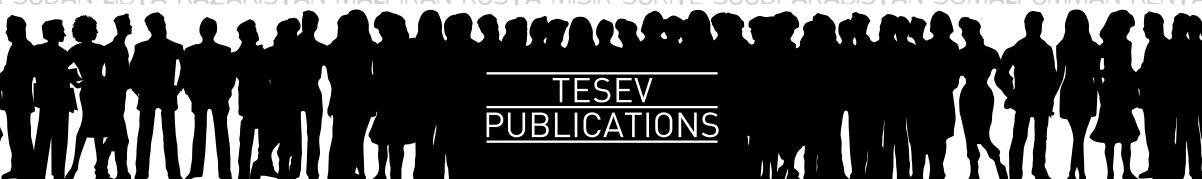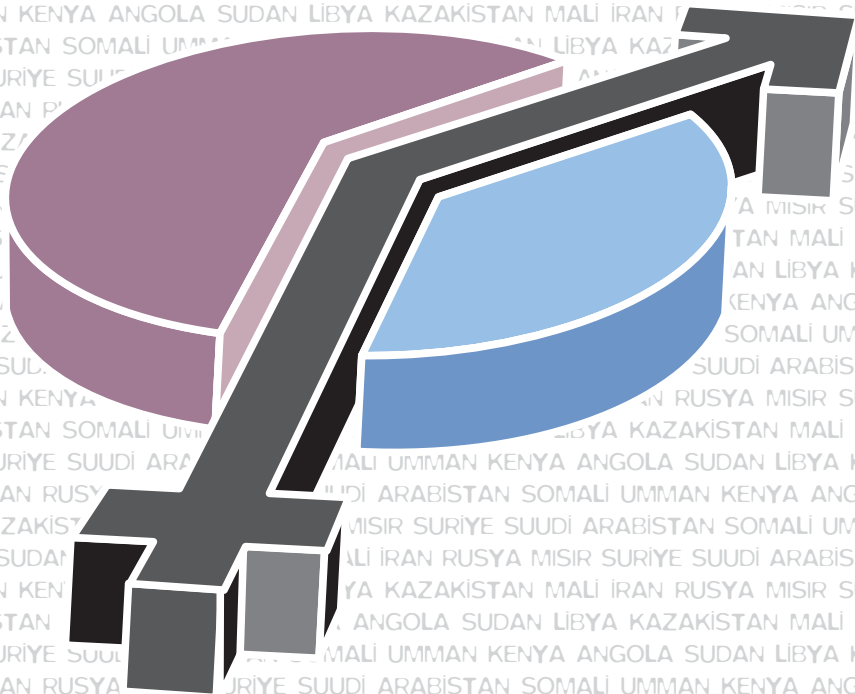# FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR A BROADER MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA GENDER INSTITUTE

FEASIBILITY STUDY

FOR A BROADER MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA GENDER INSTITUTE

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FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR A BROADER MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA GENDER INSTITUTE

TESEV

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*Turkish Economic and
Social Studies Foundation*

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Preface

This is a feasibility report based on data collected in two civil society symposia in Istanbul and two regional civil society workshops in Amman and Algiers. The report is further based upon a collected set of interviews with regional stakeholders, conducted by the TESEV Foreign Policy Program between 2005 and 2009. The report, consisting of four main sections, recommends the establishment of a regional institute to work on issues related to the empowerment of women in the Broader Middle East and North Africa region (BMENA).

TESEV is not an organization that specializes in gender empowerment. However, as part of the responsibility assumed by their incumbency as co-president of the Democracy Assistance Dialogue (DAD) in 2005, TESEV collaborated with the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs to conduct the aforementioned meetings. These meetings also benefited from the regular attendance and support offered by women's organizations and scholars working on gender issues in Turkey.

Since the first symposium in Istanbul in June 2005, participants have underscored the necessity to create a gender institute in the region. In accordance with the creeds of the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the mission of the envisaged institute was established as that of monitoring women's rights in the region.

The demand for the establishment of such an institute was confirmed by the second Istanbul civil society symposium in February 2006 and the Ankara intergovernmental meeting held in May 2006, both organized by the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Moreover, senior officers and ministers were reminded of this demand in the Forum for Future meetings, which took place in Rabat, Manama, Amman and Abu Dhabi.

The validity of the decisions reached at the civil society and official meetings was reaffirmed by the results of interviews and surveys conducted between 2008 and 2009. It should be noted that in response to nine questions devised by the project research team, an overwhelming 53 out of 56 leading women's rights activists in the region highlighted the need for such an organization.

The objective of this report is to receive official recognition and support for the establishment of a gender institute in the BMENA region in the Forum for Future meeting which will be held in Rabat on 2-3 November 2009. The founding of such

an institute will render the establishment of the first civil society-initiated project within the purviews of the Forum for Future series, as well as initiating progress on pressing issues related to the empowerment of women in the region.

The parameters of the recommended Institute have been outlined below in ten short points. TESEV would like to remind the reader that these parameters merely represent constructive guidelines and should be read as such. The actual founding of the regional gender institute may entail different targets, structures and methodologies to be designed. Here, it should also be mentioned that TESEV considers it a priority to incite and stimulate further conversations and debates on the matter, so that concrete steps may be taken in order to alleviate the condition of gender equality in the BMENA region.

1. The proposed Institute should be governed by a board of directors composed of the stakeholders listed in the report.

2. It is essential that people from the BMENA region comprise the majority of members, although the institute should not ignore suitable candidates from outside the region.

3. The hierarchical structure of the Institute should be designed to ensure efficiency.

4. It would be worthwhile if board members were connected to local and international organizations involved in influencing gender equality policies.

5. The board should decide the formation of an advisory committee and the responsibility for selecting board members should be in the hands of the relevant stakeholders.

6. The host country should guarantee the autonomy of the proposed Institute and the Institute's internal regulations should be independent.

7. The proposed Gender Institute should be formally based in the BMENA region. It would be ideal to have the headquarters in a country where the work of the Institute would not be duplicating that of any existing organization. Moreover, the Institute should fill a void not only in the host country but also within the region in terms of advancing women's rights. It is also important that the laws in the host country are hospitable to the workings of the Institute. In these respects, the fieldwork has thus far indicated that among the cities of the Broader Middle East and North Africa, Rabat, Morocco is the most appropriate location to host the proposed institute.

8. The proposed Gender Institute should be accessible to all stakeholders; retaining the institutional authority to influence governments and affect policy, while being flexible enough to be effective in outreach.

9. Possible sources for funding can include, but are not limited to: UN agencies, the Middle East Partnership Initiative, the European Union, Middle East programs of various governments, other grant-giving institutions and most importantly the Foundation for the Future within the auspices of the G-8.

10. The host country should have the political will to support the Institute; the adoption of the project by local civil society actors is also crucial for it to have any measure of success.

As one may have surmised, a project of this scope requires the input and consideration of many people. Without their kind support, it would have been impossible to attain success from our meetings or to finalize such report. For the early stages of the project, we therefore owe our thanks to Prof. Dr. Yeşim Arat, Dr. Selma Acuner and Prof. Dr. Feride Acar, whose guidance was sought for the conduct of the meetings. We are also grateful to our regional experts Nadia Ait-Zai, Lamis Nasser and Reem Obeidat for their contributions to the fieldwork conducted for the report.

We are also indebted to 31 women's organizations in Turkey, whose individual names we unfortunately cannot list here for the sake of brevity. Their support and intellectual input were invaluable during the preparatory meetings. With their active participation, these organizations not only helped us better comprehend the issues in question, but also provided crucial working information as they shared their experiences with the participants from the BMENA region.

During this process we also collaborated with the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. We should first and foremost acknowledge the contributions of Ret. Ambassador Ömür Orhun, responsible for BMENA coordination. We also feel the necessity to express our gratitude to then Foreign Ministers Abdullah Gül and Ali Babacan, Undersecretary of State for Foreign Affairs Ertuğrul Apakan, Deputy Undersecretary Feridun Sinirlioğlu, Turkey's ambassador to Tehran Gürcan Türkoğlu, Ömer Onhon, Ebru Barutçu Gökdenizler, Levent Gümrükçü, Suat Akgün and last but not the least to Turkey's ambassador to Amman at the time, Hüseyin Diriöz, whose hospitality and participation in the meetings were highly appreciated.

It goes without saying that we are also grateful to the Minister of State Responsible for Women's and Family Affairs at the time, Nimet Çubukçu, for providing her enthusiasm for the project. Ms. Çubukçu genuinely supported our efforts from the earliest stages of the process, participating in our symposia in Istanbul and later advocating for the founding of the Gender Institute in the Forum for Future meeting in Abu Dhabi in October 2008.

We should also like to mention the efforts of Dora Bakoyanni, Foreign Minister of Greece. She shared and expressed a very similar enthusiasm for the project in the

2005 Manama Forum for Future meeting. Besides Ms. Bakoyanni, we received considerable amount of international support, primarily from No Peace Without Justice and the Human Rights Information and Training Center, the two other co-presidents of the Democracy Assistance Dialogue.

The above list may be extended to include Algeria's Minister for Women's and Family Affairs Nouara-Saadia Djaffer, Morocco's Minister of Social Development, Family and Solidarity Nouzha Skalli, Antonella Uneddu from the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Zineb Benjelloun from the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), Arab Democracy Foundation Secretary General Mohsen Marzouk, Egyptian civil rights activist Prof. Dr. Saad Eddin Ibrahim, former members of the United States Department of State Scott Carpenter, Dan Fried, Kent Patton and Laura Schulz and Ambassador Frances Guy from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office of the United Kingdom.

Needless to say, the project would not have been initiated or completed without the helping hand of the Turkish and British Ministries of Foreign Affairs and the US Department of State. We also owe tribute to the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) and the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL) teams for their patience, understanding and support.

Although this was indeed a truly collaborative effort that elicited the help and support of many people and organizations, this report is ultimately the brainchild of TESEV's Foreign Policy Program. Everyone in the program contributed to the actual writing process of the report or the conduct of the preparatory meetings. Nonetheless, the greatest share of the responsibility belonged to Sanem Güner and Özlem Gemici. But insofar as it was a common endeavour, Sabiha Senyücel, Sanem Güner, Aybars Görgülü, Özlem Gemici and I should be held responsible for any irregularities or shortcomings.

ASSOC. PROF. MENSUR AKGÜN,
TESEV FOREIGN POLICY PROGRAM

Feasibility Study for a Broader Middle East and North Africa Gender Institute

1. INTRODUCTION

This report explores the feasibility of creating an institute to work on issues related to gender empowerment in the Broader Middle East and North Africa (BMENA). The mandate of the implementers and authors of this study comes from the Democracy Assistance Dialogue (DAD). DAD was established at the G-8 Sea Island Summit in June of 2004, when G-8 leaders decided to form a joint platform with the leaders of the Broader Middle East and North Africa (BMENA). This joint platform, called the Forum for the Future, is an international effort to endorse voices of reform in the region. The Forum permits partners and other supportive countries and organizations to engage in political, economic and social reform on a regular basis. An outgrowth of the Forum, the Democracy Assistance Dialogue was designed to foster productive dialogue between civil society and governments of BMENA. Integrating the participation of non-governmental actors, political leaders, media representatives and civil society experts, DAD hopes to develop specific reform initiatives on issues related to political reform, democracy and human rights. On a broader level, the DAD's ultimate aim is to enhance and initiate democracy programs in the region, thereby strengthening the functional capacity of democratic institutions.[1]

Sponsored by the Governments of Italy, Turkey and Yemen in cooperation with their NGO partners – No Peace Without Justice, Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation and Human Rights Information and Training Center respectively – the DAD was conceived with two priority themes in mind, namely "political pluralism and electoral processes" and "the empowerment of women".

The rationale for prioritizing the latter theme, on which this study is based, is multi-faceted. Achieving equality between women and men remains an ongoing challenge throughout the world. A gender perspective is often sidetracked – if at all acknowledged – in many national and international policies. This theme was therefore given due precedence in order both to address and remedy the current state of affairs, especially as it stands in BMENA.

[1]   From the report of the intiatives undertaken in the framework of the Democracy Assistance Dialogue (DAD) 2005

The reality of female disadvantage is particularly prominent in the BMENA region, despite some positive steps recently taken in legislation and policymaking. The first edition of the United Nations Arab Human Development Report states that gender inequality is a major obstacle to development in the Arab region.[2] In response, the fourth edition of the report focuses specifically on issues related to women's empowerment in the region. Although the particular problems are identified and discussed in these and other international documents, there is still a pressing need to forge civil society dialogue with regard to these issues and shape appropriate initiatives for action.

In light of the above, a series of civil society consultations have thus far been organized, all enlisting the cooperation of intergovernmental actors and civil society members. Over the past four years, these Forum for the Future assemblies have culminated in outlining and eventually deciding on a variety of policy measures.

The ideas and proposals that formed the basis of this report similarly stem from those consultations and conferences. The two civil society symposia, organized by TESEV in June 2005 and February 2006, asked civil society to develop reform initiatives which could then be taken forward to willing BMENA governments at the Ankara intergovernmental conference of May 2006, hosted by the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Participants in both civil society symposia stressed the need for a new mechanism or institution to support local women's activists logistically, ensure the effective monitoring of international conventions related to gender, act as a bridge between the civil society and governments from BMENA and provide effective and reliable information about women in BMENA. In this respect, the second Istanbul Symposium requested the following:

> Both governments and civil society consider and support the establishment of a region-wide Gender Institute, charged with enhancing civil society and government dialogue with respect to improving women's status in the region through effective and impartial data collection, gender budgeting and other projects. To that end the proposed Gender Institute would be expected to facilitate and support the review of CEDAW implementation in the individual countries of the region as well as at the regional level.[3]

The subsequent intergovernmental conference, held by the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Ankara in May 2006, also reiterated the importance of exploring the idea of establishing further institutional mechanisms:

> The participants... reflected, among others, on the idea of establishing a region-wide Gender Institute, which can provide a useful framework of cooperation and dialogue

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2   United Nations Arab Human Development Report, 2002

3   From the final statement of the 2nd Istanbul Symposium on 'Gender Equality and Political Participation', Istanbul, 6-7 February 2006

between Governments and civil society and committed themselves to further explore on this project in consultation with the G-8 partners and international organizations.[4]

Based on the abovementioned context, a number of civil society activists who participated in the DAD conferences and are part of the TESEV network have taken on the task of laying the groundwork for the creation of a future Gender Institute. This feasibility report comes as a direct consequence of those efforts.

2. VOICES FROM THE REGION

This part of the study reflects the answers of 56 respondents. This data is collected by the project team via face-to-face interviews during project field trips and surveys which were distributed to an email list compiled by the project advisors.

2.1 AIM

The endeavor to create a regional organization under the DAD framework is unprecedented and thus its feasibility needs to be tested. For the purposes of this study, feasibility refers to a very basic checklist, which includes the following:

1. Is there demand from civil society for the proposed institution?
2. Is there official consent to form this institution – that is to say, do any states under the Forum for the Future framework agree to undertake and support this initiative?
3. Are there potential donors for the proposed institution?
4. Are there potential host countries to house the proposed institution?
5. What is the estimated startup cost?

However, before testing the feasibility of the idea, the researchers had to substantiate the idea itself. Therefore a second set of questions had to be answered:

6. What are the objectives and aims of the proposed Gender Institute?
7. What are its specific tasks?
8. Who are the target groups?
9. How should it be structured and governed?
10. Where should it be located?
11. What are the possible sources of funding?

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4   From the Final Document of the DAD Intergovernmental Conference on 'Empowering Women in Public Life', Ankara, 22-23 May 2006

The researchers faced the challenge of asking and answering these questions simultaneously. However, the outcome of these efforts has been positive and as a result the idea of a Gender Institute as a conceivable working body was also substantiated.

2.2 METHODOLOGY

The content of this study was extracted primarily from firsthand interviews and questionnaires conducted in Jordan, Morocco and Bahrain. The questions and talking points for the interviews were put together in a working meeting of experts, where attention was also given to determining a suitable set of respondents.

The results of the questionnaires were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively. A project expert was present at all the interviews and wrote brief reports on the results and conclusions of the interviews. The feasibility report incorporates responses given to the interview and questionnaire questions.

2.3 THE DEMAND FOR A GENDER INSTITUTE

Efforts to alleviate gender inequality and to empower women are abundant both on the civil society and state level in the BMENA region. Although some progress in women's rights in the region is currently being witnessed, many shortcomings still lie ahead, particularly in terms of the allocation of human and financial resources to enable the effective implementation of gender equality policies. The creation of a new Gender Institute presents an opportunity to reinforce the effectiveness of existing gender equality policies and programs and to develop them further in the respective countries of the region.

Existing foundations that work on gender equality policies with a regional focus in the BMENA region include the Center of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). Other institutions like the Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies (MIGS) and African Gender Institute (AGI) cover the BMENA region only partially and do so by means of a more academic approach.

The need for a BMENA Gender Institute which will carry out tasks that existing institutions do not deal with at a regional level is indeed imperative. Based on field research and on-site interviews, it is evident that information on gender equality policies is very diffused, given that it is scattered across the region and is therefore difficult to access. 88% of the respondents have raised this concern and supported the BMENA Gender Institute's proposed role of collecting and disseminating existing research and information.

There is also a lack of coordination between existing institutions, while communication with policy makers remains equally inadequate. 39 respondents

out of the total 56 stressed the lack of coordination between existing institutions, however only 24 were in favor of an advocacy aim. The BMENA Gender Institute aims to fill this gap in dialogue and coordination.

Unlike CAWTAR or UNIFEM, the BMENA Gender Institute plans to collect and disseminate information which are presently too scattered to be considered viable for the purposes of research. As such, the Gender Institute will mainly have a coordinating role. Like its counterpart, the European Gender Institute, the Gender Institute's chief role will be to act as an archive of sorts for existing research, rather than function as a body conducting its own. In point of fact, the BMENA Gender Institute's proposed role to conduct its own research was given only medium priority by the respondents and received support from just 34 out of 56 respondents. Despite this, it should be mentioned that the BMENA Gender Institute, like the European Gender Institute, will work to emphasize the exchange of experiences.

Some specific answers to why there is a need for a Gender Institute were:

1. Efforts aiming for gender equality in the region (research, documents, declarations, databases, etc.) are scattered and cannot be made use of effectively.

2. There is demand from civil society for access to good and recent research on gender equality.

3. Women's rights in this part of the world are not fully understood. There is a need for institutes to collect and update data and provide specific analyses and reports.

The added value of such an Institute will also lay in its ability to create partnerships between different actors and levels, including NGOs, social partners, professional organizations, the media, international organizations, private sector and states. 64% of the respondents expressed the need for a regional umbrella organization which will inform existing establishments about each others' work and propose areas of cooperation and coordination.

2.4 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF A GENDER INSTITUTE

A clear majority of respondents supported the creation of a Broader Middle East and North Africa (BMENA) Gender Institute. Only three out of 56 respondents opposed the creation of the Institute. All respondents were asked to express their views about what aims the Institute should have. Their feedback was collected by the project team via face-to-face interviews during project field trips and surveys which were distributed to a mass email list compiled by the project

advisors. The interviewees and survey respondents were asked to name possible objectives and aims for the proposed BMENA Gender Institute. The respondents listed the following aims:

A BMENA Gender Institute should:

- Serve as a database for research and gender aggregated data which is already present but not readily accessible;
- Act as a network-building institution for BMENA civil society organizations and activists working in gender-related fields and function as common ground for researchers to share success stories and experiences in the BMENA region;
- Coordinate joint efforts; initiate partnerships between organizations;
- Function as a training center; offer certificates and degrees in the field of gender studies and provide technical training in fields such as gender sensitive budgeting, etc.;
- Conduct its own research; carry out country-specific analyses which will serve as diagnostic reports;
- Create a platform for advocacy and lobby for governmental action via policy recommendations.

88% of the respondents prioritized the database function of the Institute over other suggestions. They stressed the urgent need to compile and disseminate pre-existing research and information. Their main concern was the inaccessibility of the available information:

> *The Institute should address the lack and inaccessibility of statistical information in the field of gender. It should conduct field research and collect the existing data from the field to form a database which is easily accessible.*

Nearly all respondents mentioned the lack of a functioning coordinating body which could both create a network of BMENA civil society organizations and initiate partnerships alike. They described the networking function as one that should connect people who work in the same field of gender issues and inform each other about working examples and success stories. The coordination aim, however, was listed separately and it was specified that the Institute should pay special attention to similar initiatives of local organizations in different countries and that these initiatives should be linked and informed of each other 51.8% of the respondents also expressed concern over the lack of a sufficient number of people trained in the gender field. They stressed that only a small minority of people who work in this field are trained adequately:

> *There is a lack of adequately trained gender specialists: The proposed BMENA Gender Institute should fill this gap and offer training which will award certificates*

and degrees. These degrees and certificates should address both technical and theoretical issues related to gender.

Yet, some respondents expressed reservations about the Institute harboring overly ambitious aims to train people. The legitimacy and credibility of certificates or degrees granted by the institution was a main point of concern, one that was further compounded by taking note of the high likelihood of overlaps with training offered by gender studies departments at universities. The respondents therefore advised that the BMENA Gender Institute should only offer training in very technical and specific issues; in other words, in those areas not currently covered by academic institutions. This provisional aim of the Institute was ultimately given low priority.

A large proportion of the interviewees believed that the BMENA Gender Institute should carry out independent research and address areas not well explored. In order that this research does not overlap with that of other institutions, it was suggested that the Institute be given a limited research objective. Along with this, the respondents also mentioned the importance of country specific diagnostic studies. They conveyed a need for conducting yearly evaluations to monitor the progress in specific countries in the region. Thus, the interviewees gave this aim medium priority.

Only 42.8% of the respondents sanctioned the need for the BMENA Gender Institute to function as an advocacy platform. A considerable portion of respondents voiced their reservations about this aim. Major concerns indicated that the advocacy aim would eventually predominate the Institute's mission and may cause it to digress from more pragmatic concerns. This aim was given low priority.

Table 1: The interviewees and survey respondents named the following objectives and aims for the proposed BMENA Gender Institute

Legend:
- Serve as a database
- Act as a network-building institution
- Coordinate joint efforts
- Function as a training center
- Conduct its own research
- Create a platform for advocacy

Y-axis: Number of respondents
X-axis: Aims suggested by respondents

Values: 49, 39, 36, 29, 34, 24
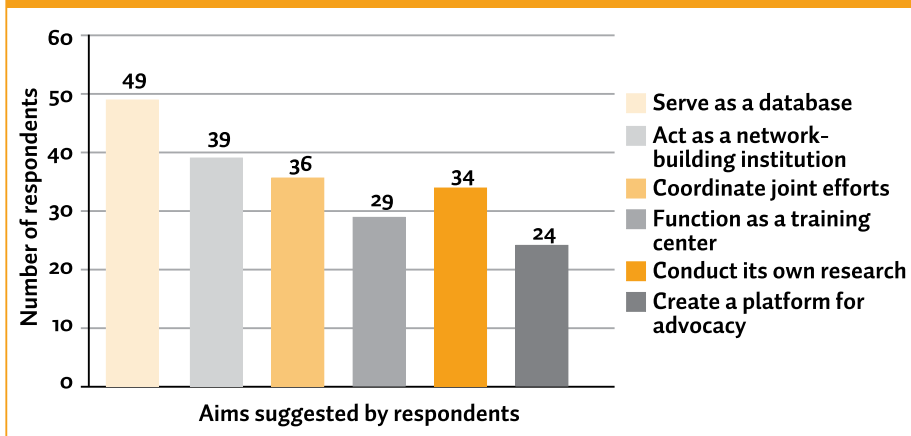
The total number of survey respondents and interviewees was 56. Table 1 includes all the aims proposed by survey respondents and interviewees. The varying levels of support for the proposed aims of the BMENA Gender Institute are explicated in detail above.

The chart shows that only 24 people out of 56 supported the Gender Institute's proposed position of being a platform for advocacy. The Institute's possible function as a database for research and information, on the other hand, received the most support. The three possible functions - network-building, coordination and research - received support respectively from 39, 36 and 34 of the total 56 respondents. From the chart, it can be concluded that all respondents and interviewees agreed on four broad aims. These aims in the order of support they received are:

1. Serve as a database to compile and disseminate pre-existing research and information;

2. Act as a network-building institution which connects civil society organizations and activists; inform them about other working examples and success stories;

3. Coordinate joint efforts; initiate partnerships between organizations;

4. Conduct its own research; carry out country-specific analyses which would serve as diagnostic analyses.

The interviewees and survey respondents both included government and civil society representatives. Since the two groups represent different stakeholders, the aims they put forward for the BMENA Gender Institute reveal different viewpoints. As a result, the subject-pool of the survey is diverse enough to be considered balanced and representative.

Table 2: The government and civil society representatives' responses to the question `What should the aim of a BMENA Gender Institute be?` met at certain points, while diverging at others.

BMENA Government Representatives

- Compile and disseminate existing research
- Coordinate existing initiatives

- Network-building
- Research
- Training
- Advocacy

BMENA Civil Society Representatives
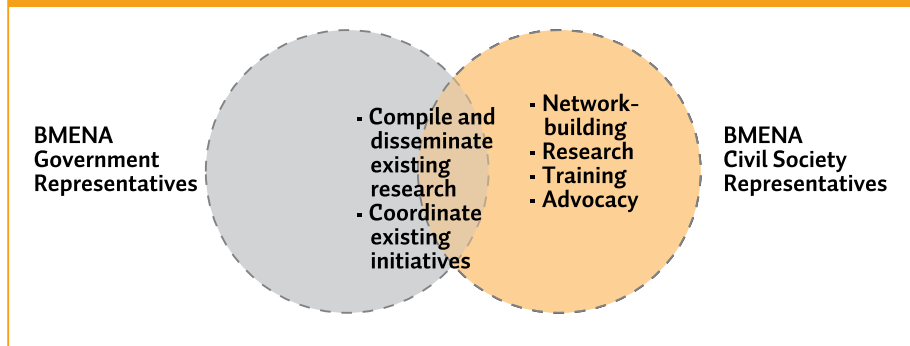
In the illustration above, the different aims suggested by the two different stake holders have been depicted. When looking at the aims suggested by the two different stakeholders, their mutual interests appear to primarily lie in allowing the Institute to function as a database for gender-specific research and a coordinating body of the organizations in the region. Separately, the civil society representatives in the surveys also proposed implementing particular aims such as network-building, researching, training and carrying out advocacy-oriented activities. Government representatives, on the other hand, avoided making reference to the Institute's possible aim of advocacy and production of policy recommendations.

To sum up, the stakeholders' common interests lie in the functions of the Institute creating a database of existing information, making this data more available and coordinating similar activities carried out by different organizations in the region. Overall, the aim given the most support is the database function, followed by network-building, coordination and conducting research. Thus a clear majority sees the Institute as a body that should collect and disseminate information across the region, create and manage the network or organizations and good practices and coordinate similar initiatives across the region.

3. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

This part of the report is based on the accumulation of knowledge collected by the research team during field trips and face to face interviews. The guidelines listed below will be eventually shaped by the prospective board members of the Institute.

3.1 TARGET GROUPS

POLITICIANS AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

A medium-level priority purpose of the Institute will be to influence politicians. While it has not drawn a full consensus in our surveys, this measure is important in that it allows the Institute to concern itself with the legislative side of gender in the BMENA. Aside from that, such a stance may also help the Institute wield influence in the allocating procedure of a state's budget. The Institute will therefore work with local civil society representatives to promote dialogue with BMENA governments. Moreover, the Gender Institute could be useful in developing regional standards for gender mainstreaming and training local politicians about those standards. Additionally, the Institute can supply governments with regional information about gender issues, supplementing their knowledge and providing a basis of comparison for local concerns over gender.

RESEARCH INSTITUTES

The Gender Institute will promote local and regional research on women's issues throughout the region. It will seek to coordinate research projects from institutes across the region and provide a way for them to exchange information they have acquired from previous endeavors. By doing so, the Gender Institute will divide the present research on the field into more manageable categories. This will not only encourage research that is more focused and centered, but also ensure that there is minimal overlap with research conducted by other, likeminded institutes.

NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

The Gender Institute intends on acting as a source of public awareness about gender issues. Assisting local NGOs with finding sources of funding, strengthening human resource management, providing avenues for networking and supporting local campaigns in the region are all part of its proposed set of aims. Local NGOs will further benefit from having ready access to research data that will have hitherto remained unobtainable or in fragmented and uncollected form. Reciprocally, local NGOs may also inform the Gender Institute about which of their events or practices have worked best, so that the Institute can pass this information onto other NGOs in the region in the hope that it may improve their own projects.

UNIVERSITIES

Universities are a target group because they impart knowledge to future decision makers, scholars, business people, etc. and the Gender Institute can draw on some of this knowledge to better its own practices. Universities can also provide the Institute with information and eligible human resource on a local level.

MEDIA

The media will be of critical importance for the Institute, as it can help the Institute achieve two of its primary aims; namely, distributing research findings and raising public and governmental awareness. The Gender Institute can therefore facilitate meetings and networking events between NGOs, research institutes and the media to provide a better medium for the dissemination of information.

ARAB LEAGUE

Not all countries in the BMENA are members of the Arab league, but many are. The organization's main purpose is to strengthen relations between the Arab countries; however, it also examines social issues in the Arab world and has done much in the past to promote higher literacy rates and women's rights. The Gender Institute

could provide it with information as well as attempt to influence which issues are present on the agenda of the organization's summits. As is well known, solutions or courses of action determined or recommended at Arab League Summits carry enough political currency to spread widely and quickly through the BMENA region.

3.2 TASKS AND MISSIONS

The establishment of a Gender Institute is designed to strengthen and underpin existing gender equality policies and programs and to further enhance gender equality in the respective countries of the region. It is therefore crucial that the tasks, functions and budget of the Gender Institute are adapted to and reflect the importance of achieving equality between the genders in the region. In addition and in congruence with the results of the interviews, project advisors have therefore drawn out a tentative list of missions for the Institute. Categorized under different activities and tasks, some of these tasks are as follows:

COORDINATION AND NETWORKING

1. Act as a center for dialogue (akin to the North-South Center of the Council of Europe) among civil society actors and also as a mediator between the civil society and public officials. Moreover, the Institute should work as a vehicle for creating and sustaining regional networks. The Institute will not seek to do work that is already being done by other institutions, but rather coordinate their actions and exchange information between them. This is so that all parties involved may benefit from such a coordinated plan of action and thus do more for their local and national communities. Additionally, it will build ties between NGOs and governments wherever they do not exist.

2. Ensure the supply of reliable and updated data/statistics - Serve as a database for research on gender equality in the region. There are currently many institutes in the region doing research on gender issues. However, they are not all integrated and are thus prone to repeat each other's work. Often times, there are also significant oversights in their research, as they cannot always avail themselves of the existing research. The gender institute would therefore create a comprehensive collection of all their previous studies to make future research wider in scope, more precise and ultimately easier.

3. Carry out projects with a macro-scope to enable smaller actors to concentrate on niche projects. The Institute will coordinate the projects of NGOs and relay information between them, thereby allowing each actor to focus on fewer and more focused tasks. This may also benefit the wider community, in that it may go towards helping independent researchers and others studying gender topics in BMENA.

4. Exchange knowledge and experience and enhance and develop dialogue among and between civil society and governments, both within the region and internationally.

5. Work in partnership with international women's organizations and other international organizations such as UN agencies (UNFPA, UNDP), World Bank, etc.

6. The Gender Institute would analyze the results of previous actions taken or research done by civil society actors and governments to see which approach worked best and in turn use this knowledge to provide advice to other institutions. It could also organize and synchronize the efforts of other actors to test which ones work best.

RESEARCH AND POLICY

7. Carry out research regarding economic, political and social problems women face and produce gender disaggregated statistics. One of the low priority goals of the Institute will be to influence government action to attain gender equality. Both respondents and project advisors realize that correct actions require accurate information. As such, it is only when the Institute collects data and makes it available to the public and other actors that a necessary course of action may be sought.

8. Use data and statistical information to translate knowledge into policy and legislation recommendations; disseminate the results of the research to inform all parties involved in BMENA countries.

9. Monitor and support the full and effective implementation of CEDAW. The CEDAW, one of the UN's human rights initiatives, seeks the inclusion of women in all aspects of community life and at all levels of society, in a world without gender based discrimination.

ADVOCACY

10. Promote the notion of gender. There is a great deal of gender inequality in the BMENA region, but recent progress in empowering women has led some to believe that these issues need no longer be addressed. However, it is important to note that this progress has been very limited. Many of the respondents believe that the shortcomings in BMENA societies -largely as a consequence of governmental neglect- need to be identified, discussed and solved. Consequently, the Institute would ensure that gender is not only a significant topic in public discourse, but also attempt to make it better understood.

11. Promote the policy of gender mainstreaming and offer training on gender mainstreaming. Gender mainstreaming hopes to achieve gender equality by

analyzing the effects any action or program may specifically have on a person's experiences. The Institute will both compose and test mainstreaming methods, subsequently spreading them to the BMENA community.

Launch awareness-raising campaigns on the topic of gender equality and provide technical assistance for shadow reports. Providing the public with information about gender issues will create dialogue, if not ensure that corrective measures are taken to remedy lapses in governmental policies. Broadly speaking, the Institute will also aim to correct any common misconceptions about gender that the public may harbor.

3.3 STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE, LOCATION AND FUNDING

1. The proposed institute should be governed by a board of directors composed of the stakeholders listed in the report.

2. It is essential that people from the BMENA region comprise the majority of members, although the Institute should not ignore suitable candidates from outside the region.

3. The hierarchical structure of the Institute should be designed to ensure efficiency.

4. It would be worthwhile if board members were connected to local and international organizations involved in influencing gender equality policies.

5. The board should decide the formation of an advisory committee and the responsibility for selecting board members should be in the hands of the relevant stakeholders.

6. The host country should guarantee the autonomy of the proposed institute and the Institute's internal regulations should be independent.

7. The proposed Gender Institute should be formally based in the BMENA region. It would be ideal to have the headquarters in a country where the work of the Institute would not be duplicating that of any existing organization. Moreover, the Institute should fill a void not only in the host country but also within the region in terms of advancing women's rights. It is also important that the laws in the host country are hospitable to the workings of the Institute. In these respects, the fieldwork has thus far indicated that among the cities of the Broader Middle East and North Africa, Rabat, Morocco is the most appropriate location to host the proposed institute.

8. The proposed Gender Institute should be accessible to all stakeholders; retaining the institutional authority to influence governments and affect policy, while being flexible enough to be effective in outreach.

9. Possible sources for funding can include, but are not limited to: UN agencies, the Middle East Partnership Initiative, the European Union, Middle East programs of various governments, other grant-giving institutions and most importantly the Foundation for the Future within the auspices of the G-8.

10. The host country should have the political will to support the Institute; the adoption of the project by local civil society actors is also crucial for it to have any measure of success.

3.4 NGO REGISTRATION IN MOROCCO

A non-profit association can be freely established in Morocco without any authorization or prior notification. The members of the association may be comprised of Moroccans, foreigners, or mixed. However, in order to exist legally (that is, to be conferred the status of legal person) and to apply for grants to support legal action, or possibly buy or sell on its behalf, an association must be declared to state authorities. The declaration of the association's constitution makes it public and allows it to function as a legally constituted entity. In Morocco, the regulation of associations depends on the Dahir[5] of 15 November 1958. The declaration of an association may take several weeks after the deposit receipts of statutes are received.

The documents required for registration are a letter of submission of the prior declaration, articles of incorporation and lists of members that are in management or administrative positions and a statute of the association. All these documents must be notarized and signed by the applicant.

Should donors and governments agree on the practicalities of establishing this institute, legal counsel must be sought to guide the founders and draft the actual incorporation articles.

3.5 STARTUP COSTS

The startup costs of the Institute would consist of three components: infrastructure, administrative and programmatic. Although programmatic costs would not be very high in the beginning, an incremental budget should be foreseen as the Institute defines its scope of work.

Based on the interviews conducted, the ratios of these three budget categories should be as follows for startup:

Infrastructure   40%
Administrative   40%
Programmatic   20 %

■   5   **The King's decree**

A sample budget for the seed funding required to set up the Institute could be as follows.

BUDGET CATEGORY		RATIO	USD AMOUNT
INFRASTRUCTURE		15%	
	Office Rent		50.000,00
	Equipment		10.000,00
	Other		10.000,00
ADMINISTRATIVE		42%	
	Staff Salaries		125.000,00
	Legal Counsel		15.000,00
	Registration costs		10.000,00
	Other (staff travel, etc)		50.000,00
PROGRAMMATIC		42%	
	Research projects		125.000,00
	Advocacy		50.000,00
	Training		25.000,00
TOTAL			470.000,00

This estimation is based on the yearly budget of similar organizations.

4. CONCLUSION

This report lays the groundwork and the rationale for establishing a Gender Institute, whose scope of work will focus on countries of the Broader Middle East and North Africa. The Institute should be an institution and should be established with local ownership. There is demand and initiative on behalf of several civil society actors to take up the work necessary to establish the Institute; however, there needs to be political will from governments to assist in the establishment of the organization. The Forum for the Future has been the first platform where

government support for the project was given. Presently, more governmental endorsement will be sought in order to substantiate these ideas into reality. The researchers invite the representatives at the Forum for the Future to endorse the outline drawn in this study and to provide the necessary financial means for the startup of the Institute.

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