-financing for grants is 90%. Full financing may only be applied in the cases provided for in Article 253 of the Commission Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 2342/2002 of 23 December 2002 laying down detailed rules for the implementation of the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget.
- Derogation to the principle of non-retroactivity: a grant may be awarded for an action which has already begun only if the applicant can demonstrate the need to start the action before the grant is awarded, in accordance with Article 112 of the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget.

In case of joint management, all contracts implementing the action are awarded and implemented in accordance with the procedures and standard documents laid down and published by relevant international organisation (UN Women).

4.3. Indicative budget and calendar

The total budget of the programme is EUR 7,000,000 distributed between components as follows:

	EUR
1. Political empowerment	2,000,000
2. Economic empowerment	4,000,000
3. Regional experience sharing	1,000,000
TOTAL	7,000,000

The foreseen operational duration of the project is 48 months.

4.4. Performance monitoring

Monitoring of the activities will be ensured through: the usual results oriented monitoring (ROM) used for grants and projects. Objectively verifiable indicators exist (e.g. the number of consultations undertaken by governments with non-state actors, the satisfaction of international standards by national legislation on associations, etc.). Baselines also exist, notably as regards the issue of freedom of association, which has been examined and monitored over years by regional programmes in the Southern Mediterranean region.

4.5. Evaluation and audit

A mid-term and final evaluation of the programme will be carried out in the course of the programme's implementation.

Expenditure incurred will have to be certified, as part of the obligations of the contracted parties in the framework of the implementation of this programme. Mid-term and final evaluations of the results achieved will be entrusted to independent consultants, as well as external audits (which will be carried out if necessary). These evaluations and audits will be funded from other sources than the project budget, since no commitment will be possible once the validity of this Decision has expired (N+1 rule will apply).

4.6. Communication and visibility

The EU visibility guidelines will be followed by all projects. Visibility and communication in the ENP South partner countries will be carried out with the support of EU Delegations, in line with the Communication and Visibility Manual for EU External Action.

Communication will be a key issue as one of the components consists of advocacy and awareness raising on the positive image of working women.