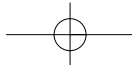# Chapter Four: Securing Politics
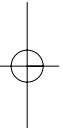
1. Women and Politics: From Political Participation to Political Security

1.1 Introduction

In the twenty-first century, Arab women face many challenges at global, regional, and local levels. Globalization and the information/communication revolution have led to a change in the nature of the concepts of sovereignty and citizenship. Unprecedented access to information has allowed Arab states to become a part of the growing 'global village,' but has also brought challenges to cultural identity, values, and traditions. On a regional level, there are pressing issues of war and peace, development and democracy, all of which have been vividly exemplified by the invasion of Iraq, the escalation of aggression by Israeli occupation forces in Palestine, and the civil war in Sudan. These challenges face the Arab region in general, and raise special concerns for women that need to be understood and addressed. On a local level, there are challenges faced due to general laws and policies regarding privatization, employment, family, personal status and so on, all of which impact women's roles in society and affect their participation in the social, economic, and political spheres. These growing challenges make the active participation of Arab women in political life and public decision-making even more critical; women must have a role in shaping the policies and strategies that affect their lives.

A great deal has been done by Arab states to enhance the role of women in politics, and many advances have been achieved on the ground. However, a gap still persists between the strategies, resources, and efforts invested in enhancing Arab women's role in politics and the actual results gained. With the world rallying to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, including Goal 3 to promote gender equality and empower women, and with upcoming Beijing +10 review to assess progress towards gender justice, the time is pertinent to analyze the approach currently used to involve Arab women in decision-making processes, in order to illuminate the main challenges and outline necessary steps that will increase and strengthen their involvement in political life.

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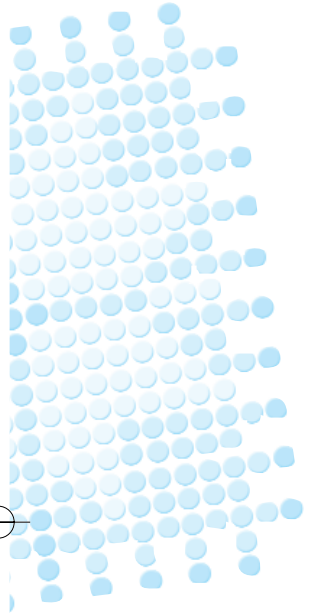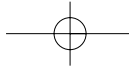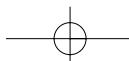
Ten years after Beijing, where are we now? Impact evaluation is needed to assess what has been achieved in the last decade (1995–2005), regarding women and politics.

1.2 Scope and Objectives

This chapter aims to examine why Arab women continue to have disproportionately low levels of participation and representation in political life. While this chapter does not negate the explanations that have been given, it argues that an inaccurate structure of the core problem exists and calls for a need to redefine and restructure the issue of women and politics.

According to William Dunn, "problem solving is a key element of the methodology of policy analysis. Equally important, however, policy analysis is a methodology for formulating problems as part of a search for a solution. By asking 'right' questions, problems that initially appear to be insolvable sometimes may be reformulated so that previously undetected solutions became visible. i.e. A problem well formulated is a problem half solved" (Dunn 2000: 2).

This chapter argues that women are not active in politics because politics is not a safe and secure domain for them to participate in. This is the key problem that needs to be solved.

The objective of this chapter is two-fold. First, it will identify the problems with the current political arena by highlighting the ways it remains inaccessible to women. Second, it will call for a paradigm shift, based on the concept of 'human security,' that attempts to secure the political sphere for women, thereby increasing their participation in public life.

The first section will provide a brief assessment of the current situation of women's political participation in the Arab world, followed by a presentation of the constraints and obstacles faced by women in the political sphere. Next, the chapter identifies the limitations and inadequacies of current explanations for women's low participation in politics, followed by an overview of the aspects of a reformed paradigm, including new definitions of politics and human security to guide the conceptual framework.

1.3 Assessment of the Current Situation

1.3.1 Benchmark and guidelines

Sound and effective governance cannot be achieved without the inclusion of citizens in the decision making process. The Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) calls for increasing the capacity of women to participate in decision-making and leadership positions, while ensuring women's equal access to, and full participation in, power structures and political posts. The BPFA set the goal of 30% for women in national decision-making positions, as a milestone toward the ultimate objective of 50%. In 2002, the global average for women's share of seats in parliament was only 14 per cent.[1]

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[1] **UNIFEM, Progress of the World's Women 2002. p.40.**

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Women are not active in politics because politics is not a safe and secure space.

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BPFA
30% of women in deci-sion-making posts by 2005.

CEDAW
Positive measures to ensure equal and active presence of women in decision-making posi-tions.

MDGs
Gender equality and the empowerment of women by 2015.

Resolution 1325
Participation of women in conflict prevention and resolution
Integration of gender per-spectives in peacekeeping missions
Protection of women and girls in conflict zones
Mainstreaming of gender sensitization in UN reporting and implemen-tation systems.

The UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) calls for positive measures to ensure equal and active presence of women in the decision-making positions. UN Security Council Resolution 1325 highlights the importance of bringing gender perspectives to the center of all United Nations conflict prevention and resolution, peace-build-ing, peacekeeping, rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts. The resolution invit-ed the Secretary General to carry out a study on the impact of armed conflict on women and girls, the role of women in peace-building and the gender dimen-sions of peace processes and conflict resolution. Moreover, the twenty-third spe-cial session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: Gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century," called for the full partici-pation of women at all levels of decision-making in peace processes, peace-keeping, and peace-building (United Nations 2002).

The Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) identified gender equality and women's empowerment as a goal in its own right and as an effective tool to combat poverty, hunger, and diseases, and to stimulate development that is truly sustainable (i.e. an essential component in achieving all of the other goals).

The MDGs offer an opportunity to refocus attention on the interdependence of eight key human development issues– incorporating both new and old goals and targets set at the global conferences and world summits of the 1990s. Because all of the eight goals are mutually reinforcing, progress towards one goal is expected to positively support progress towards others. Therefore, suc-cess in many of the goals will have positive impacts on gender equality just as progress towards gender equality will aid other goals. It is not by chance, how-ever, that the Millennium Declaration and the MDGs identify gender equality and women's empowerment as central, cross-cutting goals. Goal three – women's empowerment and promotion of gender equality - is the goal through which women's perspectives must be incorporated into all of the other seven goals. There is no one path to gender equality, but there can be no gender equal-ity unless all the different paths and different issues are confronted. Economic empowerment without recognition of women's right to be free from discrimina-tion in the workplace will not be achieved. Education without prospects for women to find employment after they finish school will decrease incentives for both families and girls themselves to continue with their studies.

Political participation of women is critical. Opportunities for political partic-ipation enable women to influence the choice of public policy, the administra-tion of public affairs, and the choice of political leaders at all levels of gover-nance. Attempts to influence government decisions can be made through sever-

al modes of participation. Presenting views in newspapers and magazines which influence and direct public opinion; sending petitions to members of the parliament (MPs) and government officials to voice concerns with specific policies; membership in syndicates, trade unions, NGOs and political parties; and voting and running for elections are some examples of these modes (Gomaa 1998).

1.3.2 Base-line data

The Arab Human Development Report 2002 states that gender empowerment is critical for human freedom. Applying the UNDP gender empowerment measure (GEM) to Arab countries clearly reveals that the latter suffer a glaring deficit in women's empowerment. Among regions of the world, the Arab region ranks next to last as measured by GEM, only sub-Saharan Africa has a lower score (UNDP 2002: 28).

In the UNDP Human Development Report for 2003, the three Arab countries analyzed (the assessment included a total of 70 countries) occupied some of the lowest rankings for gender empowerment: #65 United Arab Emirates, #68 Egypt, and #70 Yemen (UNDP 2003: 316).

The UNIFEM Arab States Regional Office report entitled "Paving the Road towards Empowerment" demonstrated that "Arab women in decision-making positions and their participation in public life follow world trends. They are under-represented in the parliament and executive body, and even when they are ministers, they are likely to be assigned to ministries that reinforce their social roles and responsibilities. Although there have been worldwide improvements in women's active participation in this field, the participation of Arab women has been slow and ad hoc" (UNIFEM 2002: 46).

1.3.3 Positive trends

With the beginning of the millennium, there have been some positive trends towards enhancing Arab women's participation in political life:
- The increase in the Arab women's representation in national parliaments.
- The inclusion of women in the political domain as part of a reform process.
- The establishment of the Arab Women's Organization.
- The rising role of NGOs.

1.3.4 The increase in the Arab women's representation in national parliaments

Figure 4.1 illustrates that the percentage of female parliamentarians has increased in eight Arab states, decreased in two, and remained constant in five countries.

The introduction of the quota system led to an increase in the percentage of

Among regions of the world, the Arab region ranks next to last as measured by GEM, only sub-Saharan Africa has a lower score.

Although there have been worldwide improvements in women's political participation, the participation of Arab women has been slow and ad hoc.

female MPs in Morocco from 1% in 1995 to 11% in 2003, and brought 35 women to the parliament. This rise in women's participation in Moroccan political life was gradual, starting in the 1950s and culminating in the 1970s. With the understanding that women's empowerment has political, cultural, and economic dimensions, the government began several initiatives aimed at enhancing women's roles and rights in society. Family care was promoted as the responsibility of both partners, women's personal and legal rights were enhanced, laws protecting the rights of the child were enacted, as well as initiatives that were culturally sensitive to the role of the male in society (Alliance for Arab Women 2004:).

The quota system also doubled women's percentage in the Jordanian parliament from 2.5% in 1995 to 5.5% in 2003. In Tunisia, the percentage of female representation increased from 6.8% in 1995 to 11.5% in 2003, a progress reflected in the election of 21 female MPs in the parliament (see Table 4.1).

Women in the states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) have also made some progress: two female candidates in Oman won seats in the Shura Council in a competitive election that w as held in the year 2000. Moreover, there are four women in the Omani State Council. In Bahrain, four women hold seats in the Shura Council.

Though the impact of adopting a quota system is is debatable (UNIFEM 2002), the experience of Morocco, Tunisia, Sudan, and Jordan suggest that quotas are a good mechanism to increase women's representation in legislative bodies. Morocco's experience illustrates that political parties can voluntarily reach a consensus to adopt a quota on their 'party list.' Moroccan political parties set an example for other Arab political parties that tend to refuse to have women candidates on their list under the pretext that Arab women are not capable of wining seats in elections because they lack leadership skills and as a result will cause the party to lose seats.

To enhance women's political participation, the UNIFEM Arab States Governance and Leadership aims at women's empowerment and equal participation in leadership and political decision-making positions which are considered as necessary elements for ensuring that gender equality is integrated into policymaking and constitutional, electoral and judicial reform. The program promotes women's leadership in all sectors, with an overall goal of giving women an equal voice in shaping the policies that affect their lives and choices. For this purpose, the UNIFEM Program has embarked on several initiatives aimed at enhancing leadership skills and capacity building for women and women's organizations in a number of Arab countries some of which aim to better enable them to effectively run for and operate in electoral offices. This multi-phased program

consists of four projects in a total of seven Arab countries: Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen (UNIFEM 2000).

Women's national machineries in the Arab states are also working to enhance the role of women in the political arena. For example, the National Council for Women (NCW) in Egypt established the Political Training Centre to support and prepare women candidates for elections. Moreover, the NCW established the Women's Political Forum, a program in collaboration with the General Agency for Cultural Centres, to increase women's involvement in politics and their understanding of the political arena. This program covers Egypt's 27 governorates and works to raise awareness for women voters on the rules and regulations of the electoral process, how to choose candidates, how to follow up with their candidates in Parliament, and how to strengthen the accountability of candidates and their ties to the communities.

In addition to regional efforts, the MDGs also draw attention to the importance of women's empowerment and women's role in governance. Gender disparity in decision-making positions is listed as one of the key problems to address in order to achieve goal # 3 of the MDGs: "To Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women."[2] Women's participation in public life and decision-making processes is critical for achieving women's empowerment, gender equality and other developmental goals. Parliament is where laws are formulated and where significant influence can be exerted in the policy making process. It is therefore essential that a fair representation of women occur in national parliaments to allow their voices and issues to be clearly heard. Although the responsibility for women's empowerment and gender equality is the responsibility of all in society, increased representation of women in decision-making encourages more practical and targeted policies dealing with women's issues to be implemented on the ground.

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[2] **http://www.developmentgoals.org/Gender_Equality.htm**

Figure 4.1: Percentage of Women's Representation within Arab Parliaments
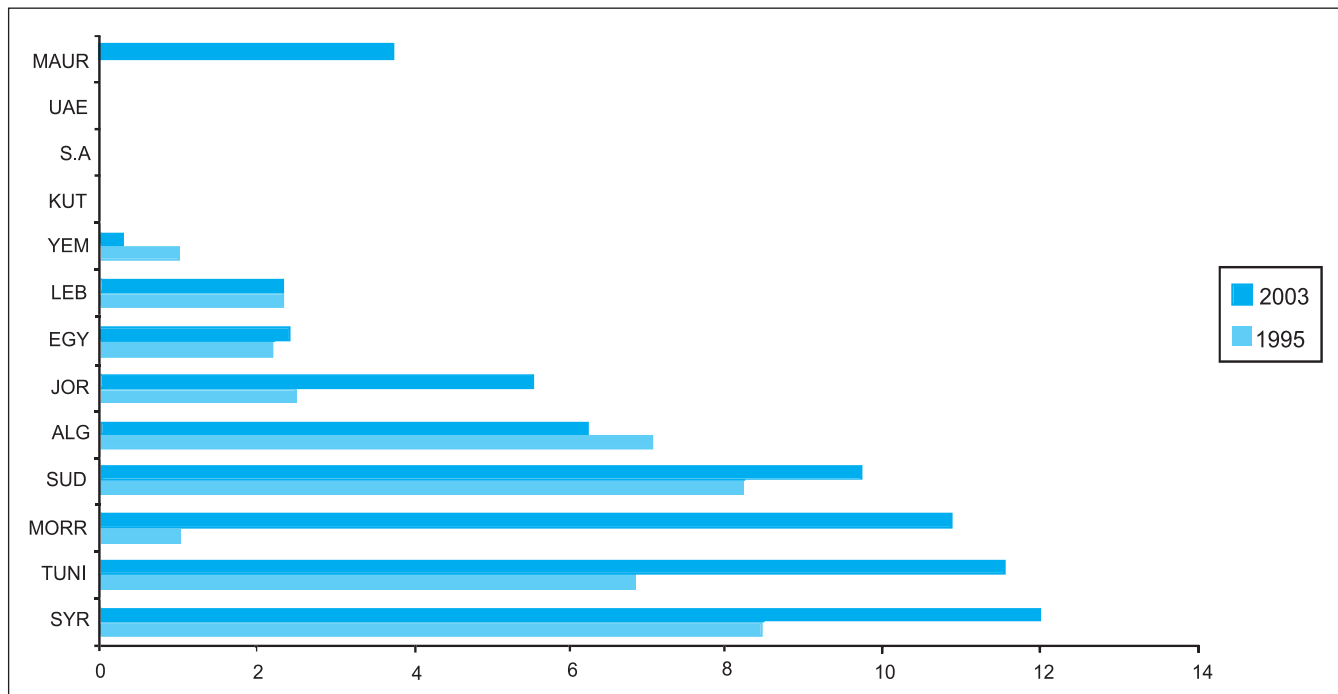
Source: Compiled from the International Parliamentary Union 2003 and ESCWA 1995.

1.3.5 The inclusion of women in the political domain as part of a reform process

Several Arab leaders perceive the integration of women within decision-making spheres as an essential component of a larger and more comprehensive process of political reform. For instance, Bahrain has lately granted women the right to vote and run for elections, as part of a constitutional monarchy framework. Shiekh Hamad Ben Eissa Al Khalifa, the king of Bahrain included as part of his initiative of reform (2000) a number of women gaining membership to the Supreme National Committee. This Committee was in charge of preparing the National Charter for Action. This charter emphasized, among other things, voting and candidacy rights for women. Article 7 stated that both men and women have the same rights to participate in political life. Bahraini citizens voted in a referendum for the National Charter and the turnout of women voters was 49% reflecting an active interest and participation by women.

In Egypt, President Mubarak stated that the political empowerment of women is a key feature of Egypt's initiative for widening the democratic process. In an effort to broaden the parameters of citizenship, the president made a landmark decision to allow Egyptian women to pass their nationality onto their children, in response to requests from various NGOs and civil groups (Mubarak 2003). Moreover, in its fourth annual conference in March 2004, the National Council for Women put forth a number of recommendations in its efforts to enhance women's political participation, including implementation of Article 4 of CEDAW calling for special measures aimed at accelerating de facto equality between men and women; a call for political parties to include women on party lists; and a review of the current electoral system to assess the best system that allows for active participation of women and youth.

In Saudi Arabia, women's participation for the first time in the National Dialogue and the Global Economic Forum 2004 was perceived as a positive step towards increased inclusion of women in political initiatives. The initiatives of Arab leaders led to an increase in the number of women in decision-making positions in the executive authority both at the national and local level. In 1990, eight Arab states had female ministers (ranging between one and two ministers) as follows: Algeria, Comoros, Egypt, Jordan, Mauritania, Sudan, Syria, and Tunisia. By 2003, the number of Arab states that had female ministers increased to 11 states including Oman, Yemen (a Minister of Human Rights), and Qatar (a Minister of Education).

In The Occupied Palestinian Territories, there are two women ministers out of a total of twenty-five in the cabinet, and a Ministry of Women's Affairs has been created. In Iraq, there are three women in the Governing Council, and the first woman Iraqi ambassador is now in Washington. In Mauritania's last presidential election, one female candidate participated in competing against six other candidates for the presidency. In the presidential elections in Algeria and Lebanon, there are women candidates. However, there is still a long way to go before Arab women hold the same number of seats or occupy offices at the highest levels, such as presidents or prime ministers.

At the local level, Arab women are participating in local governance and in both Egypt and Lebanon have become city mayors (there are four female mayors in Egypt and two in Lebanon). In Sudan, there are 35 women members in local councils (UNIFEM 2002: 42). In Qatar, women have had the voting and candidacy rights for local council since 1999. And, for the first time a woman was appointed as Dean of the Faculty of Sharia Law and Islamic Studies, and as the President of the University of Qatar.

In the judiciary system, though the average percentage of women judges does

not exceed 15 % from among the total number of judges in the Arab region, statistics show that the percentage of women judges in Morocco is 50%, in Tunisia 22.5%, Syria 11%, and in Lebanon is 5%. Recently, Egypt appointed the first woman judge within the highest Supreme Court of Justice. In Sudan there are 76 women judges, in Yeman, 35 , and in Jordan, 14.

While there have been some important successes towards the full inclusion of women political decision-making in some Arab countries, Kuwait represents a case of unfulfilled promises. The Kuwaiti parliament rejected the wish of the Prince of Kuwait to give women the right to vote and run in elections. The parliament voted against changing Article 1 in the country's electoral system and thus denied Kuwaiti women their political rights.

Recently (March 2004), members of the civil society in the Arab world organized in the Bibliotheca Alexandrina the first regional summit on political, social, and economic reform in the Arab region. The conference was inaugurated by President Mubarak and was perceived as a message that political reform and modernization are being demanded from within the region, and cannot be imposed from external powers.

The Alexandria declaration, while acknowledging the specificity of every country, called for the rotation of power, the inclusion of women in public life, and the separation of power (between the executive and legislative) as a mechanism to achieve the ultimate reform.

1.3.6 The establishment of the Arab Women's Organization

The Arab Women's Organization (AWO) was initiated by Mrs. Suzanne Mubarak, the first lady of Egypt, to serve as a coordinating mechanism for the various women's issues and movements in the region. The first summit of the AWO held in Cairo 2001 aimed at helping Arab women assure their legitimate status as full-fledged partners in shaping both the present and future of their societies. At the first meeting, a plan of action addressed the common interests of the all the participating countries: Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Sudan, Djibouti, Bahrain, and Kuwait. The AWO has certain political legitimacy lent to it by its founder. Since its inception, the AWO has held various forums to address a wide range of issues including women's legal and political rights, the image and role of women in media, and the growing role of women in national economic empowerment.

The AWO has become institutionalized in the Arab League, and has become one of its specialized organizations. Though exerting its efforts to address women's empowerment in the economic, social, and cultural arenas, the political agenda is taking a low profile. One explanation for this low profile is the con-

troversy associated with women's equal participation in the political sphere, which is perceived by many as contrary and in violation of cultural and traditional norms. Therefore, in order to encourage greater membership and endorsement of the AWO's activities, politics takes a lower profile in return for progress on other critical issues.

The establishment of the AWO is a reflection of the changing role of first ladies in the region. Increasingly, first ladies have become advocates for women's issues. These actions create momentum and political will to advance women's issues and participation in public life. These first ladies are visionaries, well educated, and eager to transform the current state of their societies. Further steps are necessary to ensure that this drive gets filtered down to the level of NGOs and community groups so that these ideals expand into the general population and gradually become part of the prevailing culture, thereby supporting-sustained and broader understanding and sustained efforts towards change.

1.3.7 The rising role of NGOs

An increasing number of NGOs are becoming involved in development issues in the Arab world. In 1995, the number of Arab NGOs was 175,000 (Kandeel 1995). By 2003, this number increased to 225,000 (Kandeel 2004). There is a wide variation in activities of these organizations, but recent trends indicate that a growing number are working on women's empowerment (political, legal, economic), to the extent that the number of such organizations has doubled in countries such as Jordan, Egypt, and Morocco. According to the database of the network of Arab non-governmental organizations, the percentage of women in decision-making positions (board members) differs from country to country: Lebanon 45%, The Occupied Palestinian Territories 42%, and Egypt 18%. A significant number of women are seeking membership in these NGOs; however, their representation on the boards is still limited, with the exception of organizations with exclusively female members (see figures 4.2 and 4.3).

These organizations are promoting women's political awareness and involvement in political life. They are encouraging women at the community and grassroots levels to get involved in trying to identify community problems and find viable solutions (for example, garbage collection, support to female-headed households, registering women voters). Even though these efforts are directed towards decision-making processes at very local and community levels, they have two very important impacts. First, they play a large role in building the capacity of ordinary women to become involved in their communities by participating in decision-making processes and problem solving. Second, they increase the visibility of these women in the public sphere as effective and able

It is necessary to ensure that the ownership of political leaders' initiatives and decisions be filtered down to ordinary citizens to promote broader support of women's increased political participation.

The association between women's informal participation at the community level and there ability to influence public policy at the formal level has to be strengthened. The most important factor is the ability to influence legislation to bring about real change, not just to change perceptions at the community level.

agents. Such visibility works towards changing societal perceptions and views on the ability of women to be active participants in politics, to be engaged in decision-making positions and to partake actively in public life.

Nevertheless, in order to ensure continued participation of women in the public sphere, it is necessary to create a link between community work (informal political participation) and the ability to influence political decision-making processes at a more formal level. There has to be a synergy between the formal and informal actions in which each can lend support to the others' actions in order to have an effective and sustainable impact.

Figure 4.2: Percentage of Women's Membership in NGOs in the Arab World
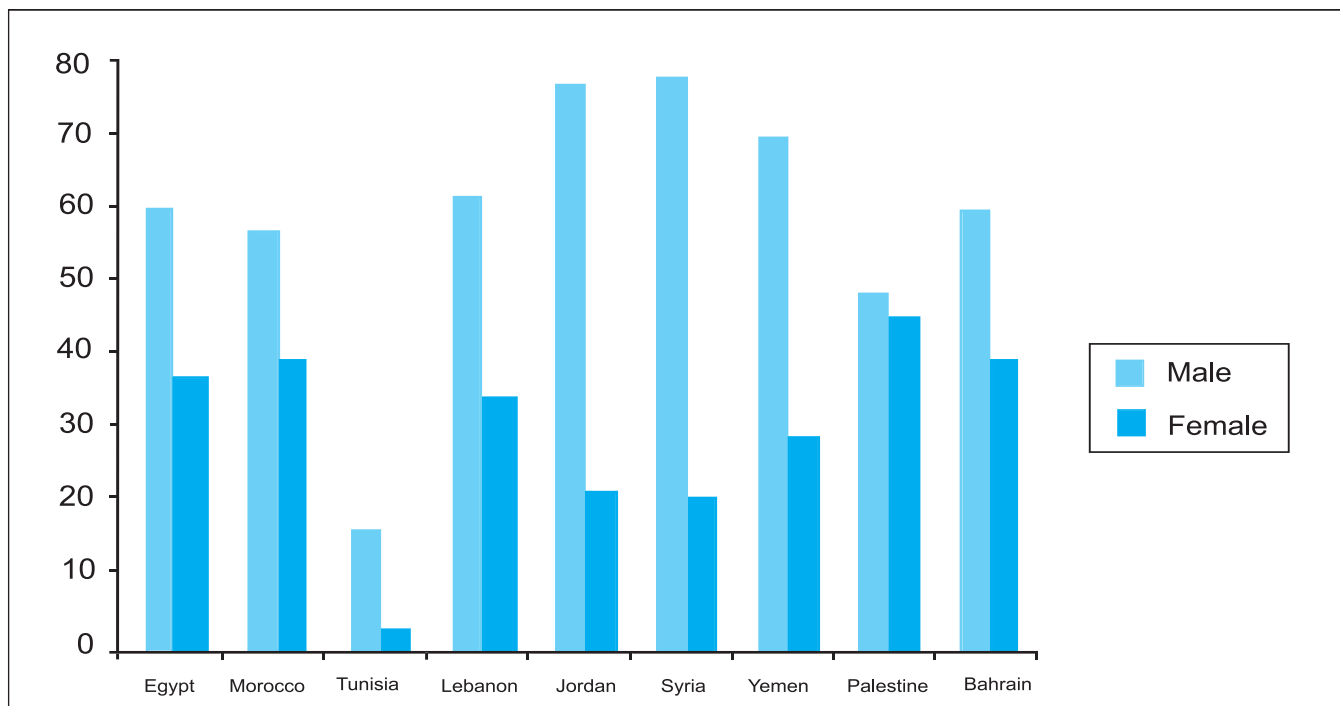
Source: Network of Arab NGOs Database.

Figure 4.3: Women's Participation in Arab Broad Members Percentage 2004 (Male-Female)
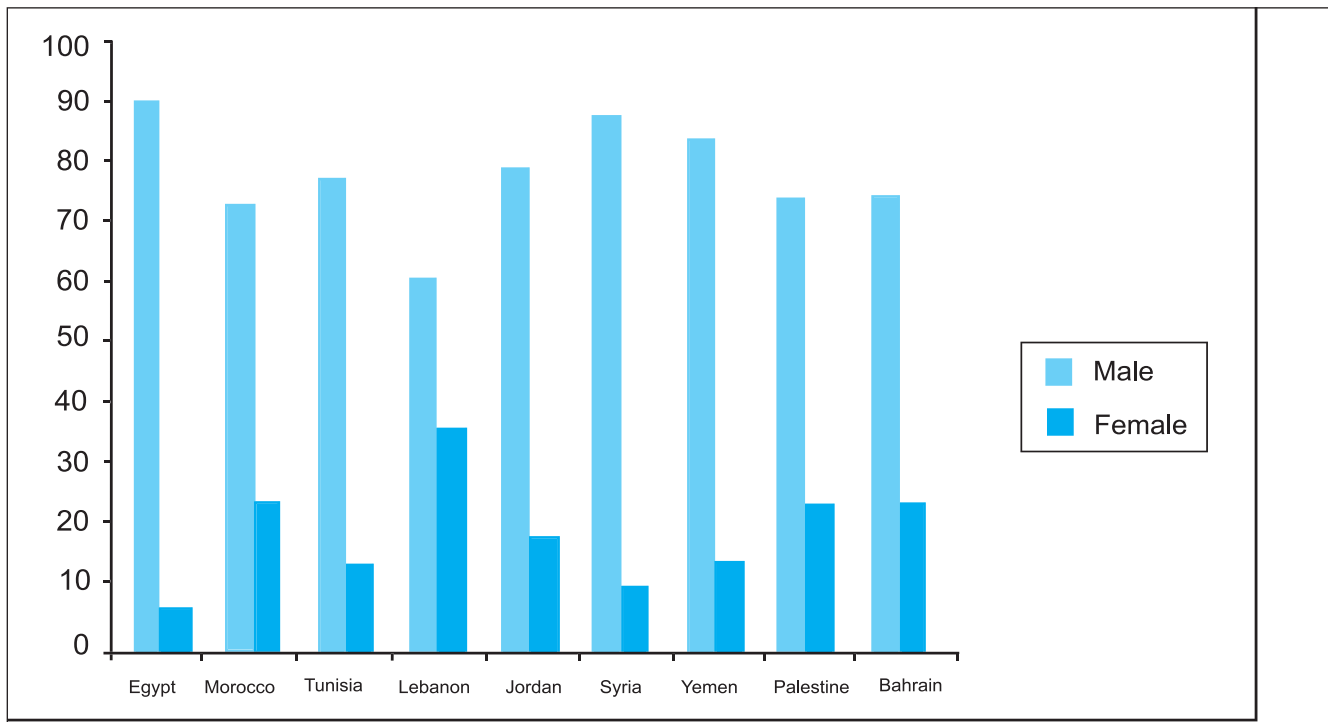
Source: Network of Arab NGOs Database.
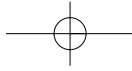
1.4 Negative Trends

The participation of Arab women in political life has taken many positive steps forward, and the figures tend to indicate some improvements. However, the number of Arab women involved in politics is still far from representative of their population in society.

1.4.1 Political Obstacles

In the Arab world, there are many obstacles to full and effective political participation for both men and women such as government interference in the electoral process, unfair elections, and lack of transparency. Women also face specific challenges, such as:

- The lack of support and guidance necessary for women to reach decision-making positions.

The number of Arab women involved in politics is still far from representative of their population in society.

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- The negative image party leaders have of women as having weak organizational capabilities and communication skills.
- The lack of knowledge and understanding of political rights and responsibilities.
- The lack of official personal identification (social identification cards, voting cards, etc.) that give women access to the political process.
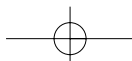
1.4.2 Social obstacles

- Several reports highlight the obstacles faced by women due to cultures and traditions. In many cases, they prevent women from working in the public sphere in general and in political life specifically. "While in industrialized nations, women suffer from a glass ceiling in professional mobility, there is a thick wall preventing Arab women from moving from the private to the public sphere. The Arab woman, unlike her male counterpart, has to prove herself in all aspects of work before she can gain the acceptance of her peers" (Gomaa 2001a).
- Sometimes the professional nature of a position contradicts the traditional image of the woman as submissive or weak. When women comply with the demands of the job, being assertive or forceful, they are attacked for adopting masculine traits, or for not fitting certain feminine ideals.
- Often the administrative or institutional framework is not conducive or supportive of female employees. An example that is often cited is the lack of child day- care facilities, despite the fact that most institutions are bound by law to have them on the premises.
- The non-availability of flexible work hours often prevents women from balancing the needs of private life with the necessary work requirements for upward mobility in the professional world (Gomaa 2001b).
- The number of women in professional positions differs from country to country, and from field to field in each country. The differences between Arab countries generally correlate with the percentage of educated females, the intensity of prevailing cultural and traditional gender norms, and the availability of a supportive environment.

1.4.3 Economic obstacles

Poverty and daily needs and pressures have a negative influence on women's participation in public life.

- Unlike countries such as India and Bangladesh where active political participation has been perceived as a tool to combat poverty and influence macroeconomic policies, Arab women tend not to view political participation as a tool that can help improve their economic conditions.

And yet, despite these many constraints, the number of successful professional women in executive positions in a variety of Arab countries is an important accomplishment. It is necessary to continue to support, and increase the number of these women.

Poverty and daily needs and pressures have a negative influence on women's participation in public life.

Efforts to address women's political, social and economic insecurity will be ineffective unless women have a full and equal role in decision-making.

Box 4.1: "Political Participation: What's in it for me?"

• Why should I participate?

• Would it secure a job for me or for my husband?

• Would it help me put my kids in school?

• Would it help me pay my bills?

Questions raised in a training session on political participation.

2. Why such low levels?

The prevailing paradigm that studies women and politics can be criticized on the following grounds:

2.1 Problem Identification

When faced with the core question, "Why are women not active politically?" the prevailing paradigm usually provides a variety of answers including lack of political skills, cultural factors that tend to emphasize the traditional role of women as wives and mothers, poverty and/or lack of democracy. Based on this-analysis, national and global strategies are formulated to empower women and upgrade their political skills through a series of training programs, creating funds for financing their campaigns, and promoting democratization. Yet many of these efforts have not succeeded at increasing or enhancing women's political participation. In the paragraphs that follow, the experience of women in the political sphere will be further analyzed. The analysis offered here suggests that women are not active in politics because politics is not a safe and secure domain for them to participate in.

Even in Arab countries where women can constitutionally and legally partic-ipate in politics, obstacles to their political engagement remain, such as:

- **Abuse and misuse of their voices**
  For example, in Algeria, men often vote for their wives, and women can rarely object or influence the political decision that is supposedly being made on their behalf. In Upper Egypt, which has the highest voting turnout in the country, women are often transported to the ballots and forced to vote on the basis of family or tribe preferences.

- **Violence during elections**
  Violence has become a characteristic of elections in many countries. Voters are prevented by force from reaching the ballots by supporters of other candidates. In Jordan, Egypt, Algeria, and Yemen candidates have been threatened with assassination, and some have actually been mur-dered. In many cases clashes between the supporters of different candi-dates or with security forces results in deaths and heavy casualties. In such contexts women are greatly discouraged from participating.

- **Harassment of women candidates**
  Often women candidates are harassed and faced with more physical and psychological threats than their male counterparts. Sometimes funding for

their campaigns is difficult to secure because others prefer to put their money towards campaigns of male representatives, which they consider more legitimate or potentially successful.

Women candidates and politicians often have to deal with sexual harassment on a variety of levels. Women politicians are often the object of defamation, accusations of impropriety and scandalous rumors that destroy their public image. In a culture that holds honor, particularly that of women, in the highest regard, these tactics ensure that the public trust and faith in women candidates is eroded.

2.2 Methodological Grounds

Most of the studies on political participation tend to measure the political participation of women by focusing on quantitative indicators that assess the percentage of women in decision-making positions, such as in executive and legislative positions, and political parties, etc. The analysis either provides a gloomy picture of women's under representation in politics, or a bright picture about their rising political role. However, the analysis needs to go further to explore why women end up with certain political portfolios that tend to reinforce their traditional roles. Although women are highly represented in the Foreign Service and have become undersecretaries, ambassadors and members of high-level delegations, no Arab woman has held the post of the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Gomaa 2000).

2.3 Conceptual Grounds

Often, the emphasis of researchers and advocates has been on 'formal politics,' and formal power structures and has not given enough attention to everyday politics.

The dynamic nature of political participation and power must be further understood. Political power is often situational and context specific. Women holding high offices may still not have the freedom to exercise political power. In addition, many informal networks and societal actors can exercise great political influence. Analysis should encompass both "informal"and "formal" politics for a fuller understanding of political power and the opportunities and obstacles for women's participation and influence.

2.4 Outcome and Impact

Moreover, the paradigm in its attempt to assess women empowerment has often confused goals with means and neglected to look at outcome and impact in terms of real changes in the lives of women. Putting women in decision-making posts

Although women are highly represented in the Foreign Service and have become undersecretaries, ambassadors and members of high-level delegations, no Arab woman has held the post of the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

is a goal in itself and is a means for promoting greater representation of women's interests. The outcome and impact should be linked to the improvement of the quality of life for individual women, and the enhancing of democracy, freedom, and equality at the national level.

Box 4.2: Reinventing Politics in the Arab World

Several members of the civil society and intellectuals from all political spectrum in the Arab World held a conference on "Issues of Refom in the Arab World." The Conference took place at Bibliotheca Alexandrina from 12–14 March, 2004.

The conference was 100% non-governmental and came as a response to internal demands for reform and modernization that has been growing over the last decade and has increasingly became more crucial in an era of globalization, international terrorism, and other external factors.

Reform was defined as "all direct and indirect steps that need to be taken by governments, civil society and private sector institutions to creat without any reluctance or hesitation an effective democratic systems in the region."

The Alexandria Declaration called for political, economic, social, and cultural reform to enable the region to respond effectively to both the citizens demands and the external challenges.

It emphasizes the following mechanisms to achieve reform:
• Rotation of Power
• Inclusion of Women in Public Life
• Separation of Power

3. Securing Politics for Women: In Search of a New Paradigm

Clearly, all the indicators call for a safer political field in which women can participate without any physical or psychological fear. It is necessary to provide an arena of interaction where women are not coerced or feel under duress when making decisions regarding their participation in the political sphere. This change can occur only when all of the factors that frustrate women's political participation are analyzed. The concept of 'human security' can provide such a framework for addressing characteristics of the political sphere that threaten survival, safety and dignity of women. As noted in the introduction of this report, human security "demands protection from these dangers and the empowerment of people so that they can cope with—and when possible overcome—these hazards."[3] The following paragraphs to discuss how such a framework can be utilized.

3.1 The Evolution of Political Security as a Competing Paradigm

The concept of security has often been narrowly defined as "securing state territory from external aggression, or as protection of national interests in foreign policy" (UNDP 1994: 22).

However, according to C.F. Rothschild Hafterdorn, the political use of the term 'human security' dates back to "the enlightenment, when notions of individual liberty and freedom were advanced to counter the dictates of government. Incorporating themes of human rights and individual well being, the term collided in the nineteenth-century political discourse. . . . With the rise of the nation state, and as regional alliances were formed—to enforce particular global regimes—the term began to be used to describe collective strategic security, enforced through diplomatic or military action" (Leaning 2000).

The end of the cold war brought new hope for more stable world, new social agenda, and cooperative pattern of interactions. Conflict was perceived more "within nations than between nations" (UNDP 1994: 22). The 1994 UNDP Human Development Report defined human security as freedom from fear and freedom from want. Moreover, the report identified the components of human security to include economic security, political security, personal security, community security, and food, health, and environmental security. The 2003 report

A focus on human security draws attention to the importance of women's political participation. In order for women to be free from wants and fears, women must play a full and equal role in political decision-making.   In addition, society as a whole must be committed to ensuring politics is an arena in which women's can participate freely, without threats and coercion.

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[3] **Commission on Human Security, Human Security Now (New York 2003), p.8.**

on human security by the Commission for Human Security (launched by the Millennium Summit) suggested that in addition to human development, which is importantly concerned with progress and augmentation, attention should be placed on human security which gives primary focus to the risks and insecurities that women and men face in their daily lives.

3.2 Assumptions of the New Paradigm

The paradigm attempts to combine definitions of security at a national level, with definitions of security at an individual level.

A focus on human security draws attention to the importance of women's political participation. In order for women to be free from wants and fears, women must play a full and equal role in political decision-making. Thus enabling them to become more effective in political participation. The paradigm attempts to combine definitions of security at a national level, with definitions of security at an individual level. Freedom is perceived as the core concept of the security paradigm. Freedom from fear and want can be operationalized on both national and individual levels. At the national level, it will address issues of peace and conflict resolution, i.e. freedom from aggression. At the individual level, it will deal with personal and civil liberty including human rights and gender equality. In addition, the paragraphs above call attention to the ways in which the political arena itself poses risks to women's security and dignity. Society as a whole must be committed to ensuring politics is an arena in which women's can participate freely, without threats and coercion.

3.3 Political Security at the National Level: Peace and Conflict Resolution

The political security paradigm questioning how the issues of women's empowerment and political participation can be put on the agenda of a country that is struggling to survive. How can women guarantee their share in political security when "the fruits of the struggle are reaped"?[4] It emphasizes that freedom and security on the national level is stepping stone for freedom and security on the individual level. Women are perceived as agents for change to assert political security, not only because they suffer more but also because they are eager for safety and security. Consequently, women have to participate in global and strategic governance issues to be able to ensure freedom from fear and want.

The 1995 Beijing Platform for Action was an important benchmark that created an internationally endorsed document highlighting the needs and rights of women in situations of armed conflict. It also suggested recommendations for

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[4] See the work of R. Saygh on Palestinian situations. Rosemary Sayegh "Researching Gender in Palestinian camps: political, theoretical and methodological problems" in Deniz Kandyoti (ed), Gendering the Middle East, London: I.B. Tauris, 1996: 145–164.

action to ensure women's protection and participation in all decision-making processes.

Despite the overall insecurity in the Arab region, the Arab-Israeli conflict, the civil war in Sudan, and the war in Iraq, only two Arab states—of all the Arab countries that participated in Beijing conference—namely Lebanon and Palestine, mentioned the role of women in armed conflict as a country priority.[5] Recently, however, several initiatives have taken place to begin addressing the various issues arising from conflicts in the region. The only international, rather than regional, initiative is the Suzanne Mubarak Women's International Peace Movement (SMWIPM), initiated in September 2002. The Movement aims at promoting and establishing a culture of peace in the region (Women for Peace 2002). This concept of peace does not only rely on the absence of war or conflict as its definition, but rather expands the notion of peace to include freedom from want and fear.

In March 2004, Lebanon organized a forum on Arab women, armed conflict, and peace building within the frame of the AWO. These initiatives by the AWO reflect a growing sense of insecurity in the region as a result of devastating wars and regional conflicts. Israeli government policies have escalated violence and hatred in the region, and have had devastating consequences on the lives of many. Moreover, the USA's intervention in Iraq and the civil war in Sudan have had negative impacts not only on Arab women but on the region as a whole.

Arab women's initiatives for peace and conflict resolution are congruent with several activities on the global level. The UN Security Council has recognized that peace and security cannot be achieved without the vital participation of women. In October 2000, the first UN Security Council Resolution on Women and Peace and Security 1325 was unanimously approved and passed. Resolution 1325 emerged out of the leadership of supportive governments, the advocacy of a coalition of NGOs and technical assistance from the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and other gender advocates in the UN system (UNIFEM 2003).

The political security paradigm perceives peace to be more than the absence of violence and encompasses social justice and sustainable development. No peace strategies are likely to be durable without the involvement of women. Opportunity must be given so that women can make their voices heard. Peace building is a community activity and is defined and initiated from the grassroots level (UNIFEM 2003: 3).

The political security paradigm perceives peace to be more than the absence of violence and encompasses social justice and sustainable development.

No peace strategies are likely to be durable without the involvement of women.

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[5] **See UNIFEM, Paving the Road towards Empowerment. Amman, Jordan 2002 "table of national priorities p.20; W.B. Gallie, "Essntially Contested Concepts," Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, No. 56, 1955–56, pp. 169, 171–72, 180; and Gallie, Philosophy and the Historical Understanding, New York: Schockan Books, 1964, pp. 2–9.**

Box 4.3: Suzanne Mubarak Women's International Peace Movement (SMWIPM)

Background:
- SMWIPM is the Middle East's first Women's Peace Initiative to empower women in the region to participate in efforts leading to peace and security.
- This movement was initiated in a September 2002 meeting in Sharm el-Sheikh.
- This meeting was a gathering of first ladies and high-ranking female officials from different parts of the world as well as public figures, parliamentarians, intellectuals, and leaders of other peace movements.

Objectives:
- SMWIPM aims at promoting and establishing a culture of peace.
- Implementing the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 regarding the role and the rights of women in relation to peace and development. This resolution was adopted in October 2000 to encourage the increasing participation of women at decision-making level in conflict resolution and peace processes.
- Ensuring that women and girls are not forced to put up with the horrors of war, and are not denied the right to full participation in efforts undertaken to bring about peace. Horrifying figures stated that 90% of all those killed in armed conflict are civilians, 80% of the people who were uprooted around the world are women and children, two million children were killed in the armed conflict and six million were seriously injured or permanently disabled.
- Projecting a proper image of women and spreading a culture of peace by cooperating with media, parliamentarians, and executive bodies.
- Spreading the notion "Peace is not just the absence of war," but it is about freedom from want and fear.

Future steps and strategy:
The movement lobbies for:
- The inclusion of women in the peace-building process.
- Ensuring that all issues that affect women and their families especially insecurity and violence in their communities will be given great attention and consideration in policy-making process.
- Planning to host a regional conference May to assess the movement next steps and strategy.
- Transforming relevant commitments and instruments made by the UN and other international, regional, and national organizations into credible accomplishments.

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3.4 Political Security at the Individual Level: Safety, Certainty, and Liberty

The main assumptions of the political security paradigm at the individual level are very basic: 1) Unless women feel physically secure, they will not participate in politics to their full potential; 2) Unless women feel psychologically secure, they will not participate in politics to their full potential; 3.) If women are concerned with basic survival elements, such as food and shelter and cannot accommodate both familial and professional demands, they will not participate in politics. As simple as these elements seem they have great implications for understanding and addressing the barriers to women's political participation.

Unless women feel secure physically, psychologically, and economically,their full participation in politics will not be realized.

Box 4.4: Not When It Comes to My Daughter: Safety over Politics

An Egyptian intellectual mentioned that as a professor at a university and a political activist she has always encouraged her students to participate in politics, to become registered voters and to vote in elections.

One day she was driving her daughter to school and was faced by a large number of security forces fully armed and surrounding the school to prevent the students from going outside the school to join a large demonstration that was taking place downtown.

All of a sudden she was shouting at her daughter asking her not to participate in the demonstration, not to discuss her political opinions with anyone, and to keep herself inside the classroom.

The university professor confessed that her concern with the safety of her daughter overrode her previous opinion regarding the importance of political participation.

Securing politics not only for women but also for all citizens.

Safety is the key dimension of political security. It is reflected in the rule of law and the protection from discrimination due to one's gender, social class, ethnic background, or political opinion.

Certainty is a feeling of purpose that triggers confidence and enables women to innovate and participate actively in community without fear. It is based on a perception of the political role they should fulfill, a mission they want to

The political security paradigm perceives safety, certainty, and liberty to be prerequisites for active political participation.

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achieve, and the interests they wish to defend. It is a cognitive status linked with cultural values according to which the importance of women's presence in the public sphere and their political participation is respected and cherished.

Liberty includes a set of values related to human rights. These include the freedom of women to express their independent personalities, opinions and beliefs, freedom from depression and mental illness, freedom from aggression and violence, and freedom of speech, expression, participation, etc. Moreover, the paradigm emphasizes the need for full citizenship for women not only in terms of legal recognition of their rights, but also in terms of their actual participation in political life.

Ruth Lister in her study entitled "Citizenship: A Gender Perspective," calls for revising the concept of citizenship in a way that reflects the needs and interests of both men and women (Lister 1994). There is an urgent need to bridge the gap between the "private" and "public" in women's daily life.

4. The Road Ahead: Where to Go from Here? Strategies to Enhance Arab Women's Participation in Public Life

Based on human security framework, the strategy should be multilayered, address sources of insecurity for women whether on the individual, family, or state level. The components of this strategy should contain the following:

4.1 Creating a Supportive Environment

This can be achieved through:

4.1.1 Bridging the gap between private (family) and public (political domain):

- The creation of a flexible working environment that is gender sensitive and does not affect family life; (e.g. tele-working, flexible working hours…etc).
- Socialization and education of children that is based on equality, and tolerance. If Arab parents raise their children on these values, this will reduce the need for formulating gender-sensitive policy as all people will support gender equality in their everyday lives.
- Closing the gender gap in education. Education fosters women's economic, social and political empowerment.
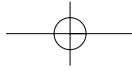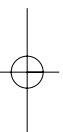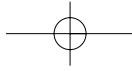
4.1.2 Political reform

There is a need to continue and expand the current trend that includes women in comprehensive political reform. The strengthening of democracy in the Arab world will help to enhance thesafety, security, and liberty of all people, particularly women who face great obstacles in participating in the political sphere.

## 4.2 Formulation of Gender Sensitive Policies to Enhance Women's Participation

These include:

- Reforming the electoral systems.
- Positive discrimination measures for women.
- Creating mechanisms for supporting women leaders.
- Building the capacity and skills of women in leadership.
- Promoting the role of the media in projecting a more positive image of Arab women and their participation in politics and in all decision making positions in all sectors.
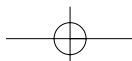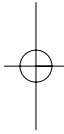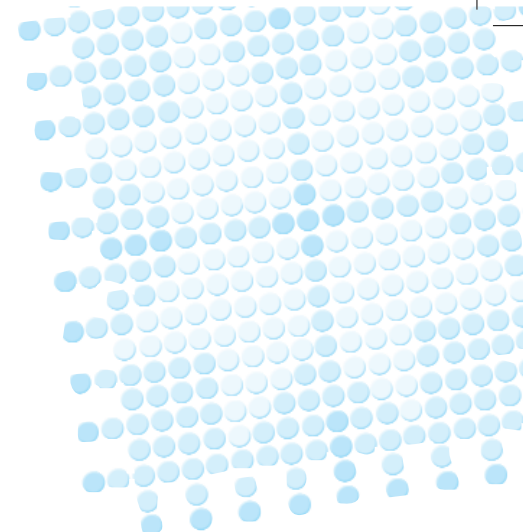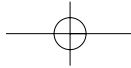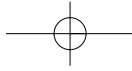
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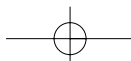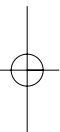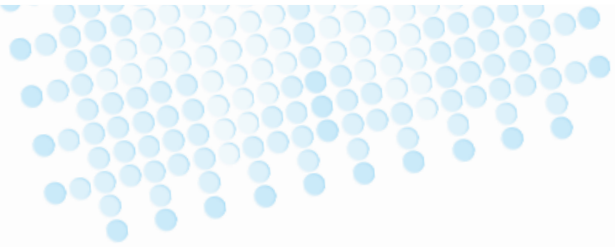
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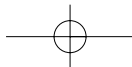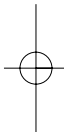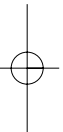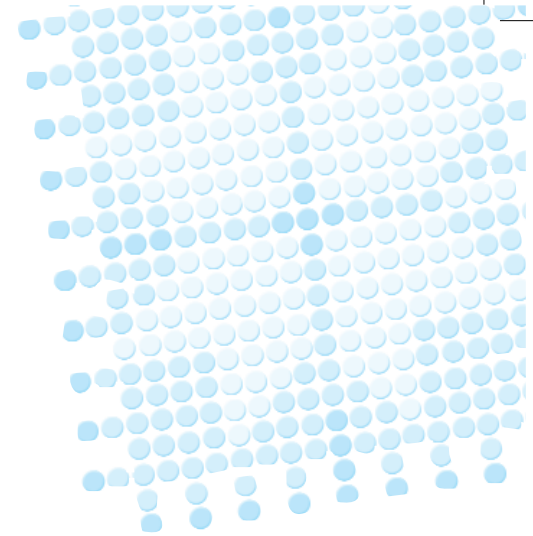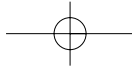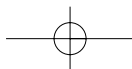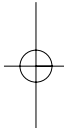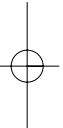
Chapter Four: Annex

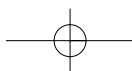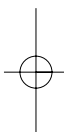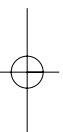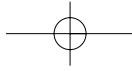## Table A.4.1: Percentage of Women's Representation within Arab Parliaments

| No	Country	Date of Election	No of Seats	% of women's aeats		No. of Women 's aeats
				(1995)	(2003)	(2003)
1	Syria	2003	250	8.4%	12%	30
2	Tunisia	1999	182	6.8%	11.5%	21
3	Morocco	2002	325	1.0%	10.8%	35
4	Sudan	2000	360	8.2%	9.7%	35
5	Algeria	2002	389	7%	6.2%	24
6	Jordan	2003	110	2.5%	5.5%	6
7	Egypt	2000	454	2.2%	2.4%	11
8	Lebanon	2000	128	2.3%	2.3%	3
9	Yemen	2003	301	1.0%	0.3%	1
10	Bahrain	2002	40	0.0%	0.0%	0
11	Kuwait	2003	65	0.0%	0.0%	0
12	Saudi Arabia	2001	120	0.0%	0.0%	0
13	United Arab Emirates	1997	40	0.0%	0.0%	0
14	Mauritania	2001	81	0.0%	3.7%	3

Source: Table compiled from the International Parliamentary Union 2003
and ESCWA 1995.

Table A.4.2: Percentage of women representation in the Arab region governance

Levels / Country	All Levels	Ministerial Level	Non-Ministerial Level
Egypt	4%	3%	4.5%
Libya		4.5%	
Syria	3.9%	6.8%	1.9%
Sudan	1.7%	2.4%	1.3%
Jordan	3.4%	6.1%	
Oman	3.6%		4.1%
Kuwait			6.7%
Algeria	4.8%		8.3%
Morocco	0.9%		1.4%
Mauritania	5.4%	3.6%	5.9%

Source: Arab Compiled Report, Arab League, June 2000: 113–22
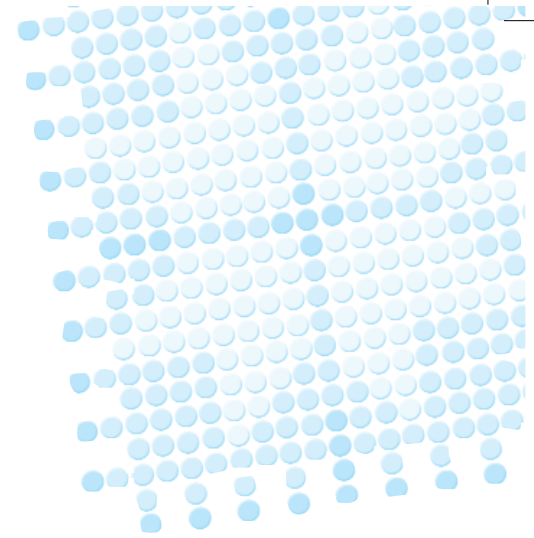
Concluding Remarks:
One Paradigm, Four Arenas,
and more than 140 Million Women
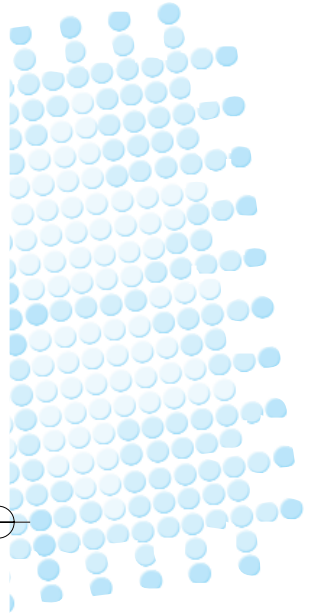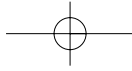
T he Arab World has experienced, and continues to endure, the repeated traumas of war, occupation, economic volatility, and impoverishment as well as civil unrest and weak governance. The past decade has added to the challenges faced by Arab citizens and governments. Yet, while this is clearly a time of crisis for many in the Arab world, it is also a time of opp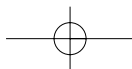ortunity. There is great interest and will within the Arab region to change, modernize, and reform Arab states so that all women, men and children can live without fear and insecurity.

This report puts in writing what is often expressed in whispers—the threats and challenges to women's security in the Arab region. Clearly if change is to occur, controversial and complicated problems must be identified, talked about and explored. As noted in the introduction, in this time of reflection and examination leading up to Beijing +10, this report illuminates areas where progress towards achieving the BPFA and the Arab Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women to 2005 remains stagnant and unfulfilled.

Many Arab governments have stressed that reform must come from within and not applied in accordance with imported recommendations or ideas. This report acknowledges the importance of internal reform. Yet it is important to understand what this really means. Too often, the cultural specificity of 'Arabs' and of 'Religion' has been used to justify violations to women's rights and inadequate progress made towards women's empowerment and gender equality. This report rejects cultural and religious excuses for stalled and unfulfilled promises. At the same time, the report recognizes and explores the rich and sophisticated knowledge base, religious identity, and historical experiences of Arab citizens. By reviewing historical efforts to achieve gender justice led by both women and men in Arab regions, and delving into religious law and tradition, this report suggests that tensions between women's rights, family obligations and cultural and religious values are a matter of interpretation, conservative and radical voices who have chosen to interpret the humane and moral vision in Islam and Arab texts in ways the often pose great risks for women's security. Global human values of equity, security, free-

dom, and dignity outlined in CEDAW, the BFPA and other international legal documents are not an imposition, but are values that have long been foundational in the thought and culture of the Arab region.

In addition to exploring the laws and traditions in the region, this report based its analysis and recommendations on the lived realities of Arab women and related these realities to the social, economic, and political conditions and constraints in the Arab world.

This conclusion will not reiterate the content of each chapter but will identify the common themes and principles that are the main messages of this report. The chapters commonly espouse one paradigm, that of security. The report focuses on the risks that threaten the survival, safety and dignity of women in the Arab region. In doing so with reference to the four arenas of policy, society, economy, polity, and they speak to approximately 140 millions of Arab women.

One: It is a Man's World

Gender awareness and gender concerns are on the policy agenda in most Arab countries. This is largely due to the global initiative that has accelerated policy responses to women's needs. Chapter one documents the success of CEDAW and BPFA in galvanizing Arab states to become signatories and committed partners on the road to change. But this policy arena is too often the only site of action where gender awareness exists. The other three chapters of the report explore the ways in which women's empowerment and gender inequality remain stalled and outline possibilities for translating high-level policy into real change in women's lives. The chapters agree that it is still pretty much a Man's world.

Chapter two describes demographic transitions and their impact on gender roles and family and discusses problems posed by the commonly held ideal of a patriarchal family where men provide welfare for women. Chapter three describes the broad economic challenges faced by Arab economies and markets and also illustrates the particular difficulties faced by women in this economic context. This chapter illuminates the factors that restrict women's access to employment opportunities, such as cultural and traditional norms, lack of educational opportunities, household responsibilities, and gender discrimination in the workplace. The ability of women to access credit, private savings and pensions schemes is also limited, resulting in even greater risks for economic security. Women's economic security depends on the male breadwinner model which assumes equitable distribution within the family. This chapter outlines economic, social and political reasons why

such equitable distribution of household resources cannot be assumed, and argues that enhancing women's economic security is critical for women's empowerment and gender equality.Chapter four makes the explicit point that women do not participate in politics because politics is not a secure field of activity for women. In the Arab world the mechanisms of representation and participation are often contingent on male ties of kinship and patronage and leave few opportunities for women tobe full and equal partners in decision-making. Being politically engaged also tends to require public exposure, which women are often restricted from, and funding which most women can ill afford. Women who advocate for change and openly participate in politics also face threats and social censure.

The authors concur that this political environment threatens the gains and advances achieved so far by women andadvocates of gender equality.

Two: Transformative Capability

To ensure the permanence and viability of progress women must be full and equal participants in the process of bringing about change. Throughout the Arab world there persists a need to engage women and their interest groups in political and economic reform movements.

The chasm that persists between elites and the populace is also an obstacle for gender advocates and women's organizations. Elites can and do speak on behalf of the powerless and poor majority. However the majority must also have opportunities to speak on its own behalf and to express their own concerns and interests. Part of women's empowerment involves ensuring an environment is in place that enables and supports women with articulating their own needs, and enables them to succeed at effecting their own change.

Three: Men and Women Share the Same Problems

This is a report about Arab women but most of the issues it raises and identifies as problems apply to men as well. Unemployment, poverty, violence, the absence of civic rights and the prevalence of insecurity plague both men and women but often not in the same way.

This report discussed how women entering labor markets often have access only to low status are precarious employment without the benefit of social security and protection. It also detailed how women's work in the informal sector, including in the household, continues to be undervalued and unrecognized. At the same time,

women's mobility in the public sphere is obstructed by both formal laws and customary norms, resulting in women's continued lack of access to services. The report also detailed laws that overtly discriminate against women, granting powers solely to men in terms of household decision-making. The risks to women's security must be recognized but must be done so in a way that recognizes the important and positive roles that men continue to play in women's lives. Opportunities must also be opened for men to advocate and support women's empowerment and gender inequality without facing social censure. In addition, the ways that gender justice benefits all in society should continue to be made clear. The retort that women are better off than men and that attending to their needs means not attending to those of society in general and men in particular is a prevalent and destructive disposition.

Men and women are together shaping society and need to together face and address its problems. But addressing these problems on behalf of women should include not preclude men. Batliwala defines women's empowerment as " .. the loss of the privileged position that patriarchy allotted to men … however women's empowerment also liberates and empowers men in both material and psychological terms… they find that they have lost not merely traditional privileges but also traditional burdens. (Kabeer, 1999: p. 13)

Four: Socially Informed Gendered Policies

Family obligations and household responsibilities continue to be seen as opposed to, or impossible to pursue along with professional, public, and civic duties. The report stresses the need for socially informed gendered policies that enable women to pursue both public and private life trajectories. There are tools and resources that can guarantee women's rights as citizens and recognize their worth and value of their family lives. Women are facing unfair choices, along with restricted options in the public spheres, and lack of protection and undervalued workloads in their own homes. By supporting women's efforts and recognizing women's rights, governments can support women's participation in both public and private domains.

Of great concern is the modern reproduction of traditional gender biases. The messages that boys and girls receive from their parents, teachers and mentors continue to reinforce stereotypes and perpetuate gender inequality. Analysis has to look beyond the numbers of girls in school, and the numbers of women employed to understand their experiences. Girls are in schools but what are they taught about themselves and their rights in schools? Women may be employed but what are the terms of their employment?

Gender biases in the labor market, administrative apparatuses and bureaucracies and in modern institutions such as political parties and schools must be illuminated and countered by alternative messages of gender equality. In addition, changes in fertility, nuptuality, population structures, economic opportunities and markets must be understood in terms of the risks and opportunities they pose for both women and men.

As often noted throughout this report women have made gains in almost every Arab state. These gains are publicized and lauded locally and regionally in the hope of catching the global eye of recognition and respect. The success of society in consolidating, protecting and building upon these gains depends onfar reaching and participatory efforts to guarantee the freedom and citizenship of all members of Arab society. Not only governments but also citizens need to have the courage and strength to recognize and address threats to human security.

We cannot ignore the conflicts that continue to rage in Arab states. We also cannot ignore the occupation of Palestine, the destruction of large parts of Sudan, the failure to restore security and evacuate military powers from Iraq and the insecurities that these conflicts have created throughout the region. Large numbers of forced migrants continue to live without a home and many communities have been deprived of their livelihoods, land and future. But this does not mean that gender justice and women's empowerment can be sidelined until these other issues are resolved. On the contrary it is now that the voices, capabilities and vision of women are most needed to weather this distressing storm.

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