

Political finance and the equal participation of women in Tunisia: a situation analysis

Magnus Ohman



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Netherlands Institute for
Multiparty Democracy

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Abbreviations

| | |
|---------------|--|
| CAWTAR | Center of Arab Women for Training and Research |
| IFES | International Foundation for Electoral Systems |
| NCA | National Constituent Assembly |
| RCD | Rassemblement Constitutionnel Démocratique Party |
| WPR | Women's Political Rights Programme |

Executive summary

This Discussion Paper explores the role of money in politics and its influence on the opportunities for women and men to run successfully for public office in Tunisia. In late 2014 Tunisia held its first regular elections since the so-called Arab Uprisings. At 31 per cent, the proportion of women in parliament is currently the highest of any parliament in the Middle East and North Africa, but it still falls short of full equality.

Tunisia uses a closed-list proportional electoral system and a gender quota that legally requires political parties to alternate women and men on their candidate lists for each constituency. This analysis is not focused on whether the parties nominate women, because it departs from the assumption that political parties comply with the legal quota. Instead, the research focused on two key issues: the role of money in political party decision-making on who should be at the top of candidate lists, and therefore has the greatest chance of being elected; and the challenges women face in becoming active in politics and running for office. The research investigated whether the women chosen for the lists were expected to campaign actively and required to provide resources for the election campaign, and examined their experiences of the campaign. Behind both questions lies an overarching question: does the legal requirement to alternate male and female candidates remove the influence of money on gender equality in elections?

The findings show that since parties were legally obliged to include women on their candidate lists,

the electoral quota made it easier for women to participate as candidates and reduced the need for access to financial resources. However, access to funding still seems to play a role in who is placed first on the candidate lists, and therefore who is elected to parliament.

More importantly, financial constraints still affected the ability of women candidates to run effective campaigns in some cases. While access to financial resources has an impact on both women and men, women are more disadvantaged as they have less access to financial resources. Although this gap did not have a significant impact on the chances of women candidates being elected, which was largely determined by their position on the closed candidate list, it did have an impact on the extent to which running for office was considered a valuable experience, and the interest of the women in continuing to participate in the political process.

The proportion of women in the Tunisian Parliament is impressive, but is not matched by gender equality in other areas, such as in the cabinet or the leadership of parliamentary committees. Creating opportunities for further advances in gender equality requires work on many fronts, such as addressing social attitudes to women and men, improved education and training for women, and legal protection with regard to violence against women.

This report makes recommendations on how reforms related to the role of money in politics could

help women participate and continue to be engaged in electoral politics. These include providing extra public funding to lists headed by women; and providing ongoing public funding to political parties, with specific funds earmarked for activities

related to gender equality. Increased transparency in political parties and election campaigns could also, with time, help to balance the participation of women and men in the political sphere.

1. Introduction

Despite laudable efforts at international and national levels particularly in the past 20 years, achieving equal political participation of women and men remains a challenge globally. One of the multitude of factors that continue to impede women's equal participation is access to the financial resources needed to participate effectively in electoral processes as candidates. It is against this background that the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD), the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) and other partners developed the Respect for Women's Political Rights Programme (WPR Programme). This four-year programme (2014–17) aims to strengthen the political leadership of women in three countries—Colombia, Kenya and Tunisia—by improving the political environment for equal participation and leadership of women and men in political parties.

The WPR Programme works directly with political parties in the above-mentioned countries to:

- Assess, reform and transform both formal and informal barriers that impede and discourage progress on gender equality and women's political rights;
- Enhance the capacity of women candidates, as well as men and women politicians in general, to be effective fundraisers, campaigners, and leaders; and
- Build political parties' institutional capacities on gender-sensitive policymaking and legislation.

This report is a continuation of International IDEA's gender-related efforts. Questions about gender regulation were included in the International IDEA Political Finance Database in 2012, and a chapter on the topic was included in *Funding of Political Parties and Election Campaigns: A Handbook on Political Finance*.¹

¹ See Ballington and Kahane (2014) and questions 27 and 28 in the International IDEA Political Finance Database, <<http://www.idea.int/political-finance>>.

Linking gender equality in politics and political finance in a coherent manner is a relatively new phenomenon.

Objectives of the analysis

The report analyses the role of money in determining the opportunities of women and men successfully contesting elections for positions of power and participating in political decision-making in Tunisia. It explores the political considerations in an electoral process such as Tunisia's, where a legal quota requires gender alternation on candidate lists.² In particular, it reviews whether such quotas reduce the role of money, which has been found to be so important in countries that do not have them (Ballington and Kahane 2014). Naturally, it does not argue that money in politics is the only factor of importance with regard to gender equality in the electoral process, or even that it is a major factor. It does, however, provide analysis of an area that has been found to be central in many parts of the world, and which has so far received little attention in the Tunisian context.

The main focus of the report is the 2014 parliamentary elections. To provide a broader understanding of the issues involved, the 2011 election for the National Constituent Assembly (NCA) is also analysed. The specific objectives of this report are:

- to identify how access to financial resources is linked to the ability to contest elections effectively and participate in intra-party democracy;
- to highlight those constraints faced by women in accessing political and electoral financing which are attributable solely or mainly to their gender; and
- to propose measures to political parties, female politicians and potential candidates, and national policymakers that address the constraints identified.

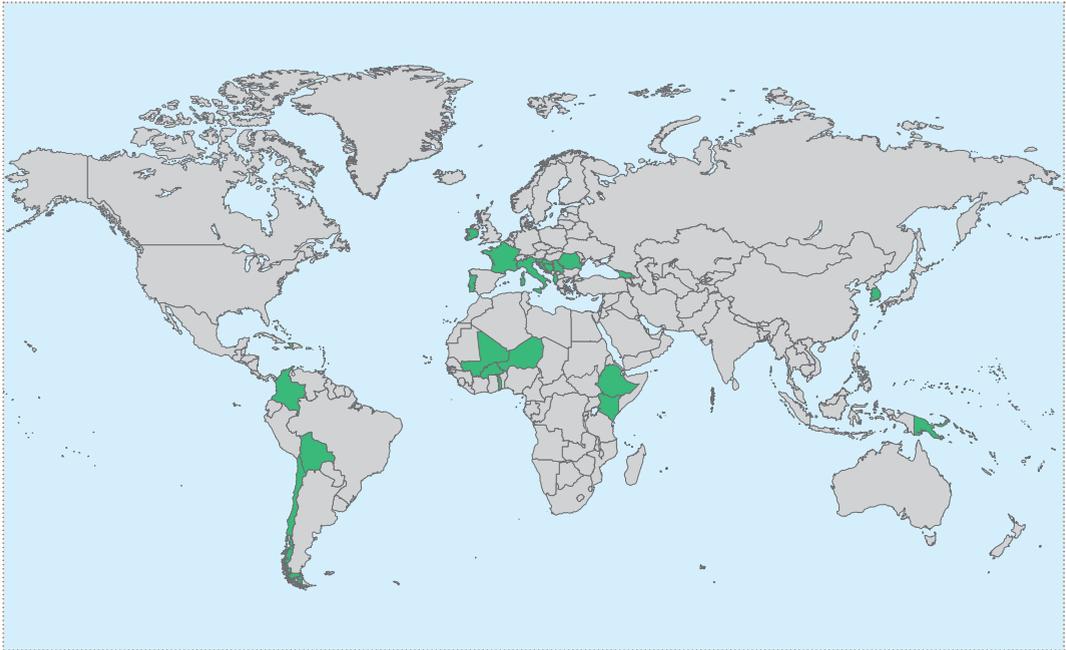
Methodology

The starting point of the initiative is recent publications on political finance and gender equality. As part of the development of this report, a literature review identified sources focused on the challenges faced by women and men in standing for election to the Tunisian Parliament. Tunisian legislation was also reviewed as part of an analysis of how existing regulations on political parties and campaign finances affect the chances of female and male candidates.

Lessons have also been learned from the work of the WPR Project on the connection between gender equality and political finance, which was carried out in Kenya in the autumn of 2014. International IDEA's Political Finance Database provided the starting point for mapping countries that provide financial incentives to encourage gender equality among the candidates presented by political parties, as shown in Figure 1.

2 Political parties draw up lists of candidates for each constituency, but lists can also be made up of non-partisan candidates.

Figure 1. Provision of direct public funding to political parties related to gender equality among candidates



Source: This map is based on data collected in the International IDEA Political Finance Database as of May 2016. The database is continually updated. See <<http://www.idea.int/political-finance/question.cfm?field=280®ion=-1>>.

Given the limited attention paid to this issue in Tunisia as well as elsewhere, a major source for this analysis was interviews with women and men involved in electoral politics in Tunisia. Nine women and three men were interviewed in April and May 2015. The respondents included women who had successfully or unsuccessfully participated in various aspects of electoral politics, as well as party representatives and others with an insight into the dynamics involved. The interviews were all conducted on the condition that responses would not be attributable.³ The number of respondents does not amount to a fully representative sample, but the findings from the interviews illustrate the diverse and significant range of views and personal experience in Tunisia.

Valuable input was also provided at the workshop 'Political parties' financial approaches to promoting gender equality: Status and reflections in the light of Tunisian political parties' practice during the 2014 elections', which was organized by International IDEA and NIMD in April 2015. At this event, representatives from seven Tunisian political parties presented their views on gender equality and political finance, focused on both the formal regulations and the actual behaviour of political parties and other stakeholders. The discussions at the seminar are summarized in IDEA and NIMD (2015).

³ The author would like to thank Raoudha Labidi for her help with carrying out of the interviews for this study.

A comparison with the Kenyan gender and political finance analysis

This study follows on from a similar analysis carried out in Kenya in late 2014 (Ohman and Lintari 2015). As a starting point for reviewing the Tunisian experience, it is useful to briefly consider the findings of that analysis and any possible implications for Tunisia.

In Kenya, gaining access to funding was seen by nearly all the stakeholders interviewed as a major challenge for women wishing to run for office. The political parties seldom provide significant funding for their candidates. Instead, those who wish to stand in elections have to pay for their own campaign and provide additional funding to their parties. Both women and men often struggle to raise sufficient funds. Women face two particular challenges: potential donors are less willing to financially support female candidates, and women often have to spend more on their campaign to persuade voters to support them.

Although money often plays an important role in election campaigns in Kenya, the Kenyan politicians consulted noted that it was even more important during the candidate selection phase. Voter loyalty means that there are many 'safe seats' in Kenya. A nomination from the political party that is strongest in a particular constituency all but guarantees success in the general election. Most of the respondents who had run for office noted that they had spent more money during the candidate selection process than during the election campaign.

A major difference between Kenya and Tunisia is the electoral system. Kenya uses single-member districts and the first-past-the-post electoral system, where safe seats often play a significant role. An electoral system of this kind often places particular focus on the individual candidates, but being the representative of 'the right party' is also crucial.

In contrast, Tunisia's proportional representation electoral system based on closed lists means that voters cannot change the order in which the candidates are placed on the list. An electoral system of this kind reduces the role of candidates in campaigning and increases the role of political parties in the election campaigns (International IDEA 2008: 57–71, 99). For those who wish to run for office, the candidate selection process is still important, as being placed at the bottom of a list means that it will be next to impossible for a person to be elected, while being placed at the top will increase the chances significantly.

Unlike in Kenya, Tunisia has a legal quota that forces political parties to alternate between women and men on their candidate lists. However, women rarely appear at the top of lists and, as is discussed below, the large number of constituencies in Tunisia means that even being placed second on the list often significantly reduces the chances of electoral success.

If women are legally guaranteed every other place on candidate lists, and if candidates do not compete directly against each other: does money still play a role in determining the chances of women and men in elections?

2. Background

Tunisian political history

Tunisia gained its independence from France in 1956, but independence did not bring democracy. The country was run by the Democratic Constitutional Rally (Rassemblement Constitutionnel Démocratique, RCD) Party, which from 1987 was led by Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali. Ben Ali stood as the only candidate in presidential elections in 1989, and even after opposition candidates began to contest elections in 1999 he would win close to or more than 90 per cent of the vote.

This all changed early in 2011, when popular protests forced Ben Ali to flee the country. A number of interim governments took over until elections were held in October for a National Constituent Assembly to govern the country. The NCA was tasked with developing a new constitution, which was adopted in 2014. The events in Tunisia are commonly seen as the start of the Arab Uprisings, which spread to most of the region. Like the 2011 NCA elections, the parliamentary elections in 2014 used a closed-list proportional representation electoral system.

Political parties dominate Tunisian electoral politics. Although independent candidate lists are allowed in parliamentary elections, such lists have little impact. Lists nominated by political parties made up 60 per cent of all lists in the 2014 elections (al-Hanachi 2014) and, more importantly, won 99 per cent of the seats.

Women in Tunisian politics since independence

There were fewer restrictions on the political participation of women in Tunisia than in most countries in the region. Women were given the right to vote in 1957, and the right to stand as candidates shortly after.⁴ During the Ben Ali regime,

⁴ Women were given the right to vote in Egypt in 1956, in Algeria in 1962 and in Libya in 1964. Countries such as Kuwait (2005) and the United Arab Emirates (2006) only gave women the right to vote this century, and prior to 2015 women in Saudi Arabia were not allowed to vote in any election.

women also 'enjoyed high labor force participation, literacy, and standards of education' (NDI 2014: 8).

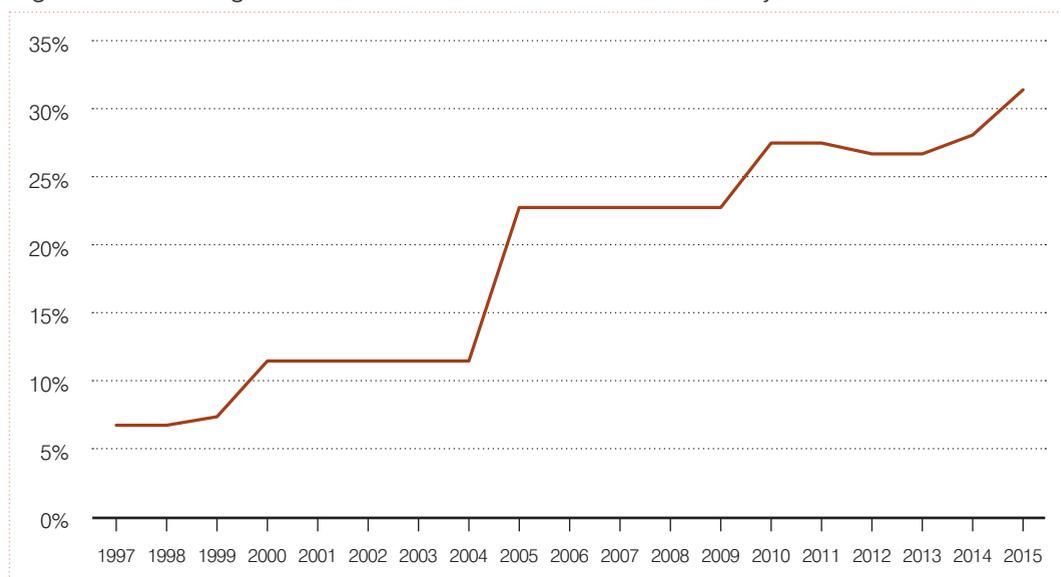
Tunisian women were not the passive recipients of such advancement. According to the European Parliament (2012: 4), the first wave of reforms to benefit Tunisian women in the 1950s was linked to a 'nationalist agenda' of making Tunisia a 'modern' country, but the improvements in the 1990s were the result of 'women's activism'.

Table 1. Women in Tunisian parliamentary elections

| Election | Comment | Women in parliament | |
|----------|--|---------------------|-------|
| | | Number | Share |
| 1994 | Government party wins 88% of seats in parliament | 11 | 7% |
| 1999 | Government party wins 81% of seats in parliament | 21 | 12% |
| 2004 | Government party wins 80% of seats in parliament | 43 | 23% |
| 2009 | Government party wins 75% of seats in parliament | 59 | 28% |
| 2011 | National Constituent Assembly elections after the Arab Uprisings | 58 | 27% |
| 2014 | Largest party wins 40% of seats in parliament | 68 | 31% |

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Figure 2. Percentage of seats in the Tunisian Parliament held by women



Source: Developed by author based on data from Inter-Parliamentary Union, 'Women in parliaments', 1 February 2015, <<http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/arc/world010215.htm>>.

Women had a notable presence in the Tunisian Parliament even before the Arab Uprisings, as shown in Figure 2, partly due to a party quota operated

by the ruling RCD. When women gained 23 per cent of the seats in the 2004 elections, the average proportion of women in the national parliaments of the Arab states was below 7 per cent (IPU 2015). However, the Tunisian Parliament had very limited powers during this period as the country was largely ruled by the president.

There were some fears that 'the use of a quota system by an unpopular dictator carried the danger of linking women's rights with an autocratic system of rule. In neighbouring Egypt, after the fall of the Mubarak regime in 2011, there was a backlash against progressive pro-women initiatives spearheaded by first lady Suzanne Mubarak' (Tavana and Russell 2014: 25). The continued use of gender quotas after the Arab Uprisings, and the general acceptance of this approach in the 2011 and 2014 elections, indicate that such a backlash has not occurred in Tunisia. More information about the success of women in recent Tunisian elections is shown in Table 1.

The number of women in the Tunisian Parliament is the highest in the Middle East and North Africa, but the situation is less positive in other areas of political life. More than three-quarters of the Standing and Special Committees of the Tunisian Parliament are chaired by men (Marsad 2015). Perhaps more tellingly, of the 27 ministers in the government formed by Prime Minister Habib Essid in February 2015, only three are women.⁵ There is also a clear pattern of male dominance within the political parties.

⁵ Prime Minister Habib Essid is an independent nominated by the largest political party, Nidaa Tounes. According to Gender Concerns International, the representation of women in the new cabinet is not line with the injunction that 'it is absolutely necessary that the new government considers nominating a large number of women as ministers to compensate for their low level of representation in parliament' (2014: 6). For a more recent discussion of women in the Tunisian cabinet see Allen (2015: 27–30).

3. Gender and political finance in the 2011 National Constituent Assembly elections

The regulatory framework around political finance and gender

For the 2011 elections to the National Constituent Assembly, private donations to the election campaigns of both political parties and independent candidates were banned. Instead, public funding was provided equally to all participating lists, and those that did not receive more than 3 per cent of the vote were required to return half the money after the elections (Jouan 2012: 3; I WATCH 2013: 14). There was also a ban on using state resources beyond the allocated funding and a specific ban on receiving funding from abroad. Public funding was not the only source of income, however, as political parties were allowed to use their 'own sources', in the wording of the legislation.

A limit was set on campaign spending, at three times the amount of the public funding provided to each list, and there were further limitations on the types of campaigning in which political parties could engage, such as a ban on television and radio advertising. Electoral contestants were obliged to submit financial reports to the Court of Accounts. According to the NDI (2011: 13), 'some parties complained that restrictive campaign finance and media regulations limited their ability to conduct effective election campaigns'.

A complete ban on private donations and limits on spending could benefit women who wish to run for office, since they might reduce the advantages of those with personal wealth or access to networks of wealthy people—and these people tend most often to be men (Ballington and Kahane 2014: 310–12). In the Tunisian case, however, the existence of a gender quota meant that the number of women candidates was determined at least partly by legal requirements, and that their electoral success was therefore partly determined before the election campaign began. The quota was the main gender-related provision in the new electoral legislation. Article 16 of Decree-Law 35 of 2010 states:

Candidates shall file their candidacy applications on the basis of parity between men and women. Lists shall be established in such a way to alternate between men and women. Lists that do

not follow this principle shall only be admitted when the number of seats in the relevant constituency is odd.

As a result of this provision, there were around 5,000 female candidates in the 2011 elections (GNRD and IIPJHR 2014: 29).⁶ This resulted in 'the largest representation of women in any parliament in the Arab world at the time' (NDI 2014: 8). The proportion of women elected (27 per cent), however, was actually slightly lower than the share of women in the final parliament of the Ben Ali regime.

The main problem was that the large number of constituencies (27 in Tunisia and six for Tunisians living abroad) meant that each constituency elected between one and ten candidates, meaning that it was often only the person at the top of the list who was elected. This problem was exacerbated by the large number of lists nominated, which made it difficult for a specific list to win a large number of seats. Geographical factors also played a role. Women were not represented at the top of lists in many interior rural areas of Tunisia (Haddad 2014).

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Lessons from the post-2011 review of political finance and gender equality

The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) conducted a review of the interplay between gender equality and political finance after the 2011 elections to the NCA. Their interviews with female candidates indicated that access to sufficient funding had been a challenge for both men and women, but that male candidates received more funding from their political parties and found it easier to raise funds independently. Although private donations were technically banned, such fundraising was commonplace (Cigane and Ohman 2014: 28–29). The importance of women achieving leadership roles within the political parties was also highlighted.

In 2013–14 a multi-stakeholder working group of Tunisian individuals from the political sector, civil society and government institutions made recommendations on legal reform and changes in the behaviour of different stakeholders, such as political parties, the media and election management. The working group focused specifically on the connection between gender equality in politics and political finance. Their recommendations (see also Cigane and Ohman 2014: 28–29) are set out below:

Recommendations on legal reform

- Political party laws should include clauses that enforce gender parity in the funding provided by political parties to their candidates, incentives for compliance and mechanisms for accountability
- Tax exemptions, such as waived nomination fees, should be introduced for women candidates during the campaign period.
- A portion of the public funding should be set aside for use by female candidates.
- The childcare expenses of female candidates should be reimbursed during the campaign period.

⁶ According to NDI (2014: 8), there were over 4,000 female candidates.

Recommendations for civil society actors

- Contribute to improving women candidates' understanding of the rules on campaign and political finance.
- Conduct a civic education campaign on the importance of women's participation and representation in politics and leadership positions, the advantages for candidates and positive societal externalities.

Recommendations for the media

- Sensitize media professionals to the importance of gender equality in media coverage.
- Educate women politicians and candidates on the importance of media exposure and public visibility as part of a larger strategy to increase funding opportunities and improve campaign competitiveness.
- Educate political leaders on the importance of guaranteeing media exposure for women candidates and politicians.

Recommendations related to capacity-strengthening

- Policymakers and political party leaders should receive training on gender equality, the importance of equal access to financial resources for male and female candidates, and the relevant legislation relating to campaign and political finance.
- Provide training for female candidates on campaign management and campaign strategies.
- Provide training to political party managers and the ISIE on current legislation governing gender parity, and on best practices for improving access to funds by women.
- Train candidates and party members on the legal and technical frameworks governing campaign and political finance with respect to improving gender equality and access.
- Provide training to party members on auditing financial records and proper methods of financial disclosure.

Recommendations for the electoral management body

- Sensitize the ISIE to the concept of gender mainstreaming so that it can advocate for, or introduce, legislation, processes and procedures that guarantee the rights of female politicians to financial resources and other protective measures, and make the political system more inclusive.
- A hotline or institutionalized means for reporting incidents of misconduct or abuse should be established for women candidates during campaigns.

Few if any of these recommendations were implemented ahead of the 2014 elections. The political parties law was not modified and contains few references to gender. The 2014 Electoral Law did not include any provisions on political finance and gender. Some training was held for women candidates, for example regarding use of the media (University of Cape Town 2014). To a large extent, however, the situation in 2014 was not significantly different from that in 2011.

Comments by other actors regarding the 2011 elections

Several respondents and other commentators noted that most Tunisian political parties were still at the formation stage at the time of the 2011 elections. A European Parliament briefing note states that 'It seems right to conclude that the policy of the winning Islamist Party as well as those of the other political parties in Tunisia towards women's rights are under continuous construction, and consequently, meetings, exchange and dialogues are important for anyone interested in gender equality' (European Parliament 2012: 14). According to Gender Concerns International (2011: 12), 'many lists displayed did not include pictures of women candidates in their lists and, for the parties that did include women candidate's photos, the pictures were often torn, defaced, or smeared with comments or defamatory insults'.

Most international observers did not make a connection between gender equality in the elections and the role of money in the elections. The Carter Center recommended that 'Procedures for the submission and resolution of campaign finance violations should be refined and stronger enforcement mechanisms should be put in place', and that 'The election management body should have adequate gender representation and develop good policies and practice on gender parity in regional electoral bodies' (Carter Center 2011: 56).

In practice, the political party and independent candidates elected to 48 of the 217 NCA seats failed to submit a financial report (I WATCH 2013: 16). There were few sanctions, and the Court of Accounts recommended that stricter sanctions should be imposed in future elections (Court of Accounts 2012).

Questions were also raised about the limited participation of women in other bodies, in particular the government formed after the 2011 elections. Only two of the 26 ministers appointed were women (European Parliament 2012: 7). Women had held 27 per cent of the seats in municipal councils and 32 per cent of those in regional councils before the Arab Uprisings. These bodies were disbanded after the uprisings and temporarily replaced by 'special delegations', to which no elections have been held.

4. Gender and political finance in the 2014 parliamentary elections

Tunisia's 2014 Constitution states that women and men have equal rights (articles 21 and 46) and, importantly, that 'The state seeks to guarantee women's representation in elected bodies' (article 34). Some see the new Constitution as 'enshrining' gender equality (France 24 2014), while a spokesperson for the Center of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR) claimed that: 'There is no big difference between what Tunisia was [before the Constitution was approved] and what Tunisia is now' (Martinez 2014).

In the Presidential elections held in November 2014, all but one of the 27 approved candidates were male. The sole woman candidate, Court of Cassation judge Kalthoum Kannou who stood as an independent, gained just 0.6 per cent of the votes (Allen 2015: 29). She came 11th, with no chance of participating in the run-off. This report consequently focuses on the parliamentary elections.

Parliamentary elections were originally planned for 2013, but only eventually held in October 2014. The regulatory framework put in place for the 2011 NCA elections was specific to that election. New regulations were needed for subsequent elections on issues such as the electoral system, political finance regulations and the design of a gender quota (if any).

The political finance regulatory framework

The campaign finance framework for the 2014 parliamentary elections largely followed what had been in place for the 2011 NCA elections, although some of the restrictions were removed. The 2011 ban on election campaigns receiving private donations was lifted, but only Tunisian individuals (not companies) were allowed to make donations. A limit was placed on the amount an eligible donor could contribute, set at 20 times the guaranteed minimum wage in non-agricultural sectors.⁷

⁷ Article 11 of the Decision of the High Independent Authority for the Elections, n°20-2014 of 8 August 2014 related to the rules, procedures and methods of the funding of the electoral campaign.

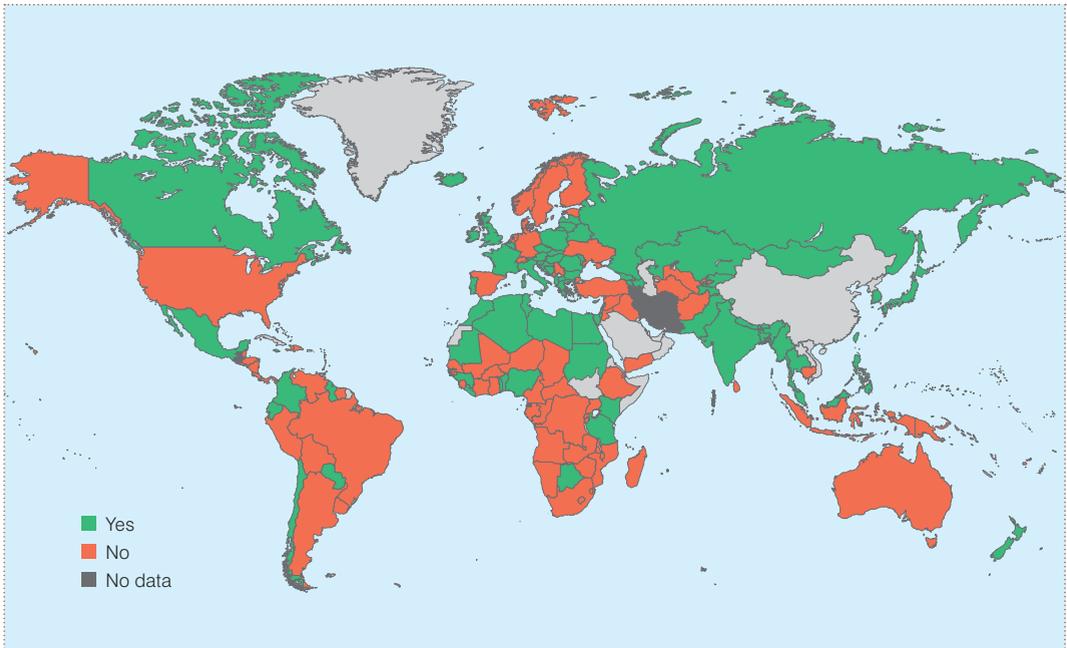
There was also a limit placed on the amount a candidate list could spend. This was set as five times the amount of public funding provided to each party in the particular constituency, which was an increase on 2011 when the limit was set at three times the public funding. The public funding allocation per list varied between constituencies. For example, it was TND 8,400 (USD 4,100) in Gafsa and 11,700 (USD 5,710) in Sousse (I WATCH 2015, 19).

As is noted above, capping the size of donations and banning corporate contributions could reduce the advantage of having access to networks of wealthy individuals, which men have more often than women (Cigane and Ohman 2014: 6). Similarly, 'Limiting the total amount that can be spent on a given campaign can also change the incentives for political parties and make them more willing to nominate women as candidates' (Cigane and Ohman 2014: 7). Currently, 79 countries impose limits on the amount a candidate can spend during elections (see Figure 3).

The short campaign period may also have reduced the importance of access to funds and served as an incentive for women to participate.⁸ However, given that the quota system gave political parties no choice but to nominate women and men alternately on the candidate lists, these regulations would not have significantly affected the proportion of women included.

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Figure 3. Countries that impose limits on the amount candidates can spend



Source: International IDEA. Data correct as of May 2016. The International IDEA Political Finance Database is continually updated. See <http://www.idea.int/political-finance/question.cfm?id=286>

8 The author wishes to thank Barbara Jouan for emphasizing this point.

The legal framework relating to gender and elections

Many aspects of the 2014 elections were unclear as late as the spring of 2014, including the electoral system to be used. A system largely similar to that used for the 2011 NCA elections was eventually agreed, as determined by article 24 of Organic Law no. 2014-16 of 26 May 2014 on elections and referendums. Since the electoral system was based on closed lists, which means that the order of candidates cannot be altered by the voters, women should in theory have automatically won around half of the seats in parliament.

There were disagreements about applying the quota system to the 2014 elections even among female members of the NCA. One independent NCA member stated: 'I am convinced that a woman must take her place by herself, through her own will and her competence' (BBC News 2014). Another NCA member, however, argued that 'I am being realistic. Not all women can do this [on their own], they need to be given opportunities that help them become leaders' (BBC News 2014).

The legislation did not include a provision for horizontal equality, which would have meant that half the lists presented by each party would have to be headed by a female candidate. As a consequence, while parties complied with the law, only 12 per cent of lists had a woman at the top (Gender Concerns International 2014: 2). This was a slight increase from 7 per cent in 2011, but it was realized as soon as the candidate nomination lists were published that the proportion of women in parliament would fall far short of half (Anna Lindh Foundation 2014).

The candidate selection process

In the 2014 elections political parties largely respected the legislative requirements by nominating women to 47 per cent of the positions on their lists (Anna Lindh Foundation 2014). The existence of a vertical but not a horizontal quota had a significant impact on the candidate selection process and the involvement of different actors. In the creation of each list, those in charge had to ensure that every other candidate was a woman. However, there was no obligation on the party leadership to ensure that half the lists were headed by women.

The issue of how political parties determined the order of candidates on their lists was discussed during the International IDEA and NIMD workshop in April 2015. All the party representatives argued that they had mainly left the selection process in the hands of the local party in the individual constituencies, and had seldom intervened. Subsequent interviews to explore the issue further, however, indicated that the selection process had often involved people from different levels of the party, and that parties had sometimes tried to retain at least some of their NCA members as parliamentary candidates, and pushed during the candidate selection process for this to happen. Many NCA members were unpopular in their constituencies. The party representatives interviewed for this research indicated that they had not visited or provided support. This is linked to a more general debate about the level of centralization within political parties. More research is needed, but it should be noted that participants at the International IDEA–NIMD event recommended that Tunisian parties need to 'adopt a clear and comprehensive strategy for candidate nomination' (International IDEA and NIMD 2015: 21).

Research on central party leadership interventions in candidate selection processes elsewhere in Africa has indicated that this is often done to support incumbents, in order to ensure continuity in the party's parliamentary caucus,

and often their continued financial support to the political party (Ohman 2004: 83–85). In Tunisia, there has only been one election since the Arab Uprisings, and it is possible that the desire for candidate continuity will become stronger in future elections—to the detriment of female challengers.

A desire to retain NCA members in the new parliament was not the only consideration for the party leadership bodies. As one respondent put it, it was not always 'convenient' to nominate a woman at the head of a candidate list, when the party felt that voters might not accept a woman as the party's main candidate.

Prominent members of society, such as former ministers, were sometimes put at the top of lists, even if they were not party members. Some female respondents claimed that they preferred to be in second place on the candidate list, but others argued that the head of the list had been imposed from above. At least one respondent claimed that she felt as if she had been placed on the candidate list simply to fill a place reserved for women.

Money may have played a smaller role in the candidate selection process in Tunisia than elsewhere (Ohman and Lintari 2015) but it was still important. Some commentators noted that the political party lists included a large number of businesspeople, who presumably have access to notable amounts of funding. One observer noted: 'The candidacy of this extraordinary number of businessmen has raised considerable controversy in political and intellectual circles, especially considering that most businessmen are candidates in areas where there is no economic development' (al-Hanachi 2014). This was also partly the approach to the nomination of women. One observer noted that the female 'frontline' candidates for Nidaa Tounes tended to be 'business women and National Union of Tunisian Women members' (Labidi 2014: 9). There are some indications therefore that decisions on placing certain people at the head of lists were related to their ability to provide or raise funds for elections, although this was often only one of several considerations. A significant focus on the financial status of potential candidates tends to work to the detriment of the active participation of women, since women often have less access to resources than men.

One reform that would use political finance incentives to encourage more lists to be headed by women without forcing the central leadership to intervene in the selection process would be to provide more public funding to lists headed by a woman than to lists headed by a man. This is discussed further below.

The choice of candidates, and in particular who heads the lists, has a significant impact on the number of women and men elected to parliament. In 79 seats (36 per cent), only one candidate from a particular party was elected, so only the person at the top of the list was successful. Of these winners, 85 per cent were men. In addition, by alternating men and women on the lists, any list with an uneven number of candidates elected would automatically have a gender-imbalance among its elected candidates. Of the 15 candidates elected third on the list and the four elected in fifth position, all but one were male. This automatically follows from so many lists being headed by a man (Marsad 2015).⁹

⁹ The exception was Nidaa Tounes in the Tunis 2 constituency, where the list was headed by a woman and the party now have three female members of parliament in that constituency out of the five seats it won in total (Marsad 2015).

Just 10 of the 72 successful female candidates won a seat because they were the head of a list. In four of the 33 constituencies, half those elected were women, which meant that full gender equality was achieved. No women were elected at all in three constituencies, since only the head of any list was elected and this was always a man. In an additional nine constituencies, less than 30 per cent of those elected were women (see Appendix A for more detailed information).

That women were elected to 34 per cent of the seats in the Tunisian Parliament was a remarkable achievement, but this still fell significantly short of the full equality indicated in the 2014 Constitution and the Electoral Law. This was directly related to the candidate nomination process, in particular to men being placed on the top of the lists.

The election campaign

The importance of campaign spending for the election results

One factor that must be considered when discussing political finance in any situation is the importance of money to the electoral outcome. Since women generally have less access to financial resources, something that was confirmed by the interviews conducted for this study, the relationship between resources and electoral results is important. The financial records submitted by the political parties to the Court of Accounts within 45 days of the election results being announced had not been published at the time of writing (Electoral Law article 86). However, I WATCH, a Tunisian civil society organization, monitored the campaign spending of the main political parties in six of the 27 constituencies in Tunisia.¹⁰ It is possible to compare their estimated campaign spending in each of these constituencies with the number of seats that each party gained.

Table 2 shows the estimated campaign spending in Tunisian dinar by each monitored political party in each of the monitored constituencies, as calculated by I WATCH (2015), as well as the seats won. The 'spend/seat percentage' shows how much each party had to spend per percentage point of seats won.¹¹ The results show that while money was by no means the determining factor in the elections, it does seem to have had an influence. It is true that Ettakatol spent almost twice as much as Afek Tounes in the Sfax II constituency but failed to win a seat, while Afek Tounes won one. However, there is an overall correlation between spending and electoral results, and even the smaller parties had to spend significant amounts to be successful.¹²

10 None of the six constituencies for Tunisians abroad were part of this monitoring.

11 This is more accurate than showing the amount spent per seat won, since the number of seats per constituency varied significantly. Note that two of the monitored parties did not win any seats in the monitored constituencies.

12 Interestingly, this did not apply to the largest spender in the monitored constituencies. The estimated spending by Ennahda in the monitored constituencies was almost as high as that of all the other parties put together, but it only managed to win an average of 32 per cent of the seats in the monitored constituencies, which is the same as the share of seats that it won nationwide. It seems that the view of many voters that Ennahda had failed to deliver progress while being the largest party in the NCA could not be shaken by large-scale campaign spending (Gall 2014).

Table 2. Monitored campaign spending in the 2014 Tunisian general elections

| Constituency | Nidaa Tounes | | | Ennahda | | | Front Populaire | | | Afek Tounes | | | Republican Party | | | Ettakatol | | |
|--------------|--------------|---------|-------|---------|---------|-------|-----------------|---------|-------|-------------|---------|-------|------------------|-------|-------|-----------|-------|-------|
| | Spend | Seats | Sp/St | Spend | Seats | Sp/St | Spend | Seats | Sp/St | Spend | Seats | Sp/St | Spend | Seats | Sp/St | Spend | Seats | Sp/St |
| Gafsa | 45,235 | 2 (29%) | 1,560 | 51,459 | 2 (29%) | 1,774 | 12,716 | 1 (14%) | 908 | 3,307 | 0 (0%) | N/A | 5,339 | 0 | N/A | 2,391 | 0 | N/A |
| Sfax 1 | 53,853 | 2 (29%) | 1,857 | 64,760 | 3 (43%) | 1,506 | 15,924 | 1 (14%) | 1,137 | 7,136 | 0 (0%) | N/A | 2,298 | 0 | N/A | 4,965 | 0 | N/A |
| Sfax 2 | 84,921 | 4 (44%) | 1,960 | 72,699 | 3 (33%) | 2,203 | 12,699 | 1 (11%) | 1,152 | 6,477 | 1 (11%) | 589 | 6,529 | 0 | N/A | 12,664 | 0 | N/A |
| Sousse | 107,781 | 5 (50%) | 2,156 | 146,196 | 3 (30%) | 4,873 | 19,037 | 0 (0%) | N/A | 25,252 | 1 (10%) | 2,525 | 11,041 | 0 | N/A | 7,471 | 0 | N/A |
| Tunis 1 | 29,898 | 3 (33%) | 906 | 176,217 | 3 (33%) | 5,340 | 17,937 | 1 (11%) | 1,631 | 17,333 | 1 (11%) | 1,576 | 12,194 | 0 | N/A | 5,414 | 0 | N/A |
| Tunis 2 | 32,126 | 5 (63%) | 510 | 50,095 | 2 (25%) | 2,004 | 10,724 | 0 (0%) | N/A | 18,535 | 1 (13%) | 1,426 | 10,774 | 0 | N/A | 10,239 | 0 | N/A |

Notes: Figures in Tunisian dinars; Sp/St = estimated Tunisian dinars spent for every 1% of total seats won.

Source: I Watch

Naturally, even if the I WATCH data indicates a correlation between money and electoral results, we cannot be certain about the direction of causality. It is possible that the parties with greater popular support before the elections managed to raise, and consequently spend, more money. However, the interviews conducted as part of this report, including those with people who stood as candidates in the elections, confirm that access to money played a significant role in the chances of electoral success of each candidate list. This was a view shared by respondents from the largest and the smaller political parties. Exactly what political parties and candidates spent their funds on is not clear, given that the submitted financial reports have not been made public, and that the only Tunisian CSO to have studied campaign finance spending in the campaign did not break down the spending by category in its report (I WATCH 2015).

There were some reports of vote buying in the elections, but these have been difficult to verify (I WATCH 2015: 30–31). However, the need to reach out to voters in sometimes difficult logistical circumstances required significant resources. The ban on costly forms of campaigning, such as broadcast advertising and the use of billboards, will have reduced the amounts spent on the election campaign, although the smaller parties would not have been able to afford to use such tactics in any case. However, this also meant that the need for other campaigning methods to persuade voters increased.

The reluctance of media outlets to devote attention to female candidates was raised as a general concern by many of those interviewed for this study. The report of the International IDEA–NIMD seminar (International IDEA and NIMD 2015: 12) noted:

The European Union report of the Election Observation Mission to Tunisia reported that the media coverage of women candidates remained low, especially in public broadcast media. Thus, the

The spending limits in the constituencies concerned were: Gafsa, TND 42,300 (USD 20,645); Sfax I, TND 45,800 (USD 22,353); Sfax II, TND 53,000 (USD 25,867); Sousse, TND 58,500 (USD 28,551); Tunis I, TND 51,500 (USD 25,135); and Tunis II, TND 55,375 (USD 27,026).

public channels Watania 1 and 2 and the National Radio devoted 10% or less of their coverage to women candidates, while the francophone newspaper owned by the State, La Presse Tunisie, devoted 29% of its coverage to women candidates.

The influence of formal political finance regulations on gender equality

While it is impossible to say for certain without in-depth research, the campaign finance rules employed in the 2011 and 2014 elections may have benefitted smaller political parties by reducing the advantage of the larger parties' better access to funding. Respondents indicated that the larger political parties would have spent more money on their electoral campaigns if they had not been restricted by the spending limits. (I WATCH data indicates that they sometimes did exceed these limits.) In particular, the ban on television and radio advertising, which was largely respected, is likely to have reduced the advantages of the two largest parties, which is not to say that they did not still dominate the electoral process.

Interestingly, since almost all the lists were headed by men, the greater the number of political parties that managed to win a seat in parliament, the lower the proportion of women would actually be, assuming that these parties only gained one seat per constituency. As is shown in the appendix, only the two largest political parties managed to have more than one candidate elected in any constituency. Of the 61 seats that went to other political parties (30 per cent of all seats), only 9 went to women. One lesson from the 2014 elections is therefore that within the closed party lists system, because most political parties tend to put male candidates at the top of the lists, restrictions on political finance that benefit smaller parties may *decrease* the proportion of women elected to parliament. This is because the smaller parties would only ever get the head of their list elected, who tends to be a man.

This finding goes against the general view of political finance and gender equality in elections. It has for example been argued that 'Enforceable disclosure can positively contribute to women's participation by increasing the transparency of the electoral process and discouraging the use of illicit funding mechanisms and vote buying—which indirectly disadvantage women' (Ballington and Kahane 2014: 314–15).¹³ However, enforced disclosure provisions can also reduce the advantages that larger parties derive from connections to networks of wealthy people. In the particular scenario where increased electoral success by the larger parties increases the share of women elected, therefore, efforts to reduce the advantages of these parties may also serve to reduce the share of women elected. In the longer term, however, provisions that limit the role of money in politics may still have a positive impact on gender equality overall and consequently on electoral outcomes (see below).

¹³ Disclosure requirements are important since they allow for more effective oversight of spending and donation limits, among other things.

The role of candidates in the election campaign and the challenges for women

If the qualitative and quantitative limits on campaign spending reduced overall spending and the advantage of the larger parties, they increased the demands on the candidates themselves, since television, radio and billboard advertising, if allowed, would presumably have been carried out centrally by the political party—a much more cost-effective approach than each list of candidates using such methods.

The interviews conducted for this study confirm that although their campaigning would in most cases only have a limited impact on their personal chances of electoral success, the candidates were largely responsible for their own electoral campaigns. Respondents from the larger parties indicated that the party provided campaign materials and that at least the candidates further down the lists were not expected to engage in their own fundraising in a large-scale way. The candidates from the smaller parties, however, painted a very different picture. While their parties sometimes provided flyers and similar campaign materials, the candidates had to raise most of the funds themselves. These candidates, regardless of their position on the candidate lists, reported having spent significant amounts of their own funds, and in some cases that they were in debt as a result.

In some cases, the experience of running an election campaign was not altogether positive for the female candidates interviewed for this study. With the exception of those standing for the larger political parties, they normally reported having spent large amounts of their own money—and sometimes that of family members—on the campaign. They reported how the male head of the list, whose electoral success was in many cases all but certain, was less active in the election campaign, and in one case reportedly kept the public funding provided to the list for himself. More research is needed on the approaches to campaigning taken by female and male heads of lists, respectively.

Women who wished to run for office also faced challenges that were not directly related to their finances. Observer groups noted challenges for female candidates linked to their freedom of movement. For example, one domestic observer mission noted that:

... women candidates encountered difficulties during campaigning. Firstly, campaign rallies took place in the evening, meaning that the audience was predominated by men. Secondly, women candidates also faced difficulties interacting with voters, as unlike their male counterparts, they must be accompanied during campaigning activities at all times. (GNRD and IIPJHR 2014: 30)

In Tunisia, unlike many countries with different electoral systems, these challenges seldom had an impact on the chance of being elected. The Tunisian electoral system meant that candidates did not need to gain support for their individual candidacy. However, it may have affected the experience of the women involved, the extent to which they will be able to run more effective campaigns in the future, and perhaps their interest in running for office again. If Tunisian women are put off participating in elections by the experience, it will be difficult to build the necessary amount of experienced female politicians who can serve as role models and mentor other women to become involved in politics. A larger group of experienced female Tunisian politicians would increase the likelihood that parties could be persuaded to place women at the top of candidate lists.

5. Recommendations

This analysis has found that many factors influence the extent of equality between women and men in the political process in Tunisia. Further improvement will require action in a number of areas, not least basic education on gender sensitivity, training for women interested in becoming active in politics, and protection for all women against violence and the threat of violence.

In comparison to electoral systems where men and women compete to be nominated by the most popular party in single-member constituencies, the Tunisian system of closed lists and vertical quotas has brought more women into parliament.

The analysis has shown that the use of an electoral quota with vertical alternation made it easier for women to participate as candidates, and reduced the need for significant access to resources seen in other countries. In Kenya, where earlier analysis of these issues was carried out by International IDEA, most of the women who stood in elections reported spending more money on becoming candidates than on the general election campaign. This was not the case in Tunisia.

While there are few indications that money played a central role in the candidate selection process, the appearance of business leaders at the head of many lists hints that it played some role—particularly in persuading political parties to place a person at the head of a candidate list, and in the expectations on candidates to fund the campaign for the list they represent. Reform of political finance could help to reduce inequality between women and men in future elections and in the political process as a whole.

Increase the proportion of women at the top of candidate lists

Without a requirement for horizontal gender equality among the lists in different constituencies presented by the same party, it is likely that political parties will continue to place men at the top of lists. As is noted above, in the current system the greater the number of political parties that manage to enter parliament with

no more than one seat in any constituency, the lower the number of women in parliament will be.

Introducing a horizontal quota would in practice force the political party leaderships to get more involved in the candidate selection process, since if the lists of the party overall did not reach the required share of women at the top, none of the lists would be approved. This might entail a level of party centralization that is undesirable in the current Tunisian context.

Another solution could be to connect the public funding provided to political parties to the gender of the candidates placed at the top of the list. One approach could be to give political parties funding in relation to the overall gender balance among the lists that they present. This approach was suggested at the International IDEA and NIMD seminar in Tunis (International IDEA and NIMD 2015: 20).

However, using a central equality criterion would have the same centralizing impact within political parties as a horizontal quota, as the party leadership would have to influence enough constituency party bodies to place women at the top of lists for the party to be able to gain access to increased funding. A better approach might therefore be to provide a significantly higher amount of public funding to each candidate list that is headed by a woman. This would be a form of positive discrimination made necessary by the reluctance of political parties to respect gender equality in previous elections. There would be a reduced focus on each candidate's ability to provide or raise funds if choosing a woman to head a list would increase the amount of public funding provided. Constituency parties would also have a financial incentive to choose a woman to head their list, even if that woman were not an incumbent or had less formal experience.

A potential risk with this approach is that political parties might wish to place a woman at the top of the list in constituencies where the party had little chance of success, and channel the increased public funding received to more competitive constituencies. Given the regional variation in voter support, even the largest political parties have areas where their chance of electoral success is small. For example, Nidaa Tounes, the largest party, won only one of the nine seats in Medenine, and the second-largest party, Ennahda, won only one of the six seats in Le Kef.

Preventing public funding from being channelled from one constituency to another would require effective oversight, especially since such transfers need not be in monetary form. A candidate list could for example produce party materials and transfer these to other lists representing the same party. Current Tunisian legislation effectively prohibits lists transferring funding to other lists, since they can only receive grants and donations from private individuals. However, it seems unlikely that the current oversight of financial transactions is sufficient to detect such transfers in practice. Detailed provisions would be required on book-keeping and reporting. All reforms may have unintended and negative consequences. It is possible that a reform of this kind might increase the focus on access to financial resources among male aspirants wishing to be placed at the top of candidate lists. This would have to be studied carefully in future elections.

Finally, it should be stressed that this idea could only work if the public funding provided made up a significant share of the funds raised and spent by candidate

lists. All the lists in each constituency receive the same amount of public funding regardless of the party that the list represents. Respondents indicated that the public funding was a significant source of income for some smaller parties, which means that a reform of this kind might be effective. For the two larger parties, however, which together hold over 70 per cent of the seats, the public funding provided seemingly represents only a minor proportion of the funds used (I WATCH 2015). This means that public funding could only help increase the number of women heading lists where the connection between gender equality and public funding were made very strong, for example by providing that in future elections lists headed by women would receive at least twice as much public funding as lists headed by men.

A reform of this kind need not relate to direct public funding. As mentioned above, media attention in the 2014 Tunisian election campaign gave disproportionate attention to male candidates. It could also be possible to make a partial exception to the ban on television advertising for lists headed by women, or to provide additional airtime on public media outlets for such lists, or to individual female candidates. Giving media time to women candidates might not increase their chances of electoral success, given the closed list electoral system, but it could raise their profile among the electorate and within their political party.

Provide assistance to parliamentarians

In looking at the growth of a new generation of women leaders, it is also important to consider the extent to which a cadre of women with experience of political leadership is being developed. There were 67 female representatives elected to the National Constituent Assembly in 2011. Of these, only 13 were returned as MPs in the 2014 elections, which amounts to an 80 per cent turnover. The turnover of male parliamentarians was even higher, at nearly 89 per cent (Marsad 2012; Marsad 2015).

Just as Tunisia needs women with the experience of standing in election campaigns, it also needs women with law-making experience, and their experience of parliament will determine whether elected MPs will wish to stand again. The NDI gender analysis of the NCA found 'little flexibility in travel or accommodation allowances to allow families to spend more time with MPs in Tunis when the Assembly is sitting for long periods'. Some MPs assume financial responsibility for having their families live in Tunis with them. According to one woman MP, 'I would never see [my family] except my husband moved here to be with me. My husband is very supportive' (NDI 2014: 13).

Financial support to allow parliamentarians with young children or families more generally to combine law-making and family life might increase the willingness of female MPs to stand for re-election. Naturally, many approaches are needed to address the overall gender imbalance in family roles in Tunisia, but a childcare allowance for MPs would be one crucial reform.

Help address male dominance by restricting money flows and increasing transparency

A counterintuitive conclusion discussed above is that the political finance regulations that reduced the advantages of larger parties, such as donation and

spending limits and disclosure requirements, might if anything have reduced the number of women elected to the Tunisian Parliament in 2014 by allowing other parties to win seats, thereby increasing the likelihood that only the head of a list was elected—who tended to be a man.

However, even if political finance regulations could have had a negative short-term impact on quantitative gender equality, the general view that such regulations are beneficial for gender equality remains valid in Tunisia looking beyond the recent election results to gender equality in the political sphere in general. In one sense, while the existing electoral quota produced an impressive proportion of women in the Tunisian Parliament, this might distract from the fact that politics in Tunisia is still dominated by men. As mentioned above, parliamentary committees and the government are still dominated by men. Male domination in Tunisian politics also extends to the political parties. The chairs and secretaries of the five largest parties in the Tunisian Parliament, which together hold 89 per cent of all seats, are all men. Particularly in the south of Tunisia, the IRI reports that 'most parties have not created space for women in their internal structures' (IRI 2014: 6).

The explanations for male dominance in Tunisian politics are many and complex, as are the solutions required. Enhanced transparency, and oversight of the role of money in the political process, could play a part in reducing male dominance over political party structures. Gender equality is on the political agenda in Tunisia in a way seldom seen in the Middle East and North Africa region, although admittedly the impact of increased political finance transparency on the participation of women is likely to be limited and should be seen as long-term.

According to Cigane and Ohman (2014: 6): 'In systems with donation limits, the relative weight of smaller donations increases and women can donate and contribute both symbolically and substantially to their political party, thus increasing their role and visibility both as recipients of donations and as donors to the campaign'. Tunisia has donation limits but no sanctions have been imposed for violations. More effective implementation of the rules will be required if this impact is to be noted in the Tunisian context.

The focus on enforcement is not only relevant to donation and spending limits. Perhaps even more importantly, effective implementation of political party and campaign finance disclosure rules, with reports submitted and then audited and published by a dedicated public body, can 'contribute to ensuring that leaders and powerful factions within the party (often men) do not abuse their power to gain access to more resources than other candidates in the party' (Ballington and Kahane 2014: 314). Transparency in how political parties and their election campaigns are financed can encourage gender equality within political parties in the longer term. As participants in the International IDEA–NIMD seminar on gender equality and political finance pointed out, increased enforcement 'may also have a positive spin-off effect by giving women increased confidence in the system and can contribute to changing the perceptions about who can participate and who can win' (International IDEA and NIMD 2015: 11).

The importance of increased transparency is not limited to the work of government institutions, civil society and media stakeholders. Political parties need to strengthen their internal structures and enhance their financial transparency (International IDEA and NIMD 2015: 21).

Support the broader political participation of women

It is also necessary to start considering political parties in Tunisia not exclusively as electoral apparatuses.¹⁴ In particular, their role in guiding national politics and in nurturing the next generation of political leaders is an important part of the democratic process, and the role played by women in political parties could be as important for long-term gender equality as the role of women in elected institutions.

One way of supporting this would be to provide ongoing public funding to political party activities between elections. The provision of public funding would reduce the need for private fundraising. Cigane and Ohman (2014: 10) note that 'easing the burden of political fundraising creates a different set of incentives regarding participation in political party management bodies and can be used as an important mechanism to promote better gender balance'. According to the International IDEA's Political Finance Database, 56 per cent of all countries worldwide provide such support, including 50 per cent of countries in the Middle East and North Africa region (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Provision of regular public funding between elections



Source: International IDEA. Data correct as of May 2016. The International IDEA Political Finance Database is continually updated. See <<http://www.idea.int/political-finance/question.cfm?id=270>>.

¹⁴ Another issue is the extent to which political parties actually control how the country is governed. In this context, half the ministers in the current cabinet, including the Prime Minister, are independents, albeit nominated by the political parties that form the government coalition.

In some countries, the amount of public funding provided to each political party is related to the gender balance among its candidates at the previous election. In contrast to the idea of tying the public funding given to lists that are headed by a female candidate, such an approach would have little impact in Tunisia because of the existing quota. In order to further strengthen the incentives for political parties to nominate women as heads of lists where the party expects to win, however, the public funding provided between elections could be related to the gender balance of the candidates elected for each party. Such rules exist, for example, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Colombia, Haiti, Mali, Niger and Romania (Ballington and Kahane 2014: 319–22).

At the International IDEA–NIMD seminar on political finance and gender equality, participants recommended that the funding of political parties beyond election campaigns should be partly related to the proportion of women in internal leadership positions (International IDEA and NIMD 2015: 18). This is an interesting approach, but it should be noted that a similar initiative in Kenya failed when political parties simply created new deputy positions for existing party leadership posts and filled these with women who were not involved in the party decision-making process (Ohman and Lintari 2015: 22).

A complementary method for supporting the participation of women in political parties would be for some of the public funding provided to be earmarked for activities working for gender equality in each political party. For example, in Brazil 5 per cent of the public funding must be used to promote the political participation of women, while in Panama 10 per cent must be dedicated to training for women. The same share of funding must be used in South Korea for the ‘political development’ of women. Similar provisions exist in countries such as Ireland, Italy, Mexico and Morocco.

A regulation of this kind requires clarity to ensure that there is no confusion over the activities for which this earmarked funding can be used. Political parties must for example not be able to carry out regular campaigning activities and classify these as supporting the participation of women. In addition, effective implementation of a provision of this kind requires functional bookkeeping and financial reporting.

Public funding need not only be in the form of money. Indirect public funding could also be used, such as the provision of free or subsidized office space or meeting places, advertising, printing of party materials, and so on. One advantage of indirect public funding is that it is normally more cost-effective for the state, and the risk of resources being used for purposes other than those intended is reduced. In the context of political finance and gender equality, indirect public funding can be used to support specific activities such as training sessions on gender equality or for women’s party activities, the printing of each party’s gender policy or administrative assistance to women in party leadership positions.

Some of the activities used in other countries to help increase the proportion of women who can run successful election campaigns would not be required in Tunisia, given the existing quota. However, such activities can still be valuable in supporting the wider participation of women in Tunisian politics. For example, as the NDI has noted: ‘Women indicate a strong interest in specific training on budgeting and finance, media outreach and message development, public speaking and communications skills, and strategic and operations planning.

Many women also ask for training in candidate and campaign skills to prepare for the next election' (NDI 2014: 14). Such support would not increase the number of women in the Tunisian Parliament, unless it empowered more women to successfully compete for top place on candidate lists. However, it might help female candidates learn more from the election campaigns that they run, and to become more skilled and experienced politicians.

The many complaints by respondents about how the media failed to pay attention to female candidates shows that the 2013 IFES recommendations on increased media sensitization on gender issues remain valid. Improved media awareness of gender issues in the political process can play a crucial role in increasing the willingness of voters to support female politicians, and in the readiness of political parties to give women prominent positions within the political party and on candidate lists.

6. Conclusions

While women in Tunisia are in a stronger position regarding political representation and participation than in almost any other country in the region, there is still progress to be made before women and men can participate on equal terms.

The path to this progress requires a number of issues and challenges to be taken into account. One of these is the role of money in elections. There is a risk that the role of money will increase in future, and that this will jeopardize gender equality in electoral and political participation.

It is possible that this will be not so much in numbers, as long as the quotas are maintained, but in terms of practical participation and genuine influence. It is therefore essential that political finance is considered in discussions about gender equality in Tunisian politics, and that the gender aspect is taken into account in all discussions on money in Tunisian politics.

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Appendix

Table A.1. Seats won by each party in the 2014 Tunisian parliamentary elections, by constituency and gender

| Constituency | Nidaa Tounes | | | Ennahda | | | Union Pat. Libre | | | Front Populaire | | | Afek Tounes | | | Others | | | Total | | |
|--------------|--------------|---|-----|---------|---|-----|------------------|---|------|-----------------|---|------|-------------|---|------|--------|---|------|-------|---|-----|
| | T | W | % | T | W | % | T | W | % | T | W | % | T | W | % | T | W | % | T | W | % |
| Ben Arous | 4 | 2 | 50% | 3 | 1 | 33% | 1 | 0 | 0% | 1 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 1 | 0 | 0% | 10 | 3 | 30% |
| Sousse | 5 | 2 | 40% | 3 | 2 | 67% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 1 | 0 | 0% | 1 | 0 | 0% | 10 | 4 | 40% |
| Monastir | 5 | 2 | 40% | 2 | 1 | 50% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 1 | 0 | 0% | 1 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 9 | 3 | 33% |
| Bizerte | 4 | 2 | 50% | 3 | 1 | 33% | 1 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 1 | 0 | 0% | 9 | 3 | 33% |
| Sfax 2 | 4 | 2 | 50% | 3 | 1 | 33% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 1 | 1 | 100% | 1 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 9 | 4 | 44% |
| Tunis 1 | 3 | 2 | 66% | 3 | 1 | 33% | 1 | 0 | 0% | 1 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 1 | 1 | 100% | 9 | 4 | 44% |
| Kairouan | 3 | 1 | 33% | 3 | 1 | 33% | 1 | 0 | 0% | 1 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 1 | 1 | 100% | 9 | 3 | 33% |
| Medenine | 1 | 0 | 0% | 5 | 3 | 60% | 1 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 2 | 0 | 0% | 9 | 3 | 33% |
| Mahdia | 4 | 2 | 50% | 2 | 1 | 50% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 1 | 0 | 0% | 1 | 1 | 100% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 8 | 4 | 50% |
| Jendouba | 3 | 1 | 33% | 2 | 1 | 50% | 1 | 1 | 100% | 1 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 1 | 0 | 0% | 8 | 3 | 38% |
| Kasserine | 3 | 1 | 33% | 2 | 1 | 50% | 1 | 0 | 0% | 1 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 1 | 0 | 0% | 8 | 2 | 25% |
| Tunis 2 | 5 | 3 | 60% | 2 | 1 | 50% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 1 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 8 | 4 | 50% |
| Ariana | 4 | 2 | 50% | 2 | 1 | 50% | 1 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 1 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 8 | 3 | 38% |
| Sidi Bouzid | 2 | 1 | 50% | 2 | 1 | 50% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 1 | 1 | 100% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 3 | 1 | 33% | 8 | 4 | 50% |
| Nabeul 1 | 4 | 2 | 50% | 2 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 1 | 1 | 100% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 7 | 3 | 43% |
| La Manouba | 3 | 1 | 33% | 2 | 1 | 50% | 1 | 1 | 100% | 1 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 7 | 3 | 43% |
| Sfax 1 | 2 | 1 | 50% | 3 | 1 | 33% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 1 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 1 | 0 | 0% | 7 | 2 | 29% |
| Gabès | 1 | 0 | 0% | 4 | 2 | 50% | 1 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 1 | 0 | 0% | 7 | 2 | 29% |

Table A.1. [cont.]

| Constituency | Nidaa Tounes | | | Ennahda | | | Union Pat. Libre | | | Front Populaire | | | Afek Tounes | | | Others | | | Total | | |
|-----------------|--------------|-----------|------------|-----------|-----------|------------|------------------|----------|------------|-----------------|----------|------------|-------------|----------|------------|-----------|----------|------------|------------|-----------|------------|
| | T | W | % | T | W | % | T | W | % | T | W | % | T | W | % | T | W | % | T | W | % |
| Gafsa | 2 | 1 | 50% | 2 | 1 | 50% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 1 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 2 | 0 | 0% | 7 | 2 | 29% |
| Le Kef | 3 | 1 | 33% | 1 | 0 | 0% | 1 | 0 | 0% | 1 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 6 | 1 | 17% |
| Siliana | 2 | 1 | 50% | 1 | 0 | 0% | 1 | 0 | 0% | 1 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 1 | 0 | 0% | 6 | 1 | 17% |
| Beja | 3 | 1 | 33% | 1 | 1 | 100% | 1 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 1 | 0 | 0% | 6 | 2 | 33% |
| Nabeul 2 | 3 | 1 | 33% | 1 | 1 | 100% | 1 | 0 | 0% | 1 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 6 | 2 | 33% |
| France 1 | 2 | 1 | 50% | 2 | 1 | 50% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 1 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 5 | 2 | 40% |
| Kebili | 1 | 0 | 0% | 2 | 1 | 50% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 2 | 0 | 0% | 5 | 1 | 20% |
| France 2 | 2 | 1 | 50% | 2 | 1 | 50% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 1 | 0 | 0% | 5 | 2 | 40% |
| Zaghuan | 2 | 1 | 50% | 1 | 0 | 0% | 1 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 1 | 0 | 0% | 5 | 1 | 20% |
| Tozeur | 1 | 0 | 0% | 1 | 0 | 0% | 1 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 1 | 0 | 0% | 4 | 0 | 0% |
| Tataouine | 1 | 0 | 0% | 3 | 1 | 33% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 4 | 1 | 25% |
| Italy | 1 | 0 | 0% | 2 | 1 | 50% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 3 | 1 | 33% |
| USA & EU | 1 | 1 | 100% | 1 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 2 | 1 | 50% |
| Arab/rest world | 1 | 0 | 0% | 1 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 2 | 0 | 0% |
| Germany | 1 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0 | 0% | 1 | 0 | 0% |
| Total | 86 | 35 | 41% | 69 | 29 | 42% | 16 | 2 | 13% | 15 | 2 | 13% | 8 | 2 | 25% | 23 | 3 | 13% | 217 | 73 | 34% |

Notes: T = the total number elected by the party in each constituency, W = the number of women elected by the party in each constituency; % = percentage of the party's candidates elected in each constituency who are women; figures in bold indicate a female candidate who was elected after heading the candidate list in that constituency.

About the author

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The proportion of women in the Tunisian Parliament is impressive, but is not matched by gender equality in other areas, such as in the cabinet or the leadership of parliamentary committees. Creating opportunities for further advances in gender equality requires work on many fronts, such as addressing social attitudes to women and men, improved education and training for women and legal protection with regard to violence against women.

This report makes recommendations on how reforms related to the role of money in politics could help women participate and continue to be engaged in politics. These include providing increased public funding to lists headed by women; and providing ongoing public funding to political parties, with specific funds earmarked for activities related to gender equality. Increased transparency in political parties and election campaigns could also, with time, help to balance the participation of women and men in the political sphere.

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