



Women from the oasis areas and the 2009 district



Basketry Cooperative, Guelmim © MDG-F JP Morocco

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elections (in the regions of Guelmim, Assa and Tata)

BACKGROUND

In the oasis zone of Morocco, women play a major role in preserving and transmitting local cultural heritage. However, they were only marginally involved in local social, political and economic decisions, and suffered from discrimination due to a pervasive patriarchal decision-making model. It has been shown that women actively involved in politics, who cooperate with national Ministries and organized civil society, are better able to call attention to issues related to gender equality and development, and to advance poverty reduction strategies. The JP thus strove to strengthen the capacity of women as actors in the political arena. Women in the region were overwhelmingly in favor of developing their capacity for local management and governance, and improving their knowledge of their national and international rights.

In 2009, the Moroccan government committed to increasing local political representation of women to 12%.

PROCESS

During the electoral process, and through various awareness-raising workshops organized under the JP, women were informed of international human rights conventions ratified by Morocco and of national policies adopted in favor of women's rights and gender equality.

Political parties and civil society organizations, supported by the JP, conducted information campaigns, educational training and awareness-raising activities to increase women's understanding of their right to political representation. In a spiraling effect, women were further encouraged to increase their political participation by the visibly growing number of females running for local office and the development of a more effective public service which began to take gender issues into account for the first time.

In the local elections of 12 June 2009, women ran for office in 5 of the JP's targeted municipalities. 14 were ultimately elected, putting an end to a historic lack of female political representation in those areas. The elected women received numerous training courses on gender equality, and gender concerns were quickly incorporated into the legislative process.

The increased political participation of women in the Oasis zone has promoted democracy and modernization, enabling them to effectively exercise their citizenship. To promote institutional collaboration in the new political structure, new systems were put in place to establish and identify the roles and responsibilities of each actor.

The JP has also contributed to capacity building of other women in the 3 regions. One newly-elected woman created an Association for exchange and dialogue on problems female leaders face in exercising their duties. These types of actions are expected to strengthen women's leadership in the local community and further develop good governance practices at the local level.

Outcomes