

**Gender Election  
Monitoring (GEM)  
Mission Morocco  
Project Report**

25th November 2011



Supported by: **National Human Rights Council Morocco**

In cooperation with:

**Federation of the Democratic League for Women's Rights**

**Women's Creativity**

**People's Rights Center/Morocco**

**Civil Youth Alliance for Reform**

## **THE MISSION**

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## Preface

Speech delivered by Imane Boutkhil on behalf of Sabra Bano, director of Gender Concerns International in occasion of CNDH “Workshop for Exchanging and Sharing Experiences on Election Observation”, held on January 25th, 2012.

### Statement by Gender Concerns International

Rabat 25th January 2012

#### GEM Mission Morocco - Elections 25th November 2011

Dear Chair and the honorable guests,

It is indeed a privilege and an honor to be able to report on the gender dimension of 25th November’s election held in Morocco last year to you today.

First of all let me thank Mr. Driss El Yazami, president CNDH for his kind invitation to carry out our GEM Mission in Morocco and the cooperation his very professional and talented team has provided to the very execution of our mission.

Secondly, allow me to thank various women and civil society organisations that have welcomed us in Morocco and have been very open to integrate gender component to their own mission.

Thirdly, let me state that today we have presented our draft of the final report to CNDH and will finalize this report within the next coming days. Report is open to all of you for your comments and recommendations. I thank you in advance for your attention. Once ready, the final report will be available on our site: <http://www.genderconcerns.org>

Ladies and gentlemen,

Gender Concerns International is a Dutch international gender and development organisation based in The Hague, the Netherlands. Within its Gender and Democracy Program GEM Mission Tool was developed to address the need of introducing new techniques and methodologies to identify the gaps advancing progress on female leadership and women’s inclusive governance. Gender Election Monitoring is an initiative of Gender Concerns International and has been launched in 2008 to monitor elections in Pakistan.

**Composition of the Mission:** GEM Mission is an all-female international observation mission. We rely on the expertise of women with different backgrounds: academicians, women’s right activists, lobbyist and specialists. Central to our GEM Mission is the support of local women, human rights and civil society organizations and local authorities.

GEM Mission Morocco: During last November elections we teamed up with five local human rights, women and youth organizations in order to undertake a comprehensive observation of 25 November

2011 elections. We wish to thank these organizations for their cooperation during pre and post-election period. Especially, our gratitude goes to their willingness in integrating gender approach to their own mission and making great efforts to complete and send us their observation. These organisations are:

#### Partners

- CNDH (National Human Rights Council),
- FLDDF (Federation of the Democratic League for Women's Rights),
- People's Rights Center/Morocco (CDG),
- Women's Creativity,
- Civil Youth Alliance for Reform.

#### **Gender Election Monitoring Mission Morocco: Methodological approaches**

Gender Concerns international conducts short term observation missions focused on Election Day observation. Mission duration ranges between 10-12 days allowing pre-election media and civil society campaign observation. Post-election period is short and covers the period of issuance of preliminary report/statement within the 48 hours of elections held. While our focus remains the same, our methodologies and approaches do differ and reflect relevant adjustment to local realities and conducive operational situations. GEM Missions are all female missions, composed of, managed and led by women. Mission's core business is to observe election with a gender eye and report on gender gaps in election management and observation processes. To the mission, the whole society is a one big stakeholder as gender cuts across all socio-political boundaries.

GEM Mission Morocco provided technical assistance in the design of methodological approaches that targeted to help observe free and fair elections under the rule of law. A 4 members international team of observers liaised with various women and civil society organisations in order to build partnership based on local ownership principle. Sampling and selection of the constituencies and the polling stations has been conducted with full guidance of our partners.

GEM Mission used Tunisian model for its election monitoring mission which already has reached some women's organisation in Morocco. We are indeed very pleased with appreciation the of our efforts in the region. Our observation has been very focused on gender approach. During our mission with the help of CNDH, we tried to get in touch with all registered local missions. As result, we got 5 partner organisations willing to use our observation form and submit their preliminary and final findings to us. The advantage of this approach has been valuable and both qualitatively and quantatively, it has enriched the GEM Mission by fostering cooperation between Moroccan and international organisations. Our partner organisations have wide network of their own and that has multiplied the impact of GEM Mission in the observation and reporting activities.

#### **The techniques used**

Gender Concerns International used various techniques to ensure best result during the operation. Various field visits were made to the partner organisations especially in Fes, Safru, Casablanca and Rabat.

Use of ICT techniques and transforming the data from the field did prove to be a poor and insufficiently result oriented activity within NGO world. However ICT management at CNDH was excellent. Especially the task of data collection and aggregation within the 24 hours after elections was performed efficiently and all relevant information was accessible to GEM Mission's team at all times.

### **General comments on main Election Observation Missions**

Gender Concerns International considers electoral processes as an instrument to ensure women's inclusive governance and election monitoring from a gender perspective as a tool that identifies required adjustments in order to create a just and participatory democracy. Gender Concerns International designed the GEM mission in order to address these issues. Studying various election mission reports we made two main observations that two important components of election monitoring were missing or overlooked. First, gender; and second: focus on Election Day methodologies.

#### **Statement 1**

In regard to gender, the majority of reports analyzed included little, if any, gender-oriented sections.

#### **Explanation**

The purpose of introducing a distinctive gender approach in election observations is to identify and denounce any inequalities and discrimination vis-à-vis women experienced by women during the electoral process that could represent an obstacle to their full political participation. Addressing the gender dimension of election monitoring adds value to the whole political process, having wider implications for the political participation of women in a given society.

#### **Statement 2**

Concerning the second missing point, we noticed that other election monitoring missions concentrated their observation mainly on the election campaign to compile their final reports.

#### **Explanation**

Gender Concerns International deems it necessary to focus mainly on Election Day observation. This is the reason why we planned our mission to be brief, intense, concentrated more on the Election Day observation than on media and campaign observation. In order to be aware of the gender representation of the campaign, we scheduled key meetings with the human rights and gender experts few days before the elections. Through this technique we could concentrate on designing an appropriate election reporting form which reflected both the observation made by other monitors during the campaign and Gender Concerns International's specific expertise: Focusing on gender, genderizing elections as wide and as deep as possible.

#### **Conclusion: Forward looking strategies**

The way CNDH and other national election observation missions have been willing and prepared to integrate gender perspective in election observation is highly commendable. Encouraged by this positive

approach we wish to propose a consultation on Gender Agenda 2012 for Morocco to be held by the 25th of March if there is consensus among partners. Gender Concerns International will be happy to co-host such an initiative in Morocco.

Thank you for your attention.

Sabra Bano, director of Gender Concerns International

24th November 2012

## **Why a Gender Focus on the Elections: what is the Added Value?**

The purpose of introducing a distinctive gender approach in election observations is to identify and denounce any inequalities and discrimination vis-à-vis women experienced by women during the electoral process that could represent an obstacle to their full political participation.

Addressing the gender dimension of election monitoring adds value to the whole political process, having wider implications for the political participation of women in a given society. In February 2008, Gender Concerns International initiated its Gender Election Monitoring Mission in Pakistan, introducing a unique but much needed approach in election observation missions internationally. The first GEM Mission completed various observational tasks including: visiting polling stations, assessing electoral materials, and evaluating the electoral campaign for fairness. Our experience in Pakistan reaffirmed our belief in the value of undertaking systematic gender observations in election processes, especially within emerging democracies and countries in democratic transition. Within this context, Gender Concerns International conducted its GEM Mission during the October 2011 elections in Tunisia.

Pursuant to an invitation extended by CNDH, Gender Concerns International deployed its GEM Mission to Morocco a week prior to the elections. Our methodology for the 25th November elections was not only to monitor elections, but also to undertake an observation of the other local and international observer missions in Morocco.

## **The Context of the Observation Mission**

The Moroccan elections on 25 November 2011 were the first elections to be held following the referendum on constitutional reform of early July, sparked by the pro-democracy movement known as the Arab Spring. One of the objectives of the newly created constitution is to promote gender equality – achieved in part through increased gender quotas in the parliamentary lists. Sixty seats have been reserved for women according to the bill passed by the Council of Ministers on 9 September 2011.

During previous parliamentary elections, Morocco employed a list system, in which parties make a list of candidates and voters choose from among those lists (as opposed to electing each individual politician to office). However, there is no quota system for the number of women who should actually win seats. Notably, only a few women eventually managed to carry seats in their own right. Figures published by the Ministry of the Interior show that the percentage of female candidates on supplemental lists has risen from 4.8% in 2003 to 15.7% in 2011. Yet, only 3.4% of candidates on the regular lists are women. Indeed, the current situation of women's participation in politics is still far from reaching the gender equality described in the constitution.

Party leaders oppose the list system which increases the quota for female candidates. Normally, parties select candidates who will guarantee them the maximum possible number of seats. They still believe few women are capable of winning seats and participating in politics, an opinion which is shared by many of the Arab nations.



During these elections, some 31 political parties, totaling 5,392 candidates competed for 395 seats in parliament, including 60 set aside for women and 30 for "youth" under 40. The February 20 pro-reform movement, responsible for the popular protests in Morocco last spring, called for a boycott of the election, stating that the reforms made to the constitution did not meet their demands. However, the new constitution does include a quota for female parliamentarians, a step in the right direction for equality in Morocco.

The Gender Election Monitoring Mission was tasked with assessing women's political participation at all levels, both as candidates and voters. Following the mission, it will present recommendations on how women's political participation in Morocco can further be strengthened in Morocco's transition to democracy.

## The Mission



**Sabra Bano, Head of GEM Mission and Director of Gender Concerns International**

**Gender Concerns International:** Gender Concerns International is a Dutch international gender and development organisation based in the Netherlands, specialized in gender election monitoring missions as well as peace, security and development issues from a gender perspective. Gender Concerns International considers the electoral process to be an instrument capable of ensuring women's inclusive governance. Moreover, Gender Concerns International deems election monitoring from a gender perspective to be a vital tool to identify adjustments necessary in order to create a just and participatory democracy.

## The Partners



**Driss El Yazami, President of CNDH**

**CNDH:** The National Human Rights Council was created to reinforce and guarantee the respect of Morocco's international commitments in the protection and promotion of human rights. CNDH not only invited Gender Concerns International to conduct an election monitoring mission in Morocco, but it also supported the GEM Mission's vision and operational methodology. CNDH cooperated fully in the review and assessment process that led to a thorough observation of the extent to which the quality of gender-focused questions were accommodated in CNDH and other monitoring missions active during November 25th elections in Morocco. Gender Concerns International is grateful to

CNDH for its openness and commitment to improve gender equality in Morocco. GEM Mission and this report is indebted to President Driss El Yazami, Naima Benwakrim and its entire team for their cooperation in allowing our mission to have full access to their collected data and the preliminary report.



**Fouzia Assouli,  
President of FLDDF**

**Federation of the Democratic League for Women's Rights (FLDDF):** The Federation of the Democratic League for Women's Rights works tirelessly for the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women by addressing the needs and aspirations of different social groups of women, and the diversity of their experiences. GEM Mission was warmly welcomed by president Fouzia Assouli and offered its full cooperation during our mission.



**Amina Laabidi,  
director of Women's  
Creativity**

**Women's Creativity:** The association was founded in Sefrou by a group of local women addressing the issues faced by women in the area. Women's Creativity focuses on health care awareness programs, promoting schooling for economically disadvantaged kids, recreational activities in a retirement house and prison, promotion of women's crafts workshops and many other activities.



**Jamal Chahdi ,  
president of CDG**

**People's Rights Center/Morocco (CDG):** The CDG was founded in 1999 by a group of activists for human rights in the region of Fes. The aim was to create a national network defending and educating people about human rights as a means of political and social intervention.



**Aziz Idamine,  
president of CCJR**

**Civil Youth Alliance for Reform (CCJR):** The CCJR is a youth movement that focuses on the problems faced by young Moroccans especially the young professionals, graduate students and unemployed youth. The CCJR aims to unify the struggle of young people for social, political and economic justice and reform. CCJR mobilized Moroccan youth to observe the elections and assess whether they were conducted in a free and fair manner. Its members joined GEM Mission's monitoring teams during its election observation in Rabat, Casablanca, Sale and Bouznika.

## The Composition and the Focus of the Mission



**GEM Mission together with members of the CCJR**

Gender Concerns International GEM Missions are headed, organized and implemented by female observers. On the invitation of CNDH, a two member delegation of Gender Concerns International conducted an assessment mission in late October 2011. The mission then met with various stakeholders in Rabat including EU, The Royal Embassy of the Netherlands and a number of women's and civil society organisations. Based on this assessment, Gender Concerns International decided to accept the invitation of CNDH to monitor the 25th elections in Morocco. Due to the very nature of this mission, 3 experienced international observers formed a core team of GEM Mission, headed by Sabra Bano, Executive Director of Gender Concerns International. In cooperation and partnership with four local NGOs with substantial expertise in women's and human rights issues, the mission then included local observers in its extended team.

The team benefited from Gender Concerns International's experience acquired during its previous GEM Missions in Tunisia and Pakistan.

The national observers of partner organizations covered a wide part of the country, while the international observers, together with members of the Civil Youth Alliance for Reform, concentrated monitoring in the areas of Casablanca, Rabat, Sale and Bouznika.

The observation was carried out by groups of three to five observers, who observed many polling stations to assess the quantitative aspects of female participation but also its qualitative dimensions (atmosphere, attitude of the voters, mixed or separate voting lines, intimidation or influence, priority given to pregnant women, etc.).

### **The Environment in the Voting Centers (Outside)**

- a. The security forces: There were no women among the soldiers and police in front of the polling stations in which the observation was conducted.
- b. Groups: More often than men, women came in groups of women, family groups, accompanied by children or elderly people.
- c. Queues were rarely observed. When there were queues they were usually very short and comprised of men and women. The observers never witnessed cases of women who left because they had to wait for too long.



**GEM Team in front of a polling station in Sale**

## The Environment in the Polling Stations (Inside)

- a. Head of the polling station: It was observed that less than 2% of the heads of the polling stations were female.
- b. Poll officials: The observers noticed that less than 10% of the poll officials were women.
- c. Representatives of the political parties: Among the representatives of the political parties, less than 20% were women. Moreover, women representatives of PJD were the most active in approaching the observers to report abuses and irregularities.
- d. Priority was often given to handicapped and pregnant women, though monitors did observe certain isolated cases where they were not given priority. Moreover, certain voting centers only gave priority when asked by elderly, handicapped or pregnant women themselves.

## Voter Participation Through a Gender Lens



People waiting to vote

- a. Participation of women: The observed ratio of male/female voters was around 2/1. At the polling station the observers noticed women from all age groups. It was observed that a greater amount of women participated in the morning and early afternoon. Contrary to this, men were more numerous in the afternoon and towards the closing of the polls.
- b. The social profile of women and men: There was a presence of women from all social and professional categories, including the poor, elderly, youth and middle aged.
- c. The difficulties and obstacles
  - i. The fact that some female voters were accompanied by two or three children made it difficult for them to concentrate on voting.
  - ii. Observers often witnessed cases in which both women and men could not find their name on the voter's lists. This created great confusion among the voters and the poll officials.
- d. Family voting: Women voted individually for the most part, but the impact of family and tribal voting should not to be excluded.
- e. Attitudes with regard to women wearing the niqab: Some rare cases of women wearing the niqab were reported.

## **National and International Observers**

- a. Numbers: Around one-third of the observers were women. The percentage of women was higher among international observers compared to national observers.
- b. Discriminatory attitude towards or pressure on women observers: We did not observe discriminatory attitudes toward women observers anywhere.

## Irregularities observed



### PJD representatives reporting violation to GEM Mission

- a. Some women representatives of the Justice and Development Party (PJD) reported to the observers that the Liberty party was engaging in propaganda activities outside the polling station on the Election Day. However, the observers did not witness such occurrence.
- b. Sometimes the voting centers were not attentive to certain rules such as the prohibition on taking cellphone into the voting booth. The observer witnessed cases of people speaking at the cellphone inside the polling station.
- c. Some observers witnessed certain problems among parties, especially between PJD and Liberty Party (the police were involved).
- d. Observers witnessed bribery in different ways (i.e. taking CVs from voters with the promise of giving work in exchange for their vote; distribution of donations and gifts to secure the votes; etc.).
- e. Distribution of posters and leaflets was sporadically witnessed.
- f. The proximity of the voting booths did not always guarantee the secrecy of the ballot.

## Evaluation of Gender Focus in Various Election Monitoring Missions' Election Day Forms

**CNDH:** National Council for Human Rights CNDH's role is highly commended for their integration of a gender approach in the November 25th Moroccan election monitoring. The CNDH Election Day form included only 5 out of more than 100 questions related to gender. These questions were, nonetheless, structural questions which were used in the final report to give a gender-evaluation of the elections.

**NDI (National Democratic Institute):** As we did not have access to NDI's Election Day form, we assessed their approach on gender by reading their preliminary report. Even though gender was included in the report, it was primarily related to the presence of women in party lists. Women's participation in the process of voting itself was totally overlooked.

**FLDDF:** The president of the FLDDF, Ms. Fouzia Assouli, declared to have received and adopted Gender Concerns International's Election Day form from Tunisia. We are pleased that our work received regional acceptance to the extent that it was adopted as a model by such a valuable women's organisation as FLDDF. We evaluated the FLDDF final report, not having had access to their Election Day form. The FLDDF gender-specific report, which included an analysis of the electoral lists, the election campaign and the Election Day, was comprehensive and effective in its comments and recommendations.

**CDG:** A section of their Election Day form was devoted to gender. Among the forms that were analysed, CDG's included gender-specific analysis while not being exclusively gender-focused. Moreover, CDG's final report also included a section dedicated to gender. CDG has many years of experience defending women's rights and on the support of women's inclusion at all levels of society.

**Women's Creativity:** The center of their observation was women and women's rights. Although they had prepared an election campaign form, the Election Day form was not finalized until the day before the elections. In a meeting with a delegation from Gender Concerns International, Amina Laabidi, president of Women's Creativity, received our Election Day form, on which their Election Day form was based. The final report of Women's Creativity was not gender-specific but included a section of gender in regard to the composition of the electoral lists and the evaluation of qualitative and quantitative aspects of women voters.

**CCJR:** Their form did not include gender. Yet, Civil Youth Alliance for Reform was happy to receive Gender Concerns International's gender-focused form and use it as a model for a more balanced evaluation of the voting process. In their final report, CCJR included no gender-focused sections, despite mentioning women's participation as one of the criteria used to evaluate the voting process.

## Conclusions and Recommendations of the Gender Election Monitoring (GEM) Mission

### 1. 25 November 2011 – Election Day

#### Conclusions:



- We noted general satisfaction among the female observers.
- Conviction and rigorous methodology were displayed throughout the observation.
- Women observers were well-received, even where male observers greatly outnumbered them.
- The members of voting bureaus appreciated the presence of female observers due to the added legitimacy provided in relation to transparency in the voting process.
- We noted with satisfaction the participation of women from all social categories. However, we would like to draw attention to the following issues:
  - i. Among illiterate women many were deprived of their right to vote by not having the possibility of being appropriately assisted by impartial officials during this operation.
  - ii. Many voters, men and women, were frustrated by not finding their names on electoral lists, after having waited a long time in a polling station. They were not necessarily able to travel to other stations to vote.
  - iii. It is difficult to evaluate if certain women were able to make a free, individual choice or if they voted according to family pressure.

Recommendations:

- a. Outside the polling stations: There is a need to include women among security and police officers in the voting centers.
- b. Inside the polling stations:
  - i. Head of the polling station: the low percentage of women among the heads of the polling stations needs to be addressed and adjusted.
  - ii. Poll officials: among the poll officials, less than 10% were women. We advise this ratio to be set at the ratio of 1 man/1 woman.
  - iii. Representatives of the political parties: positive steps have been taken to achieve gender equality among the representatives of the political parties, but the percentage of women is still lower than men's.
- c. Voters participation: Women's participation in the voting process was not satisfactory. We would recommend focused awareness campaigns to encourage women to vote.
- d. National and international observers: Among the international observers the percentage of women was excellent but it is necessary to increase the number of women among national observers.



A woman voter being checked for her identity

## 2. Election Day Forms

### Conclusions:

- a. The majority of the Election Day observation forms analysed included little, if any, gender-oriented questions.

- b. Some of the election monitoring missions concentrated on the electoral campaign but overlooked the need for a specific election observation form during Election Day observation. Some did not even have such a form ready until the day before the elections.

Recommendations:

- a. It is necessary for election monitoring missions not only to concentrate on the electoral campaign but also to understand the importance of monitoring the election process on the day of election itself.
- b. It is crucial for a complete evaluation of the voting process to adopt a more gender focused approach and observation methodology.

**Positive Outcomes of the Mission**

The mission contributed to greater transparency of the elections, and more inclusive and egalitarian democracy. It was a positive experience for Gender Concerns International to work closely with national partners from women and other civil society organisations in Morocco. We hope that this also offered an opportunity to women, human rights and youth organizations to share and exchange expertise on the gender dimension of election observation.

Gender Concerns International's experiences in Morocco reaffirmed our belief in the necessity of undertaking systematic gender observations in the election processes, especially within the emerging democracies and countries in democratic transition.

For Gender Concerns International, electoral process is an instrument to ensure women's inclusive governance. Within this context, election monitoring from a gender perspective is an effective means to identify gaps in the facilitation of elections and results in a set of recommendations for improvement. These recommendations have the potential to galvanize women and civil society organisations to set up a common agenda for change under a post-election structure of governance. We hope that the GEM Mission Morocco will realise this ambition and further strengthen Gender Concerns International's partnerships and scope of operations in post-election Morocco. In particular, we hope the actions of Gender Concerns International and its valued partner CNDH will contribute to a more democratic Morocco which safeguards the human rights of women and promotes a national agenda for gender justice and equality.



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