



**POST PROJECT EVALUATIONS FOR THE
UNITED NATIONS DEMOCRACY FUND**

EVALUATION REPORT

UDF-16-710-TUN

Women and men equal for local governance in Tunisia

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Disclaimer

The views expressed in this report are those of the evaluator. They do not represent those of UNDEF or any of the institutions referred to in the report.

Author

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I. OVERALL ASSESSMENT

(i) Project data

About the project

This report is for the evaluation of the project entitled “Women and men equal for local governance in Tunisia”.

The project started on March 1st, 2018 and was planned to last 24 months, without extension. It ended on March 31st, 2020. It is the first grant from the United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF) for the implementing agency named Lam Echaml, with a grant amounting to USD 198,000.

Project Objective:

The project aimed to strengthen gender equality and good governance in local development projects following the first democratic municipal elections after the fall of the old regime.

Implementation Partners:

- EAF Berlin (European Academy for Women in Politics and Business)
- The National Union of Tunisian Women (NUTW)
- The Tunis Center for Freedom of Press (TCFP)

Project Beneficiaries:

- 54 members of local civil society organizations (CSOs)- women and men
- 54 Municipality staff- women and men
- 54 Elected members- women and men
- 45 Journalists and radio hosts- women and men

Project Activities:

- Capacity-building for Local Stakeholders:
 - Training in leadership, gender equality and good governance for local CSOs.
 - A series of trainings for elected members and staff of municipal administrations on gender equality, good governance and sustainable development.
 - Training on citizen journalism and gender equality for journalists and radio hosts.
- Communication and Awareness-raising:
 - Producing articles and podcasts to promote the culture of gender equality.
 - Common awareness campaign to promote equality and citizenship.
Organization of the annual event "The City of Women" to raise awareness and inform the public opinion on the matter of equality in local economic and social life.
 - Communication on local pilot projects.
Communication on the project.

- Advocacy and Coaching to promote women's participation
- Coaching of nine local associations with a view to modify the internal statutes and regulations to integrate principles of gender equality and democratic and participatory governance.
- Signing nine partnership agreements with local public stakeholders to engage them for a sustainable and fair development.
- Coaching local authorities in implementing three pilot local development projects in compliance with gender equality principles.

(ii) Key findings

Coherence

The project objectives are aligned with Lam Echaml's axes of intervention, its value charter, and its efforts to promote local development and citizen rights in Tunisia's most underprivileged areas. The organization has demonstrated expertise in training management and the mobilization of local actors, but this was its first project for the promotion of gender equality.

The project was to a great extent aligned with UNDEF's objectives and continuous support to Tunisia throughout the democratization process, and was wholly consistent with efforts of other actors (e.g., UNDP, SIDA, USAID, GIZ, and the European Union) for the promotion of decentralization and gender equality in local governance. Yet, there was no coordination or official collaboration with those actors or public entities such as the Center of Training and Decentralization Support, the General Authority for Prospecting and Support for the Decentralized Process. Both represent central authorities and are responsible of carrying out the necessary studies to develop a national approach on the implementation of country-wide decentralization, and in coaching local municipalities to guarantee their commitment to this approach.

Relevance

The project was relevant inasmuch as it responded to an evident and urgent issue in the decentralization process, which is the integration of gender equality in the design, implementation and monitoring of local development projects.

The pilot development projects were highly relevant in terms of meeting the needs of the target and advancing towards the achievement of the main project objective.

Although the project's objectives were relevant and responded to the needs of the intended beneficiaries, the project design had some limitations including (i) the absence of specific and measurable outcomes indicators, which prevented adequate performance measurement, and (ii) the absence of a needs study or context indicators, which limited the possibilities of comparing the situations before and after the intervention.

The choice of project partners was also relevant and had contributed to the convenient implementation and monitoring of activities, unlike the choice of beneficiaries, as the selection criteria were not sufficiently specific, and the geographical scope was too wide to allow for capitalizing on change.

From the interviewed experts' perspective, communication activities were not innovative and the efficiency of activities such as celebrating women's day and holding press conferences are debatable. Indicators of this were the low media coverage of these activities, and difficulties to capture change at the community level.

Effectiveness

All things considered, the project was effective, and apart from some minor changes, the activities were implemented in accordance with the logical framework.

The trainings and coaching activities for municipalities and CSOs impacted participants in such a way that would make them contribute to driving forward project outcome 1 and 2. For outcome 3, the involvement of local actors (media, CSOs, and municipal administrations) in the promotion of women's rights had increased.

The effectiveness of the communication and advocacy activities is arguable, especially given the absence of a communication strategy guiding the activities, and not hiring a communication expert as provided for in the project document.

Efficiency:

The project was partially efficient. On the one hand, the budget was respected, except for a few changes reported by the grantee. The project could have been more efficient had the geographical scope of activities been narrower and had the activity management, which was expensive, been carried out by the regional coordinators.

On the other hand, the average cost of training per participant was also relatively expensive, which can be explained by the low number of participants (around 20) at each training session.

Impact

Without a baseline assessment and sufficient details on progress under each outcome in the final report submitted by the grantee, it was difficult to measure progress towards project outcomes. However, results on various levels indicate that the project was considerably impactful.

The project had a direct positive impact on beneficiaries, municipality officials, the newly elected members, CSOs, and media workers, who felt tangible change thanks to the law and gender equality training. It also had an indirect impact on building the capacities of local organizations (municipalities and associations) which would contribute in the success of the decentralization process and the integration of gender equality into local politics.

Women from Kebili and Mdhila sensed a palpable change at the local level as a result of pilot development projects. Those who benefited from these projects gained confidence and a sense of empowerment and were better equipped to face the social and cultural barriers that prevent them from participating in local politics.

Sustainability

The project is sustainable in the sense that it contributes, along with other projects, to the success of the long-term process of decentralization in Tunisia.

Although the project design failed to put in place collaboration mechanisms or resource dissemination plans to sustain results, the process of implementation itself contains elements of sustainability, such as:

- The new governance and gender equality skills consolidated through the project;
- Changes in attitudes and beliefs induced by debates, coaching sessions etc.;
- Sustainable confidence and sense of empowerment among female participants - which can be sustained if monitored and supervised;
- Lam Echaml's regional institutional anchoring, insofar that the regional branches can ensure the continuity of these activities; and
- The commitment of municipalities and associations supporting the participation of women in these organizations and promoting their integration within local development initiatives.

II. PROJECT CONTEXT AND STRATEGY

(i) Development context

The Process of Decentralization

After the fall of Ben Ali's authoritarian regime, and for several months, Tunisia lived through an anti-authoritarian period during which people tried to be independent of the central State so they can directly manage the wealth of their regions. With the new constitution of 2014, Tunisia had the suitable legal framework to begin its decentralization process.

Chapter 7 lists a set of measures to initiate decentralization and support local power in order to ensure a constitutional local democracy. It was therefore a matter of vertically streamlining power (political decentralization) to permanently remedy long-standing regional disparities, ensure better representation of the State at the local level and especially in marginalized regions, and promote better citizen participation in political life, namely among women and youth.

Articles 29 through 37 of the Local Authorities Code stipulate that participatory democracy and open governance allow citizens and civil society to participate in the preparation of development and spatial planning programs. They also allow access to information relating to the various municipal activities¹.

The Role of Women in Politics and Local Governance

Despite having made notable progress in recent years in terms of women's political participation at the parliamentary and local levels, Tunisia has still not made any significant

¹ While the new Code of Local Authorities offers more political and financial autonomy to municipalities and theoretically extends their area of competence, the prerogatives of central and regional administration have remained nearly intact. The new coordination and cooperation procedures between the various public policy actors at regional and local levels (municipal and regional councils, governorates, delegations, sectors, agencies, establishments and public enterprises) have not yet been defined. This results in a blurred division of tasks between the administration and local authorities.

accomplishments at the level of ministerial and senior positions, which are at the center of public policy decision-making².

According to the report of The Center for Research, Studies, Documentation and Information on Women (CREDIF), there were approximately 16,000 registered associations in the country in 2014. Among the reported associations, there were 1,435 women founders against 7,524 men³.

After 2011, no woman was appointed either as a head of governorate or of one of the municipal councils, which were temporarily reshuffled pending municipal elections. There is little official gender-disaggregated data on the composition of such local authorities.

The success of decentralization represents an excellent opportunity for Tunisian women to play an active role in setting local policies and to fully integrate the gender component in policies, local projects, and within organizations.

(ii) Project objective and intervention rationale

Problem statement

Following the municipal elections, thousands of newly elected members would fill their positions without prior experience in public administration or in the management of a municipality. These local institutions are less developed than their national counterparts which have more expertise, resources and power, and that difference represents a challenge for the success of local governance.

On the other hand, policy and civil society remain male-dominated, both nationally and locally, thus reflecting the traditional division of labor within society. The presence of women in decision-making positions for an active and influential participation faces several challenges, especially culturally and socially.

Project objective

The project aimed to promote women's participation and gender equality in local development projects following the first democratic municipal elections after the fall of the old regime

Project Outcomes:

Outcome 1: Local CSO stakeholders have become aware of gender equality and good governance.

² At the parliamentary level, women represent 34% of the Assembly of People Representatives, making Tunisia the leading Arab country in terms of female representation in parliaments. At the ministerial level, women remain under-represented, and mostly absent from ministries of sovereignty. In Ben Ali's last government, only one woman was appointed Minister of Women and Family, and three women were appointed Secretaries of State. All the following transitional governments after 2011 were of unequal composition; with women being barely represented (holding two or three positions). At the local level, 47% of candidates elected in the municipal elections of May 2018 were women, therefore reversing the trend prevailing between 2011 and 2018; a period during which women were not very present in municipal councils. Source: OECD, THE PLACE OF WOMEN IN LOCAL POLITICAL LIFE IN TUNISIA.

³ <http://www.credif.org.tn/index.php/base-de-donnees/observatoire/gender-info>

Outcome 3: Increase in the involvement of local stakeholders (media, CSOs, municipal administrations) in the promotion of women's rights.

(iii) *Logical Framework Matrix*

Project Activities	Project outputs	Project outcomes	Long-term objective
<p>1.1.1 Establishment of contact with CSOs local and organization of 09 exchange meetings with local CSO</p> <p>1.1.2. Organization of 03 workshops training for associative actors in leadership, good governance and gender equality</p> <p>1.2.1 Organization of 09 meetings exchange with members of local CSOs</p> <p>1.2.2 Accompaniment of 09 local associations with a view to modification of the statutes and internal regulations</p> <p>2.1.1 Contact with public local actors (elected officials and administrative actors)</p> <p>2.1.2 Organization of 9 exchange meetings with public. local actors (elected officials and administrative actors) and signing of Partnership</p> <p>2.2.1: Organizing of 3 training workshops towards municipal officials</p> <p>2.2.2: Conduct 03 training sessions for elected officials</p> <p>2.3.1 organizing of 03 meetings with local/elected authorities</p> <p>2.3.2: Supporting local authorities to implement 03 pilot projects of local development</p> <p>2.3.3: Communication around pilot projects</p> <p>2.3.4: organizing 03 monitoring meetings post implementation</p> <p>2.4.1: Development and printing of a manual of good practices</p> <p>3.1.1: Organizing a press conference (Project launch)</p> <p>3.1.2: Organizing 2 press briefings on the progress of the project</p> <p>3.1.3: Organizing of a press conference at the end of the project</p> <p>3.1.4: Production of communication tools</p> <p>3.2.1: Organizing training for local media on citizen journalism and gender equality</p> <p>3.2.2: Production of (09) programs</p> <p>3.2.3: Writing of (15) press articles on women's rights</p>	<p>1.1 (54) CSO members trained in gender equality and good governance</p> <p>1.2 9 Local associations have changed their interior rules to integrate principles of gender equality and democratic governance</p> <p>2.1 (09) partnership protocols signed with the local public actors</p> <p>2.2 (54) members of municipal officials and 54 elected officials are trained in gender equality and local governance</p> <p>2.3 (03) "pilot" local development projects integrating the principle of gender equality in place by target municipalities</p> <p>2.4 A manual of good practices is produced and distributed</p> <p>3.1 implementation of a communication campaign around the project</p> <p>3.2 Producing of 09 radio programs and 15 of articles on gender equality by trained local media</p>	<p>Awareness of local actors on gender equality and good governance has increased</p> <p>Commitment of trained public actors in favor of integration of mainstreaming gender equality principles in local development projects has increased</p> <p>The involvement of local actors (media, CSOs, municipal administrations) in the promotion of women's rights has increased</p>	<p>Promoting women's participation and gender equality women in local governance.</p>

III. METHODOLOGY

(i) Evaluation methodology

This evaluation is intended to assist UNDEF in (i) advising future projects, (ii) project short-listing for future funding by building on the experience, achievements and lessons learned from experiences, and (iii) proposing recommendations for continued adaptations.

The evaluation rationale is informed by the people-centered evaluation (PCE) approach and conducted in accordance with the Norms and Standards for Evaluations developed by the United Nations Evaluation Group and the The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) criteria of evaluation⁴. Due to COVID-19, this post-project evaluation was conducted entirely remotely, and all interviews were held online and by phone.

The evaluator received all project documents in September 2020, and prepared a preliminary launch note in October 2020 based on a review of the project's documentation. The evaluator and the grantee then held multiple phone conversations to develop a schedule of online interviews, which took place from October 26th to November 07th, 2020.

(ii) Evaluation limitations

The evaluation data collection process was carried out under challenging conditions because of the global Covid-19 crisis, most people were not available or reachable online, in addition to meetings and Skype calls being cancelled without prior notice. The main challenges were:

- Priorities and availability of stakeholders;
- Meeting cancellations or rescheduling resulting in delays and extending the required time to complete data collection;
- Limited means of verifying contradictory information;
- Longer than expected time to establish a relationship of trust with beneficiaries, especially the vulnerable;
- Concepts and terminology (gender equality, equality between men and women, women participation) not having the same meaning and interpretation by the different interviewees;
- Failure to set up group interviews despite the numerous attempts;
- The lack of grantee capacity and resources to prepare for a remote evaluation (lack of electronic data, most team members don't use skype or Zoom); and
- The poor international telephone network

⁴ Coherence, relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability.

IV. EVALUATION FINDINGS

(i) Coherence

Internal coherence

Since 2013, Lam Echaml has been very active in regional development projects, as well as supporting the decentralization process. It is undeniable that the project objectives are in line with Lam Echaml's intervention areas and its efforts to promote local development and citizen rights in Tunisia's most underprivileged areas⁵.

Although Lam Echaml have extensive expertise in capacity building and youth engagement projects, nonetheless, the association has no demonstrated expertise in projects for the promotion of women's rights. The simplistic gender approach, the lack of diagnosis for specific community needs, the absence of a methodical selection strategy to serve project objectives, and the lack of innovation in communication and advocacy activities suggest that there is still room for improvement in terms of their social change and advocacy expertise

Although the association is committed to the principles of equalities, it has not introduced equality in a multi-tiered cross-cutting fashion; The project management was highly centralized and led almost exclusively by men, with the exception of one female trainer, which was inconsistent with the project objective.

To strengthen its capacities, the organization worked in partnership, among others, with the European Academy for Women in Politics and Business (EAF Berlin), the latter did not fulfil the conditions of their participation.

External coherence

The decentralization project constitutes a major challenge for the democratic transition in Tunisia, as its success will radically change the system of governance in the following years. It is for this reason that the project received special attention and support from international donors. Several stakeholders were mobilized to strengthen the capacity of local stakeholders, especially the newly elected municipality members.

According to the interviewed experts, it was certain that the project objectives were entirely consistent with the different efforts of several actors working on local stakeholder

⁵ Since its creation, the Lam Echaml association has delivered several projects:

(1) The project entitled *Campaign for Regional Citizen Appropriation of the Constitution* implemented in 2013, in partnership with the UNDP, which contributed to making the constitutional process accessible to citizens through regional information and training workshops;

(2) The project entitled *Acting Together for Local Democracy, Decentralization and Development* with the support of MEPI (2015-2016) contributed to raising awareness, training, and involving CSOs in the local governance best practices, and promoting dialogue between CSOs and local authorities.

(3) The project entitled *Citizen Journalism* implemented with the support of the Swiss Embassy and Free-Press Unlimited (2013-2014) through which Lam Echaml strengthened citizen journalism capacities of media stakeholders.

(4) The project entitled *LADDER* supported by the European Union and aiming to improve the actions of local authorities for development education and awareness-raising.

capacity building. They agreed that building the capacities of local stakeholders to ensure the good governance of their communities and overcome the challenges of local governance is so crucial and urgent, making all the initiatives fit and necessary.

For the implementation team, there have been discussions and feedback with other projects, but no formal coordination took place to share resources and ensure synergy between activities. It is difficult to judge whether there has been any duplication of efforts. When asked, the Lam Echaml's team reported that neither partnership nor coordination happened between Lam Echaml and the Tunisian Center of Training and Decentralization.

(ii) Relevance

In examining the relevance of the project, the evaluator distinguished between three levels of analysis: the relevance of the chosen issue, the relevance of the target beneficiaries, and the relevance of the activities.

For the choice of the issue, and at the time of the project design, the prioritized issue was very relevant to the socio-political context and the situation of women in the local Tunisian communities. Supporting the participation of women in the design, implementation and monitoring of local development projects that meet their needs and priorities is certainly a relevant and even crucial objective for the promotion of equality between men and women as well as of good local governance.

It is debatable whether Lam Echaml had adequately chosen the number of beneficiaries. The project targeted a very large number of municipalities (27) across nine governorates. However, the number of people trained per municipality at the end of the project is relatively low (2 elected members and 2 administration staff), resulting in minimal change-driving effect in their respective organizations. In fact, the trainings were not designed as ToTs, and the project did not develop a strategy to more widely transfer the training knowledge among the members of the municipal councils.

The selection criteria for local associations were too broad, and no community diagnosis or stakeholder analysis was carried out to initiate a participation and collaboration process targeted at the promotion of the situation of women in local governance.

Lastly, while the local stakeholder capacity building component was very relevant, the training topics such as good governance and leadership were considered general and very theoretical by the beneficiaries as well as the interviewed experts.

In general, the majority of project activities were relevant, but according to the views of the experts interviewed, activities such as governance, leadership, and citizen journalism trainings, and the celebration of women's day are very recurrent, and therefore do not constitute an innovative and concrete response to a problem as deep as the weak participation of women in community management. Instead, a gender approach which considers the interaction and power dynamics between gender groups and goes beyond just focusing on the participation of women is required.

This project sound very recurrent, activities are relevant mostly for legal literacy. I'm sure that Lam Echaml did a great job. But there is no innovation in this approach. This project, as many others, lacks community gender analysis and a more holistic approach to promote women's participation in the local governance.

Ms. Hayfa Dhouib
Project manager at the AFTURD
Tunisian women's association for the development research.

(iii) Effectiveness

In considering the project's effectiveness, the evaluator examined the contents of the project components, the links between them, and how they contributed to strengthen the capacities of local actors and to promote the principle of gender equality in the local governance processes.

The evaluator also examined the pilot local development projects supported under the framework of this project, including how activities contributed to strengthen the position of women in the design, implementation and monitoring of local development projects that meet the specific needs of women in the communities.

The project was successfully implemented in accordance with the logical framework, and as a result, it was predominantly effective in the sense that the majority of output indicators were reached without any major delays, despite political disruptions.

Overall, project activities have contributed to improve the level of knowledge and awareness of local actors on governance and the gender equality at a time when they, especially the newly elected (mostly independent citizens), lacked basic legal and policy knowledge that is key for the appropriate performance of their duties and for the development of gender equality compliant local governance projects.

Moreover, project activities allowed the formal engagement of nine municipalities and local associations for the integration of gender equality in local development projects. Coaching local authorities in implementing three pilot local development projects respecting gender considerations is the component deemed to be the most effective in achieving the project objective.

Improving the knowledge and awareness of local actors: the first challenge for local governance and gender equality

The main component of this project consists in training activities for various stakeholders and local governance actors.

Table 1 Training beneficiaries disaggregated by gender

Target	Nature of training	Number of participants	Number of women
Local CSOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Leadership- Good governance- Gender equality	54	32
Municipality staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Decentralization- Local governance- Development approach and gender	51	19
Newly-elected members	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Planning, governance and implementation of local development projects- Gender equality	53	30
Local journalists and radio hosts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Citizen journalism- Gender equality	50	21

With its strong partnerships, its wide network covering 24 regional sections, and the expertise of its management team (a majority of professors and activists for citizens' rights and social justice), Lam Echaml has a demonstrated expertise in mobilizing local actors, attracting and recruiting the most famous trainers in their specialties, and adequately managing trainings. As these capacities enabled them to successfully run training activities, most output indicators for this component were attained.

The interviewed female participants reported that trainings brought significant added value in terms of legal knowledge and awareness of the importance of integrating women in the process of local governance to promote gender equality.

The interviewed female elected members and municipality staff reported that trainings and open discussions with trainers strengthened their self-confidence and made them aware of the importance of their participation in decision-making at the municipal level, and of their duties to women in their communities. They reported that following the trainings, they took more initiative in municipal councils, closely monitored development projects, and tried to defend the interests of women despite the great resistance and opposition to which they were subjected.

An interviewed journalist reported that, albeit interesting, the training for media actors was not enough to change the editorial line to local governance news while national political events monopolize the public debate and citizen interest. She explained that it's a matter of

habit and mentality that will take time to change.

A simple advocacy and communication strategy against solid societal standards

Through the various training activities and the awareness-raising meetings with CSOs and municipalities, Lam Echaml wanted to trigger a debate on the issue of gender equality in local governance at the level of municipal councils, associations, and the media, in order to create an effect that catalyzes on change to trigger a wider debate. However, this ambition was difficult given the wide geographic scope of the project, which covers nine governorates in three regions comprising 96 municipalities and 1,812 seats.

In spite of the advocacy and awareness-raising activities being more targeted by focusing mainly on nine municipalities and associations, it is noteworthy that the participant selection criteria were quite general and could have been more effective had there been a mapping of agents of change or leaders who are likely to spread training, guide the debate, or influence the decisions of municipal councils in favor of the needs of women.

Signing partnerships with municipalities and having equality-compliant association internal regulations is certainly beneficial, but their effectiveness against societal standards and cultures of public organizations remains questionable according to the experts interviewed and the project team.

Despite Lam Echaml's expertise on the Tunisian political context and particularly the issue of local governance, the association lacks expertise in the management of social change projects and in communication. For communication and advocacy activities, the association planned to hire a communication consultant, but ended up entrusting these activities to the project assistant due to a lack of good candidates.

This might explain why the project could not motivate and engage media actors to cover local news and attract the attention of public opinion to the issue of gender equality. Moreover, the communication media used were not very innovative or attractive to trigger public debate outside of activist networks.

The exercise of local governance and the integration of equality:

The component deemed to be the most effective in achieving the project objective is coaching local authorities in implementing three pilot local development projects respecting gender considerations. The efforts of Lam Echaml and the commitment of local actors at the municipalities of Mdhila and Kebili resulted in the implementation of two local development projects for women from the communities, despite the tension in the political climate and the multiple challenges. Unfortunately, the third project was canceled because of the dissolution



Figure 1 : Poster prepared for the celebration of women's day

of the municipal council due to political disagreement.

The first development project carried out with the municipality of Mdhila consisted in the creation of a women house called *The Star of Mines* in Mdhila (Gafsa) as a response to the needs of the citizens in the region who used to gather in the street or in front of the school. The municipality inaugurated the venue intended for the reception of women for exchange, cultural and recreational activities, and the organization of trainings.

In Kebili, women demanded the revival of the city of handicrafts which has been abandoned by the municipality for the last ten years. With the commitment of the municipality and local associations, it was renovated and made available to handicraftswomen of Kebili. On the one hand, the advocacy exercise with municipal councils strengthened the commitment of female citizens to participate in exercising their constitutional rights and reacquire their place in the public space. On the other hand, the exercise of designing and monitoring these projects, in addition to the achievement of concrete results for the benefit of women in the communities have made female participants more empowered and confident in local governance.

(iv) Efficiency

The project was somewhat efficiently implemented respecting the planned budget, with some changes reported by the grantee.

The major change was not using the USD 9,000 sum allocated to the communication expert, and the under-spending due to the recruitment of national instead of international experts for activities 2.2.1 and 2.2.2. (see Logical Framework above for activity details).

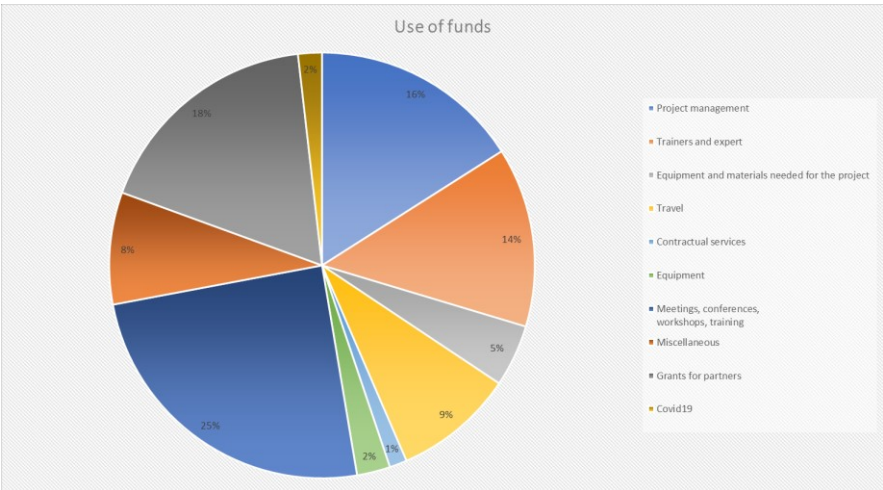


Figure 2 Use of Funds

The overall costs of the project were adequately managed, the budget lines respected, and all activities carried out up to a good standard. Notwithstanding this efficiency, a closer examination of the budget and utilization report raise the following remarks:

- The project management team is comprised of two full-time members and nine part-time regional coordinators. Albeit adequate, the project management was costly (21%) considering the number of activities. There could have been room for more efficiency had the association relied more on its regional coordinators instead of managing everything centrally;
- As a result of the relatively low average number of participants (20/training session), the cost of training was rather expensive, thereupon making it questionable whether the project presented a sufficient quality-price ratio;
- Significant expenses (5%) were allocated to project equipment such as printing of press files, roll-ups, stickers, manuals etc., yet, and prior to the evaluator's request, there were no electronic versions of the manuals or training materials. The frequent use of printed materials was excessively inefficient and environmentally unfriendly; and
- Women, who were the first targets of this project, did not benefit from the resources directly spent. The management team was made up of the president of the association and its secretary general, who were both men, and among the six contracted trainers, there was one woman only.

(v) Impact

The project had a positive impact at several levels:

- **Empowering local actors through capacity building**

The 2018 municipal elections allowed the emergence of a new political elite.

The success of independent candidates and the number of women, youth, and people with disabilities as elected candidates gave rise to the hope for local democratic progress. This would allow the gradual transfer of excessively centralized powers from the ministries in Tunis to the municipal councils.

This transfer of power faces many challenges, mainly the lack of political experience of independent candidates, the insubstantial expertise in legal, administrative and governance matters, and, above all, societal norms against the participation of youth and women in local political life.

Capacity building for the newly elected, particularly women, municipality officials, and local CSOs, has a direct impact on understanding the basic principles of good governance and gender equality for the proper execution of their duties.

All the experts interviewed agreed that in light of the poor knowledge and expertise of elected members and municipality officials coupled with the great resistance of the central power to transfer skills to the local level, any training or technical support for local authorities has indeed a direct impact on the quality of performance of municipalities and the success of the decentralization project.

All the interviewed beneficiaries among elected members and municipality officials reported that the training brought considerable added value and enabled them to acquire new

knowledge that is crucial for the understanding and proper execution of their roles and missions. The female directors of the women's sections in target municipalities were able to grasp the notion of gender equality and how to apply it at the level of their organizations. Interviewees from CSOs also reported the importance of these trainings to better understand their roles in participatory democracy and how to support women's rights in the implementation of development projects.

Several female participants reported positive change after the trainings, for them as well as their male colleagues. Per contra, a change limited to a few people within an organization does not necessarily lead to a change in decision-making at municipal councils.

The trainings could have had more impact had there been a more targeted selection of participants, with a narrower geographical scope.

- **The creation of an informal network**

Bringing together actors and elected members of municipalities from different communities enabled the creation of exchange and collaboration spaces between stakeholders, which continued even after the end of the project.

According to the feedback of few interviewed participants, this encounter has created a network of relationships between elected municipality members who informally help each other and exchange information and lessons learned in the field.

- **The impact on women empowerment**

The interviewed women gave numerous examples of the project's positive impact on their self-confidence and skills and described how they contributed to the municipal council's meetings and discussions. They report being more audacious and persuasive when arguing with peers.

- **Influencing social norms through Action**

The celebration of international women's day gave women the chance to hold a place in public spaces. In Mdhila, women occupied a cafe reserved for men. This simple act challenged the social norms that deprive women of being present in public spaces and expressed their deep motivation to take part in local governance.

Could the project have achieved greater impact?

Based on Lam Echaml feedback and Expert's comments, the project could have been more impactful had there been more focus on fewer municipalities as models and had the awareness-raising sessions on the role of women in local governance reached all local authorities through a larger-scale advocacy campaign, because raising awareness among citizens, CSOs, religious leaders, the private sector, local authorities and all key stockholders through impactful communication could have helped to change attitudes. Additionally, sponsoring pilot development projects carried out by women could have helped women groups to participate actively in the local governance .

(vi) Sustainability

According to the grantee and the interviewed experts, capacity building for CSOs, media actors, municipality officials and newly elected members is generally the most sustainable investment in the democratic process. Continuous efforts from different projects could lead to reaching sustainable change in local governance in the long run.

Although some beneficiaries still collaborate after the end of the project, the latter did not create a sustainable collaboration mechanism between local stakeholders, or a dissemination plan for the resources produced (trainings or manual). Communication activities were basic and conventional, making it challenging to judge their impact on media coverage or social norms.

Considering that the mission of the Center for Training and Support for Decentralization (CFAD) is to strengthen the capacity of municipalities, projects supporting decentralization would gain to establish systematic collaboration with it to avoid eventual duplications and overlaps, and to streamline the use of the gender manual and training resources and mainstream it among various users. Such collaboration would have increased the prospect of sustainability for this project.

The project could also have been more sustainable if the training had targeted local trainers (i.e. done in the form of ToT) who would duplicate the training with other organizations and municipalities.

On the other end the project's outcomes shaped some elements of sustainability:

- Change in individual attitudes

Women beneficiaries reported that they felt more confident and empowered to commit to overcoming social norms and barriers for their participation in local governance.

They reported that training sessions had a prominent impact on their male peers' attitudes towards gender equality as they became more conscious and sensitive to the issue of inequality.

The manual of good practices for integrating gender equality into development and local governance projects was disseminated to a reasonable number of municipalities, CSOs, and high schools. Some participants appear to have used its recommendations to continuously raise awareness among their team members about gender equality in local development and governance, which is likely to contribute to on-going positive change among local organizations.

- Concrete outputs lead sustainable change

As reported by interviewed project team members, pilot development projects in Kebili and Mdhila are the most sustainable output of the project, as their concrete result improved women's life in the target communities. This change is likely to improve women's trust in the local democracy and to increase their participation in local governance.

Signing partnerships with municipalities can also be considered an element of sustainability, however, little data is available in the project reports on the correlation between these

partnerships and the integration of gender equality in the design and the implementation of local municipal projects.

As reported by Lam Echaml in the final evaluation report, only 28% of municipality stakeholders agreed that there was an increase in the integration of gender equality in the design and implementation of projects.

(vii) UNDEF Added Value

This project illustrates the support granted by UNDEF to the democratic transition in Tunisia and its commitment to the success of the decentralization project and the promotion of women's rights.

Because there is a large number of projects on decentralization and strengthening women's participation in local governance, it is not entirely possible to state that the achievements of this project could not have been accomplished without funding from a UN actor. Nevertheless, by funding this project and other projects under the same theme, UNDEF is strengthening its presence and support to a very strategic axis for the promotion of democracy and development.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

(i) Conclusions

Based on the reflective exchanges between the evaluator, the project team, the trainers, the experts and many project beneficiaries, it is possible to deduce the following observations and conclusions:

1. Decentralization is a major development for Tunisia. It represents an excellent opportunity for the emergence of a new political elite, where youth and women have their places, making it therefore very interesting for UNDEF as well as other donors to support this project and strengthen women participation in local governance through different approaches and interventions.
2. Strengthening the capacities of local actors is a required condition for the transfer of skills and the transition of power from the central level to the communities. However, to increase coherence and efficiency, it is imperative for donors and project managers to coordinate among themselves to avoid possible duplication, and to involve public authorities to ensure the dissemination of resources and training and thus the sustainability of these projects.
3. Lam Echaml has remarkable capacities of mobilizing local actors and managing quality trainings. Its partnerships, contacts, and regional networks are an advantage compared to other organizations. Yet, the association leadership's effectiveness in managing the project was unproven, especially in relation to technical issues such as a holistic gender approach, advocacy, and communication.

4. The project design is coherent, but it lacks innovation. The project implementation is effective for the components of training and coaching municipalities with pilot projects but had limitations as far as the components of advocacy and communication were concerned.
5. The project's financial management was adequate and in line with the budget. Some solutions would have allowed for a better use of resources to optimize the cost-benefit rate of the activities.
6. It is difficult to measure progress towards project outcomes, however effects and impacts can be observed on several levels, especially for female participants. The project could have been more impactful if the activities were better targeted and focused.
7. The outcome of project implementation incorporated elements of sustainability, and, together with other projects, the project could contribute to the attainment of decentralization.

(ii) Recommendations:

For Lam Echaml:

- Conclusions 3 and 4 entail that it is desirable that the organization attracts talents experienced in project management, communication and advocacy, in order to develop the capacities of the organization, be more competitive and innovative with social change projects, and expand the portfolio of the association.
It is also strongly recommended to strengthen the capacities of the regional branches to ensure the independent implementation and monitoring of activities in the regions, thus reducing cost and increasing efficiency while simultaneously benefitting the tradition of decentralization;
- On the basis of conclusions 4, 5, and 6, it is recommended to identify the needs of the target (especially women) and to carry out diagnoses of target communities before designing the project, as this can help to explore new responses and better target activities. Baseline indicators allow a better understanding and the possibility to compare the situation before and after the intervention;
- Conclusions 5 and 7 suggest it is highly recommended to prepare a dissemination plan for resources produced throughout the project, in order to broaden the scope of the impact and optimize the cost-benefit rate of activities; and
- Based on conclusions 2 and 7, it is essential for the association to develop opportunities for coordination and formal communication with other actors who work on the same objectives, to maximize coherence, effectiveness, and sustainability.

For UNDEF

- Considering conclusions 1 and 3, it is desirable that UNDEF funds other projects in Tunisia to promote the participation of women and youth in local governance; and
- Conclusion 6 reveals the need for stricter requirements relevant to baselines indicators and the diagnosis of contexts to push the organizations to do more research and better analyze and understand the context of intervention.

VI. LESSONS LEARNED

1. As the selection of beneficiaries is key to the success of a project, the selection strategy should take into account the contacts and network of the implementing agency and have a well-defined and guided intervention rationale. This strategy must meet the criteria of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency.
2. To better measure the impact of the intervention and inform other projects, capacity building projects require robust consideration of initial and final baselines of participants' knowledge and skills.
3. To ensure greater sustainability in capacity building projects, developing a dissemination plan for learning resources, presentations, videos, manuals, etcetera maximizes the number of beneficiaries.
4. The promotion of women participation in local governance requires a deep understanding of the motivations and obstacles to participation in each target community. It is also important to involve women of these communities in the design of projects with a bottom-up approach to ensure more inclusion and effectiveness.
5. It is crucial for the project management approach to be consistent with the principles and objectives of the project. Thus, a project to promote the participation of women designed and managed by men would have less credibility than a project that gives women more chances.

Annex 1: Example of evaluation questions

DAC Criterion	Evaluation Question	Related sub-questions
Relevance	To what extent was the project, as designed and implemented, suited to context and needs at the beneficiary, local, and national levels?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Were the objectives of the project in line with the needs and priorities for democratic development, given the context? Should another project strategy have been preferred rather than the one implemented to better reflect those needs, priorities, and context? Why? Were risks appropriately identified by the projects? How appropriate are/were the strategies developed to deal with identified risks? Was the project overly risk-averse?
Effectiveness	To what extent was the project, as implemented, able to achieve objectives and goals?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent have the project's objectives been reached? To what extent was the project implemented as envisaged by the project document? If not, why not? Were the project activities adequate to make progress towards the project objectives? What has the project achieved? Where it failed to meet the outputs identified in the project document, why was this?
Efficiency	To what extent was there a reasonable relationship between resources expended and project impacts?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was there a reasonable relationship between project inputs and project outputs? Did institutional arrangements promote cost-effectiveness and accountability? Was the budget designed, and then implemented, in a way that enabled the project to meet its objectives?
Impact	To what extent has the project put in place processes and procedures supporting the role of civil society in contributing to democratization, or to direct promotion of democracy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent has/have the realization of the project objective(s) and project outcomes had an impact on the specific problem the project aimed to address? Have the targeted beneficiaries experienced tangible impacts? Which were positive; which were negative? To what extent has the project caused changes and effects, positive and negative, foreseen and unforeseen, on democratization? Is the project likely to have a catalytic effect? How? Why? Examples?

Sustainability	To what extent has the project, as designed and implemented, created what is likely to be a continuing impetus towards democratic development?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To what extent has the project established processes and systems that are likely to support continued impact? ▪ Are the involved parties willing and able to continue the project activities on their own (where applicable)?
UNDEF value added	To what extent was UNDEF able to take advantage of its unique position and comparative advantage to achieve results that could not have been achieved had support come from other donors?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What was UNDEF able to accomplish, through the project, that could not as well have been achieved by alternative projects, other donors, or other stakeholders (Government, NGOs, etc). ▪ Did project design and implementing modalities exploit UNDEF's comparative advantage in the form of an explicit mandate to focus on democratization issues?

Annex 2: Documents Reviewed:

OECD, 2018, *Women's place in local political space in Tunisia*

<https://www.oecd.org/mena/governance/la-place-des-femmes-dans-la-vie-politique-locale-tunisie.pdf>

The civil collective for individual rights, 2018, *Mask off State of Individual Liberties*, Tunisia

https://tn.boell.org/sites/default/files/uploads/2019/04/1._rapport_etat_des_li_2019_version_integrale.pdf

PLATFORMA, 2015, *social inclusion and gender equality in the local governance in the Maghreb*

<https://platforma-dev.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Maghreb-Inclusion-sociale-et-genre-au-niveau-local.pdf>

Xavier CADORET, 2018, *information report about the Tunisian municipal election 2018*

<https://rm.coe.int/09000016808e4a51>

Lotfi TARCHOUNA, 2019, *The Tunisian Experience of Decentralization Since 2014*

<https://www.arab-reform.net/publication/the-tunisian-experience-of-decentralization-since-2014?>

Web site of Tunisian local communities, 2018, *Evaluation of municipalities'*

performance <http://www.collectiviteslocales.gov.tn/fr/evaluation-de-performances-2018/>

The center of training and decentralization support

<http://www.cfad.tn/fr/>

Review of the following project documentation:

- Mid-term progress and final narrative and financial reports;
- Milestone verification reports; and
- UNDEF Program Officer mission notes
- Press articles
- All attendance lists
- Trainers reports
- Manual for good practice
- Partnership contract

Annex 3 : Persons Interviewed

Lam Echaml Team

- Mr. Moncef BEN SALEM. Project coordinator and Lam Echaml's president
- Mr. Tarak HADRAOUI. Project assistant and Lam Echaml's se
- Mrs Asma MGADMI Project coordinator Gafsa

Experts

- Mrs Hayfa DHOUIB. Project manager at the AFTURD Tunisian women's association for the development research.
- Mrs Imen CHERIF. Expert on decentralization
- Mr. Walid BEN FADHLA. Member of the Tunisian instance for the promotion of decentralization

Trainers

- Mrs Hafidha CHKIR
- Mr. Sami BOUAOUINA

Project beneficiaries

- Mrs Imen OUSLATI
- Mrs Imen CHABANE
- Mrs Najet KHLISSA
- Mrs Samiha BEN HASSINE

Annex 4: Acronyms

EAF Berlin	(European Academy for Women in Politics and Business)
(NUTW)	The National Union of Tunisian Women (NUTW)
(TCFP)	The Tunis Center for Freedom of Press (TCFP)
(CREDIF	The Center for Research, Studies, Documentation and Information on Women
NGO	Non-governmental organization
CSO	Civil society organizations
OECD	Organization for Economic Development and Cooperation
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
TOR	Term of reference
ARP	Assembly of the Representatives of the People (ARP)
UNDEF	United Nations Democracy Fund
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
SIDA	Sweden's government agency for development
GIZ	German Corporation for International Cooperation GmbH
UN	United Nations