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PUBLICATION #15



Funded by the
European Union



SHAPEDEM-EU Publications

Published by Justus Liebig University Giessen (JLU). March 2025.

This publication is part of WP7 of the SHAPEDEM-EU project, led by Justus Liebig University Giessen (JLU).

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Editor: Fabian Schoeppner (JLU)

To cite:

Baghoury, Khouloud. Climate Change as a Cross-Cutting Issue to Gender Equality with Perspectives from the North African Region. SHAPEDEM-EU Publications, 2025.

Design: EURICE GmbH

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About the Author

Khouloud Baghourî holds a diploma in Conflict Resolution and Civic Engagement from California State University, Chico, with a strong background in the peace and security sector, particularly in Africa. She has served as a youth ambassador for peace at the African Union, focusing on political affairs, peace, and security, gaining valuable on-the-ground experience. Khouloud has been actively involved in designing and implementing programs related to peacebuilding, conflict prevention, and youth engagement, with a specific focus on promoting gender equality, women's empowerment, and social justice.

Khouloud's research interests revolve around the intersection of climate change, conflict, and gender equality in the North African region. She is particularly interested in understanding how climate change impacts conflict dynamics and exacerbates gender inequalities. Her work aims to explore innovative strategies for addressing these challenges and promoting sustainable development, peace, and security in the region.

Research Stay

In the context of the SHAPEDEM-EU programme, my research stay in Brussels, Belgium, was hosted by Carnegie Europe Foundation, with endorsement from the Justus-Liebig-University Giessen's Institute for Political Science. Throughout my one-month stay, I received support and guidance from Carnegie and the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, allowing me to connect with local stakeholders and encouraging me to attend various relevant events. My main focus was on understanding the EU's neighbourhood and enlargement policies, particularly in the South Mediterranean region, and the collaborations between the EU, EU-funded institutions in Brussels, and Tunisian civil society organisations (CSOs).

Discussions with representatives of the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG-NEAR) would have been instrumental in learning about the EU's priorities and approaches in its Southern Neighbourhood.

1. Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide an analytical perspective on the intersection of climate change and gender equality in the North African region, with a focus on the EU's democracy support initiatives. Drawing from my research stay in Brussels, Belgium, hosted by Carnegie

Europe, and interactions with relevant stakeholders, this analysis emphasises the critical link between climate change impacts and gender disparities.

My approach includes a critique of the gaps existing in local organisations in North Africa working on climate change adaptation and gender equality, complemented by desk research to enrich the analysis with insights from existing literature. This report aims to delve into the complex socio-political dynamics shaping the climate-gender nexus in the region and offer recommendations for enhancing EU support in this crucial area.

The report unfolds in several key sections. Firstly, it provides a socio-political background outlining the formation of civil society organisations (CSOs) in North Africa and their efforts in addressing climate change and gender issues. Secondly, it explores the impacts of climate change on gender equality, particularly in the context of vulnerable communities in North Africa. Thirdly, the report assesses current EU initiatives and policies addressing climate change and gender equality in the region, highlighting successes and identifying areas for improvement. Finally, it concludes with actionable recommendations aimed at strengthening EU support for gender equality within the framework of climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies in North Africa.

This report seeks to contribute to the ongoing dialogue and action surrounding climate change and gender equality, advocating for more integrated and effective approaches in addressing these interconnected challenges in the North African context.

2. Background

An examination of the EU's democracy support policies and practices in the North African region, particularly regarding climate change and gender equality, necessitates an understanding of the broader geopolitical dynamics at play. A wealth of literature offers valuable insights into foreign interventions in civil society development and the challenges faced in promoting democracy and gender equality agendas, especially in the context of North African countries.

It is crucial to recognise that the evolution of civil society in the region has seen a feminisation, contrasting with the traditional masculine dominance in political spheres. This feminised civil society sector has become a vital mediator between the populace and governance structures, contributing significantly to democratic processes and advocacy for gender equality amidst complex socio-political landscapes.

In North Africa, the formation and evolution of civil society organisations (CSOs) have been shaped by a complex socio-political landscape. Following the wave of decolonisation in the mid-20th century, many countries in the region experienced significant political transformations, including the emergence of new governance structures and ideologies. This period saw the

establishment of various CSOs, ranging from human rights advocacy groups to environmental organisations, reflecting the diverse challenges and aspirations of the population.

One pivotal aspect of CSOs' work in North Africa has been their engagement with climate change and gender issues. As the region grapples with the impacts of climate change, including water scarcity, desertification, and extreme weather events, CSOs have played a crucial role in raising awareness, advocating for policy changes, and implementing grassroots initiatives. For instance, organisations such as the North African Network for Climate Change Adaptation (NANCCA) have been instrumental in promoting sustainable practices, conducting research, and building local resilience to climate-related challenges.

Moreover, CSOs in North Africa have been at the forefront of addressing gender inequalities exacerbated by climate change. Women and marginalised groups often bear the brunt of environmental degradation and climate-induced disasters, facing heightened risks and vulnerabilities. CSOs have championed gender-responsive approaches to climate action, advocating for women's inclusion in decision-making processes, access to resources, and support for livelihood diversification. Initiatives like the Women's Climate Action Network (WCAN) have mobilised communities, provided training, and amplified the voices of women leaders advocating for climate justice.

Despite these efforts, CSOs in North Africa face numerous challenges, including limited funding, restrictive regulatory environments, and political tensions. The ongoing socio-political dynamics in the region, including transitions in governance, conflicts, and economic pressures, also influence the work of CSOs and their ability to effectively address climate change and gender issues.

The intersection of climate change and gender dynamics in North Africa presents a multifaceted landscape influenced by various socio-political and environmental factors. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the region is experiencing significant climate impacts, with temperatures rising at a faster rate than the global average and projections of increased water scarcity and extreme weather events (IPCC, 2021). These changes are particularly challenging for vulnerable populations, including women, who often face disproportionate risks and burdens due to their roles in resource management and household resilience.

Research by organisations such as UN Women and the World Bank highlights the gendered dimensions of climate change adaptation in North Africa. Women, who are primary caregivers and responsible for household food security and water management, encounter barriers in accessing resources and decision-making processes related to climate adaptation (UN Women,

2020; World Bank, 2020). The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) emphasises that climate change exacerbates existing gender inequalities, particularly in rural areas where women's livelihoods are closely tied to agriculture (UNDP, 2021).

In a study by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), it was found that women in rural North Africa are disproportionately affected by climate-related challenges such as droughts and changing rainfall patterns, impacting agricultural productivity and food security (FAO, 2019). This underscores the urgent need for gender-responsive approaches in climate adaptation strategies to address the unique vulnerabilities faced by women in the region.

Recent initiatives and policies have focused on empowering women as key stakeholders in climate action. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) emphasises the importance of gender mainstreaming in climate policies and projects, recognising women's roles as agents of change and leaders in community resilience (UNFCCC, 2021). However, reports by organisations like the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and Oxfam highlight persistent challenges, including limited access to finance and technology for women-led climate initiatives, hindering their full participation and impact (IUCN, 2020; Oxfam, 2021).

This comprehensive background sets the stage for a deeper analysis of the intertwined challenges and opportunities at the intersection of climate change and gender equality in North Africa, providing a robust foundation for examining the EU's democracy support efforts within this context.

3. EU Projects in North Africa in the Context of Gender Equality

The European Union (EU) has made significant strides in addressing climate change and promoting gender equality in North Africa through various support programs. However, a critical examination reveals areas that they require further attention and improvement to maximise the impact of these initiatives.

Firstly, while EU-funded climate adaptation projects often incorporate gender mainstreaming principles, there is a need for more robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure the effective integration of gender considerations throughout a project lifecycle (UNDP, 2021). Research by organisations such as the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) emphasises the importance of participatory approaches that actively involve women in decision-making processes related to climate adaptation (IIED, 2020). Enhancing the inclusivity and representation of women, particularly from marginalised communities, is crucial to ensuring that these projects effectively address gender disparities and contribute to sustainable development goals.

Secondly, the EU-supported programs aimed at empowering women as climate change actors should prioritise capacity-building and access to resources. Studies by the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) highlight the significance of providing women with training, technology, and financial support to effectively engage in climate-resilient activities (ICRW, 2020). However, challenges persist in ensuring equitable access to these opportunities, especially for women in rural areas and vulnerable groups who may face additional barriers.

Moreover, the alignment of the EU climate and gender policies with local priorities and needs is essential for the success and sustainability of these initiatives. While the EU's overarching goals align with global agendas such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Agreement, a more contextualised approach is needed to address the unique challenges faced by North African countries (UN Women, 2020). This requires close collaboration with local stakeholders, including civil society organisations and grassroots women's groups, to co-create solutions that are responsive to local contexts and realities (UNDP, 2021).

While the EU support programs in climate change and gender equality in North Africa demonstrate positive intentions, there is a pressing need for greater effectiveness, inclusivity, and localisation in their implementation. By addressing these critiques and leveraging evidence-based approaches, the EU can enhance the impact and sustainability of its efforts to promote climate resilience and gender equality in the region, contributing to broader goals of sustainable development and social justice.

4. EU Support Programmes to Gender in Tunisia

The European Union (EU) has been a pivotal partner in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment in Tunisia, evident through robust and targeted funded programs. One exemplary initiative is the 'Support Program for the Promotion of Women's Rights in Tunisia', a collaborative effort between the EU, Tunisian government agencies, and civil society organisations. This program has significantly contributed to enhancing women's participation in decision-making processes, combatting gender-based violence, and fostering women's economic empowerment (European External Action Service, 2021).

An illustrative achievement of this program is the establishment of women's empowerment centres across Tunisia. These centres serve as comprehensive hubs offering vital services such as legal aid, counselling, vocational training, and support for entrepreneurship. For instance, the Centre for Women and Child Protection in Tunis provides legal assistance to women facing domestic violence, empowering them to seek justice and protection (European Union, 2020). Similarly, the Women's Economic Empowerment Center in Sousse offers training programs and

mentorship for women entrepreneurs, facilitating their entry into the formal economy (European Commission, 2021).

Additionally, EU-funded initiatives focusing on gender equality in employment and entrepreneurship have made significant strides in Tunisia. The ‘Gender Equality in Employment and Entrepreneurship’ project, for instance, has been instrumental in addressing gender disparities in the labour market. Through targeted interventions such as skills training, access to finance, and awareness campaigns, the project has boosted women's participation in formal employment sectors and promoted the growth of women-owned businesses (European Union Delegation to Tunisia, 2020).

Despite these commendable efforts, challenges persist in achieving gender equality in Tunisia and the wider North African region. Structural barriers, societal norms, and cultural attitudes continue to hinder women's full participation and leadership. EU-funded gender equality programs must adopt a holistic approach, encompassing economic, social, and political empowerment (European Commission, 2019).

Ongoing collaboration between the EU, Tunisian government, civil society organisations, and other stakeholders is essential for addressing these challenges. Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms must be strengthened to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of gender equality initiatives. By adopting a comprehensive and collaborative approach, the EU can continue to play a pivotal role in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment in Tunisia and across North Africa.

5. Recommendations

In light of the ongoing efforts and challenges in promoting gender equality and addressing climate change in Tunisia and North Africa, the European Union should consider the following policy recommendations to enhance its impact and effectiveness in the region:

1. Strengthen Integration

The EU should prioritise the integration of gender considerations into climate change policies, programs, and initiatives in Tunisia and North Africa. This includes mainstreaming gender-responsive approaches across all levels of decision-making, from policy formulation to implementation and evaluation. By ensuring that gender equality is an integral part of climate action, the EU can maximise its positive impact on women and vulnerable communities.

2. Capacity-Building and Empowerment

Invest in capacity-building programs and initiatives that empower women and marginalised groups to actively participate in climate resilience and adaptation efforts. This includes providing training, access to resources, and opportunities for leadership and decision-making roles. By strengthening the capacity of women, youth, and local communities, the EU can foster inclusive and sustainable climate solutions.

3. Promote Access to Finance

Facilitate access to finance and funding mechanisms for women-led climate initiatives, entrepreneurship, and sustainable livelihood projects. This involves creating tailored financial instruments, grants, and support mechanisms that prioritise gender equality and social inclusion. By addressing financial barriers, the EU can unlock the potential of women as agents of change in climate action.

4. Foster Partnerships and Collaboration

Foster multi-stakeholder partnerships and collaboration between the EU, Tunisian government, civil society organisations, academia, and the private sector. This collaborative approach is essential for co-creating and implementing effective climate and gender equality programs, leveraging diverse expertise, resources, and knowledge. By working together, stakeholders can synergise efforts, share best practices, and achieve greater impact.

5. Monitor and Evaluate Impact

Strengthen monitoring, evaluation, and reporting mechanisms to assess the impact and outcomes of EU-funded gender equality and climate change programs in Tunisia and North Africa. This includes collecting disaggregated data, conducting gender-sensitive evaluations, and engaging stakeholders in feedback and review processes. By measuring progress and learning from experiences, the EU can enhance the effectiveness, accountability, and sustainability of its initiatives.

These recommendations are designed to guide the EU in shaping its climate change and gender equality policies and programs in Tunisia and North Africa, ensuring that they are responsive to the region's unique challenges and opportunities. By implementing these recommendations, the EU can contribute significantly to advancing gender justice, social inclusion, and climate resilience in the region, ultimately fostering sustainable development and a more equitable future for all.