Women's Political Participation in Morocco

A Literature Synthesis on Progress, Barriers, and Pathways to Influence



AUTHORS

Sara El JAOUHARY
Marwa ELFASSI
Mohamed Badr ER-RAHAOUI
Salsabile LAMINE

PEER-REVIEW

Applied Research & Development

Youth Inclusion for Gender Justice in Politics (YIGJP) Project, led by the Youth Policy Center in partnership with KVINFO

Policy Paper N° 020726

POLICY BRIEF

Women's Political Participation in Morocco

A Literature Synthesis on Progress, Barriers, and Pathways to Influence

Sara El JAOUHARY (Team Lead)
Marwa ELFASSI
Mohamed Bader ER-RAHAOUI
Salsabile LAMINE

Peer-reviewed by the Applied Research & Development Sub-committee
Youth Inclusion for Gender Justice in Politics (YIGJP) Project, led by the Youth Policy Center in partnership with KVINFO

Abstract

Morocco has made measurable progress in expanding women's formal political representation over the past two decades, driven by gender quotas, constitutional amendments, and internationally aligned gender action plans. Reserved seats for women in parliament were introduced in 2002 and expanded to 90 seats in 2021, contributing to a rise in women's legislative presence. At the local level, women accounted for 26.6% of municipal council seats and 38.5% of regional council seats following the 2021 elections, with women elected as mayors of Morocco's three largest cities (Ministry of Interior, 2021). Notwithstanding these gains, the translation of numerical representation into substantive political influence remains limited and uneven. Subsequently, this report synthesizes existing literature and policy documentation to examine the structural, institutional, and socio-cultural factors that shape women's political participation in Morocco. Drawing on a comparative desk review of six country cases, namely, Tunisia, Jordan, South Africa, Mexico, Sweden, and New Zealand, the report assesses what legal and programmatic mechanisms have produced durable increases in women's political power rather than merely in their formal presence. The analysis integrates theoretical frameworks of descriptive and substantive representation (Pitkin, 1967), critical mass theory (Dahlerup, 1988), feminist institutionalism (Waylen, 2009), intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989), and political opportunity structures to situate Moroccan reforms within broader academic debates. Furthermore, key findings indicate that Morocco's formal legal advances are substantively constrained by patriarchal party cultures, exclusion from informal political networks, a deficit of mentorship and sponsorship, and uneven enforcement of existing legislation. The report concludes that Morocco's primary challenge is not the absence of gender-equity policy but its effective and durable implementation. Recommendations are addressed to political parties, government institutions, parliament, civil society organizations, educational institutions, and international partners, with differentiated short-, medium-, and long-term actions and measurable targets.

Keywords: women's political participation, Morocco, gender quotas, substantive representation, feminist institutionalism, political parties, MENA

Introduction and Research questions

Over the past two decades, women's political participation in Morocco has been shaped by an uneven combination of legal reform, entrenched social tradition, and structural obstacles (Charrad & Zarrugh, 2020; Zerhouni, 2016). Political participation is generally understood to encompass not only the right to vote and stand for election, but also the capacity to influence policy outcomes once in office (Bari, 2005), and feminist scholarship has similarly framed women's political inclusion as inseparable from the broader creation of organizing structures that sustain women's presence over time (Abiola-Akiyode-Afolabi, n.d.). In Morocco specifically, an active women's movement helped lay the discursive groundwork for the legal reforms that followed (Naciri, n.d.). Gender quotas and constitutional amendments introduced since the early 2000s have opened new formal pathways into elected office, yet the translation of this presence into substantive political influence has remained inconsistent (Benbelli, 2023; Mohamed, 2024).

This report addresses six interrelated questions, each of which structures a subsequent section of the analysis:

- What historical and structural factors explain the current situation of women in Moroccan politics?
- How have quotas and post–Arab Spring reforms affected women's political presence?
- Which laws and policies exist, and where do they fall short?
- How do informal norms and party cultures shape women's political trajectories?
- Does descriptive representation translate into substantive power?
- What lessons can be drawn from regional and international comparisons?

Formal Factors: Legal Framework, Policies, and International Commitments

National Legal and Quota Reforms

Cross-national research on gender quotas shows that their design, reserved seats, legislative candidate quotas, or voluntary party quotas, shapes their effectiveness across different institutional contexts (Tripp & Kang, 2008). Morocco began formally strengthening women's political representation in 2002, when 30 parliamentary seats were reserved for women for the first time (Zerhouni, 2016). The 2011 Constitution reinforced this framework: Articles 19 and 30 affirm equality between men and women and guarantee women's political rights (ConstitutionNet, 2021). Subsequent electoral reform increased the reserved-seat quota to 90 seats in 2021, yet only five women won seats outside the quota list that year, indicating that women's representation continues to rely overwhelmingly on reserved mechanisms rather than open competition (L'Opinion, 2025c; Zerhouni, 2016). The parity authority promised under the 2011 Constitution has yet to become operational, turning what could have been an influential oversight body into another unfulfilled commitment (Mohamed, 2024).

At the local level, reforms have produced more tangible gains. Women's representation rose from 4.5% of seats in 2015 to 38.5% in regional councils and 26.6% in municipal councils in 2021, with 8,661 women elected that year (European Partnership for Democracy [EPD], 2023; Westminster Foundation for Democracy [WFD], n.d.-d). That same year, women were elected mayors of Casablanca, Rabat, and Marrakech for the first time (L'Opinion, 2025a). Political parties additionally benefit from financial incentives, including a 10-million-dirham fund intended to promote women's political participation (EPD, 2023). Even so, women's visibility within party leadership and key parliamentary committees remains limited, suggesting that numerical visibility does not automatically confer influence (Benbelli, 2023; Mohamed, 2024).

Corporate Governance and Economic Parity Measures

Political empowerment alone has not been treated as sufficient for gender parity in Morocco; the same logic has been extended to corporate governance. Law 19-20 on corporate governance requires 30% female representation on the boards of public companies by 2024 and 40% by 2027, extending the quota logic from parliament into the private and semi-public sectors (EPD, 2023).

National Strategic Plans: ICRAM and Attamkine 2030

Morocco's gender strategy has also relied on multi-year national plans. ICRAM I and ICRAM II were central to this approach; ICRAM II, which ran from 2018 to 2023, was supported by €35 million in EU funding and placed particular emphasis on increasing women's access to decision-making positions through affirmative action (EPD, 2023). The Attamkine 2030 initiative extends this ambition further, setting a target of 30% of decision-making positions for women by 2026 and introducing additional quotas for women entrepreneurs and board members (EPD, 2023; WFD, n.d.-b). Rather than treating quotas as an end point, Attamkine 2030 explicitly aims to reshape public perceptions and address the stereotypes that continue to constrain women's roles in society (WFD, n.d.-b).

International Commitments: CEDAW, the SDGs, and EU–UN Partnerships

Morocco's pursuit of gender parity is not solely a domestic undertaking; it is also shaped by longstanding commitments to the United Nations and the European Union. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), signed in 1980 and ratified by Morocco in 1993, obliges states parties to ensure women's equal participation in public and political life; Articles 7 and 8 specifically call for affirmative action, quotas, and reserved seats to accelerate reform (National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, 2023). Weak enforcement mechanisms, however, continue to limit the practical implementation of these obligations across contexts (Krook & True, 2012).

The UN Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 5, directly target the elimination of gender discrimination and call for women's equal participation in political life at all levels (UN Women & UNDP, 2021). Progress toward this goal at the local level remains slow, in part because much of the associated funding is project-based and donor-dependent (Baliamoune-Lutz, 2016).

The European Union and UN Women collaborate on joint initiatives that channel substantial funding toward women's empowerment programming, with the EU directing at least 85% of its external actions toward gender equality objectives (EPD, 2023). Donor-driven funding cycles, bureaucratic constraints, and uneven resource allocation, however, continue to restrict the reach of these partnerships (Baliamoune-Lutz, 2016).

Informal and Behavioral Barriers

Legal reforms and quotas may appear substantial on paper, but the reality of women's political participation in Morocco is shaped largely by informal and cultural dynamics that operate outside formal institutions (Benbelli, 2023). These barriers are often more subtle than legal restrictions, yet more powerful in practice: they are rooted in longstanding patriarchal traditions, reinforced by party practices, transmitted through peer behavior, and reproduced daily through unwritten rules ("Challenging Patriarchy," 2019; Fakih & Sleiman, 2022). These dynamics shape not only whether women enter politics, but whether they are able to remain and advance once inside.

Patriarchal Norms and Perceived Legitimacy

Moroccan society continues to strongly associate women with caregiving and domestic responsibility, while men are constructed as the "natural" holders of leadership (Zerhouni, 2016; "Challenging Patriarchy," 2019; "Multiculturalism, Gender," 2020). This gendered division of labor

is not merely symbolic; it shapes how women allocate their time, the mobility available to them, and their financial independence (Ibourk, 2023). Women who enter political life are consequently perceived as transgressing socially expected roles, which immediately raises questions about their legitimacy as leaders (Fakih & Sleiman, 2022). Because leadership is culturally coded as a masculine attribute, women's authority is often doubted irrespective of their qualifications (Boyer, 2018). Media coverage, family expectations, and community leaders further reinforce the perception that politics is unsuitable, or even risky, for women (Diplomatist, 2025), which for many potential candidates produces a crisis of confidence rooted in the anticipation that their legitimacy will be continually challenged (Benbelli, 2023).

Informal Networks and Political Capital

Political life in Morocco, as elsewhere, is not confined to formal meetings and parliamentary sessions; much of it unfolds in informal settings where trust is built, alliances are formed, and decisions are effectively made before they reach formal channels (Mohamed, 2023). Women are routinely excluded from these informal arenas, as cultural expectations regarding propriety, restricted mobility, and caregiving responsibilities constrain their participation in the "backstage" of politics (Fakih & Sleiman, 2022). This exclusion carries real costs: women miss early information about opportunities, the endorsements that can determine the success of a campaign, and access to networks of financial and political support (Mohamed, 2023). Even when formally present in institutions, women's absence from these informal networks leaves them structurally disadvantaged relative to male peers (Benbelli, 2023).

Mentorship and Sponsorship Gaps

Mentorship and sponsorship play a critical role in helping women navigate the unwritten rules of political life, from when to intervene in debates to how to frame messages that resonate with voters and avoid common pitfalls in fundraising (Westminster Foundation for Democracy [WFD], n.d.-a). Sponsorship goes further still, drawing on an established leader's own political capital to secure a woman a speaking slot, a leadership nomination, or the mobilization of backers on her behalf (National Democratic Institute, n.d.-a). In Morocco, however, structured mentorship and sponsorship remain rare, leaving most women to navigate the political system largely on their own; the resulting "learning costs" lead many to abandon political careers early, once the disparity with their male peers' trajectories becomes apparent (WFD, n.d.-a).

Unwritten Rules of Political Behavior

Beyond formal institutions, a set of unwritten behavioral norms governs how politicians, and particularly women, are judged, covering expectations about tone of voice, dress, how much one speaks, and when one is available (Behavioural Insights Team, 2019). Behaviors that are praised in men, such as assertiveness, ambition, and decisiveness, are frequently read as aggression or arrogance when displayed by women, while women who conform to more passive expectations are dismissed as lacking leadership qualities (OECD, 2021). This double bind places women in a position where they are punished for speaking up and ignored for staying quiet (World Bank, 2015). Logistical norms, such as evening meetings, travel-heavy campaigning, and late-night negotiations, further privilege politicians who are free from caregiving responsibilities, disproportionately disadvantaging women balancing domestic labor with political engagement (Behavioural Insights Team, 2019).

Intersectionality of Barriers

These dynamics do not affect all women equally; intersecting factors of class, geography, and education make the barriers considerably more uneven (Ibourk, 2023). Urban, educated, and wealthier women tend to have greater access to networks, resources, and mentorship, which helps

them navigate political spaces more effectively, while women from rural or lower-income backgrounds face compounded disadvantages, including reduced access to elite networks and higher relative costs of political participation (Ibourk, 2023; Mohamed, 2023). As a result, quota-driven gains are often concentrated among already-privileged women, and without deliberate efforts to reach marginalized women, reforms risk deepening rather than reducing inequality (Benbelli, 2023).

Taken together, these informal and behavioral factors help explain why legal reform alone is insufficient to produce substantive equality. Quotas can place women's names on ballots, but they do not, by themselves, change the cultural scripts that question women's legitimacy, the party structures that relegate them to symbolic positions, the informal networks that exclude them, the scarcity of mentors and sponsors, the unwritten rules that penalize women differently from men, or the intersectional disadvantages that weigh disproportionately on rural and low-income women (Benbelli, 2023; Fakih & Sleiman, 2022).

From Representation to Power

While quotas and reforms have produced a measurable increase in women's presence in Moroccan political institutions, this presence does not automatically confer genuine influence or decision-making power (Zerhouni, 2016). The central question addressed in this section is whether descriptive representation in Moroccan politics translates into substantive power, or whether the current system offers women largely symbolic seats while decision-making authority remains concentrated elsewhere (Mohamed, 2024).

The evidence suggests that numerical increases in representation do not necessarily reflect substantive authority or agency; a comparable pattern of stronger legal quotas outpacing internal party practice has also been documented elsewhere in North Africa ("Women, Gender, and Politics," 2018). The central weakness in Morocco's approach to women's inclusion appears to be less about the absence of policy than about the limited and inconsistent implementation of existing agendas (Mohamed, 2024; Benbelli, 2023). By contrast, cross-national evidence suggests that representation translates more consistently into real decision-making power in contexts where gender equality is embedded within government structures rather than treated as an isolated policy area, as in Sweden's combination of gender quotas with mentorship and leadership training (Stockemer & Sundström, 2019). Morocco's initiatives, in comparison, have tended to remain shorter-lived and more symbolic in character, a limitation that has also been acknowledged by senior officials involved in implementing them.

Consistent with this pattern, experimental evidence from outside the region shows that exposure to female leaders can raise the political aspirations and educational attainment of adolescent girls, suggesting that descriptive representation can generate downstream effects on future generations of women leaders even where it does not immediately translate into policy power (Beaman et al., 2012).

Within Moroccan political parties, two obstacles stand out. The first is an age barrier, whereby an entrenched leadership generation retains control of major projects and limits space for younger politicians to lead (Kadi, 2015). The second is a gender barrier, whereby women continue to be judged not only on competence but against persistent stereotypes, for instance, the assumption that a mother cannot simultaneously be an effective leader ("Challenging Patriarchy," 2019). Young women in particular therefore face a compounded challenge of age- and gender-based discrimination (Kadi, 2015). Addressing this requires political parties to ensure that gender-equality commitments move beyond formal policy language and into substantive practice, including genuine leadership space for younger politicians and a rejection of the assumption that only older leaders are capable of governing responsibly (Kadi, 2015). It also requires recognizing men and women as equal partners in shaping the country's political future and dismantling the

patriarchal structures that continue to constrain that partnership (Fakih & Sleiman, 2022). The evidence reviewed here points toward a clear set of priorities: institutionalizing long-term programs, opening leadership pathways for youth, and normalizing women's leadership as an ordinary part of political life rather than an exception to it (Zerhouni, 2016).

Comparative and International Insights

In Morocco, questions of youth political engagement and women's leadership converge at a shared structural bottleneck. Party hierarchies remain dominated by older male elites, and the voices of young people, particularly young women, struggle to be heard within them (Kadi, 2015). Although Morocco introduced gender quotas more than two decades ago, these reforms have not translated into deep influence within internal party life, and for young women in particular the path into politics continues to be shaped by cultural, institutional, and personal barriers (Kadi, 2015; Charrad & Zarrugh, 2020). Comparative fieldwork across the Maghreb has documented similar patterns of formal inclusion alongside limited internal party power for women (United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women [INSTRAW] & Center of Arab Women for Training and Research [CAWTAR], 2007), and cross-national knowledge-sharing platforms have tracked comparable dynamics across a wider set of countries (iKNOWPolitics, n.d.).

Regional comparisons nonetheless offer encouraging evidence of what is possible when legal reform is paired with intentional institutional practice. Tunisia's 2014 Constitution and its 2017 gender-parity law required political parties to alternate between male and female candidates on electoral lists; this legal design reshaped opportunities substantially, and women now hold more than 30% of seats in Tunisia's parliament and close to half of its municipal council seats (Hteit, 2023; Charrad & Zarrugh, 2020). In Jordan, a comparable combination of quotas and youth-specific measures has created entry points into elected office for both women and young people, illustrating that inclusive electoral design can produce measurable results (ARDD, 2024).

Beyond electoral rules, some institutions have invested directly in leadership development. The Jordan School of Politics was designed to train a new generation of political leaders with gender balance as a guiding principle: its cohorts consistently include equal numbers of men and women, and its curriculum incorporates modules addressing the specific challenges women face in leadership (Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy, 2024). Training programs led by the UN Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) have similarly demonstrated the value of combining classroom learning with mentorship, peer support, and regional exchange (UN Institute for Training and Research, 2025), a model echoed by regional campaign-school programs supported by international donors across the Middle East and North Africa (U.S. Department of State, n.d.). Across these cases, the pattern is consistent: quotas create access, but training, mentorship, and visibility are what convert access into influence (Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy, 2024; UN Institute for Training and Research, 2025).

South Africa: The ANC Women's League

The African National Congress (ANC) led South Africa's anti-apartheid struggle in coalition with allied women's organizing structures, a tradition tracing back to earlier milestones such as the 1956 Women's March (African National Congress Women's League [ANCWL], n.d.-a; Government of South Africa, n.d.). What distinguishes the ANCWL today is its status as a constitutionally supported, autonomous body within the party rather than a subordinate auxiliary, which allows it to act as an internal advocacy structure, influence national policy, and hold party leadership accountable for gender-policy outcomes (ANCWL, n.d.-b). To counter generational stagnation, the ANCWL launched the Young Women's Desk in 2016, a platform for women aged 18 to 40 to organize debate and discussion on issues such as gender-based violence and economic precarity, functioning in effect as a political academy that prepares future leaders for engagement with the

ANCWL and the wider ANC (YouTube, 2021; Durban University of Technology, n.d.). The League's structures have not been without internal criticism, with commentators periodically questioning whether they have kept pace with the aspirations of younger members (Mail & Guardian, 2016).

Mexico: The PRI and ONMPRI

Mexico's Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) illustrates that the scale of reform matters as much as its existence. Gender reforms in Mexico were modest for most of the party's recent history, but reached a landmark in 2019 with the "Parity in Everything" ("Paridad en Todo") constitutional mandate, which requires a 50% quota for women across elected and appointed government positions and created urgent demand for a pipeline of politically prepared women (Wilson Center, n.d.-a). To meet this demand, the PRI's women's wing, the Organización Nacional de Mujeres Priistas (ONMPRI), established a permanent virtual academy, the "Escuela para la Vida" ("School for Life"), offering practical training in financial literacy, wealth creation, political leadership, and digital activism (ONMPRI, n.d.; PRI Oaxaca, n.d.; PRI Zacatecas, n.d.). This approach transformed the ONMPRI from a primarily advocacy-oriented body into an active pipeline for the party's leadership (Wilson Center, n.d.-b).

Sweden and New Zealand: Structural Gender Parity

Sweden's approach to gender equality is organized around the principle that women and men should hold equal power to shape both society and their own lives, operationalized through sub-goals covering the equal distribution of power and influence, economic gender equality, gender equality in education, the equal distribution of unpaid domestic and care work, gender equality in health and social services, and the elimination of men's violence against women. New Zealand, the first country in the world to grant women the right to vote, has since produced two female prime ministers and has consistently ranked among the world's highest-performing countries for women's parliamentary representation. Both cases illustrate that structural, government-wide commitment, rather than isolated quota mechanisms, is associated with sustained gains in women's substantive political power (Stockemer & Sundström, 2019).

Morocco: The Istiqlal Party and Istiqlal Youth Academy

Within Morocco, the Istiqlal Party has demonstrated a comparatively strong external commitment to advancing women's representation. Its women's wing, the Organisation de la Femme Istiqlalienne (OFI), has led a prominent advocacy campaign to raise the national legislative quota for women to one-third of parliamentary seats, and its recent "Forum des jeunes compétences féminines" initiative aims to bring young, highly educated women into public life (L'Opinion, 2025b; Istiqlal Party, n.d.). Compared with the ANC and the PRI, however, the Istiqlal Party's approach reveals a strategic gap: where its counterparts have pursued institutional and legal reform, the Istiqlal's approach has remained comparatively event-based (Le360, 2021). Two related weaknesses stand out. First, continued reliance on quotas risks functioning as a ceiling rather than a platform, compounded by the pattern of political patronage that characterizes Moroccan party politics and tends to produce elite circulation rather than a diversified base of qualified leaders (Zerhouni, 2016). Second, the OFI's emphasis on external advocacy, such as lobbying for changes to national electoral law, has not been matched by an equivalent push for internal reform of the party's own leadership quotas (Istiqlal Party, n.d.).

The Istiqlal Youth Academy (IYA) shows more promise in this respect, particularly through recruitment strategies that actively pursue gender balance and a curriculum that integrates equality rights into the core of political training rather than treating them as an add-on (Le360, 2021). These practices remain small in scale, but they demonstrate how youth-oriented structures can advance genuine equality when designed with that goal in mind (Le360, 2021).

Recommendations

The findings above reveal a persistent gap between Morocco's constitutional and international commitments to gender parity and the informal barriers that continue to operate within political parties and national institutions (Benbelli, 2023; Mohamed, 2024). International models from South Africa, Mexico, Sweden, and New Zealand demonstrate that deep structural change, beyond numerical quotas, is what ultimately converts representation into power (Stockemer & Sundström, 2019), while the Istiqlal Party's largely event-based, externally focused approach illustrates the limits of reform that does not extend to internal party structures (Le360, 2021). The recommendations below are intended to move Morocco from a dynamic of formal compliance toward substantive change, drawing on the comparative evidence reviewed in Section 5 and adapted to the specific institutional context of Moroccan political life.

For the Istiqlal Party

- Mandate a "zipper system" for electoral lists, alternating candidates by gender to ensure balanced representation in decision-making positions (Hteit, 2023).
- Establish a binding quota for women on the party's executive committee, currently six women, starting at 40%, to give women meaningful political weight and agenda-setting influence (Zerhouni, 2016).
- Create a Candidate Support Fund to provide direct financial and technical support to women running in competitive, non-quota constituency seats, addressing the financial barriers that disproportionately affect women candidates (WFD, n.d.-a).
- Launch a formal sponsorship program pairing every member of the party's senior leadership with a high-potential young woman from the IYA School for Politics, with each pairing assigned joint responsibility for a substantive one-year task, such as chairing a policy committee or drafting legislation, and with the young leader participating formally in the senior sponsor's annual performance evaluation (National Democratic Institute, n.d.-a).

For the Istiqlal Youth Academy

- Establish the IYA as a permanent and autonomous training institution rather than an alternative youth wing (Le360, 2021).
- Develop a dedicated school for politics, following the Mexican ONMPRI model, offering a multi-module curriculum open to young women in areas including policy and governance, campaign management, political communication, digital activism and security, and economic empowerment (ONMPRI, n.d.).
- Create a specialized "Digital Wing" within the IYA, staffed by graduates of the School of Politics' digital module, to lead online advocacy and counter online harassment targeting female politicians (PRI Oaxaca, n.d.).

For Moroccan Political Parties

- Implement internal board-level quotas to open long-term, influential positions to women rather than symbolic ones (Zerhouni, 2016).
- Build structured mentorship and sponsorship programs pairing women with successful leaders of both genders, enabling mentees to develop leadership skills and their own leadership style (WFD, n.d.-a; National Democratic Institute, n.d.-b).

For the Government

- Introduce political education from early primary school (around the fourth grade) so that future citizens can develop the knowledge base needed to make informed, confident political decisions (Kadi, 2015).

- Invest in digital platforms that educate, connect, and empower young women, supporting broader digital inclusion (PRI Oaxaca, n.d.).

- Promote inclusive, gender-sensitive language in media and political discourse, recognizing that internalized stereotypes affect how women themselves perceive political leadership (Diplomatist, 2025).

- Open genuine leadership space for youth in shaping national policy, recognizing that the capacity to lead develops well before the age conventionally assumed by established political elites (Kadi, 2015).

Conclusion

Morocco has made measurable progress in increasing women's representation within political parties and elected institutions, but this progress conceals a persistent gap in who ultimately holds decision-making power (Zerhouni, 2016; Mohamed, 2024). The quota system, often presented as a step toward equality, can also contribute to stagnation when it offers women symbolic positions rather than substantive influence (Benbelli, 2023). Despite the increased presence of women in parliament and local councils, their capacity to shape policy outcomes remains constrained, and women continue to experience a form of dual exclusion, from male-centered political networks and from entrenched social traditions (Fakih & Sleiman, 2022; Ibourk, 2023). Comparative evidence from Sweden and New Zealand suggests that combining stronger quota systems with sustained training programs, party reform, and a changing political culture can enable women to move from symbolic representation toward effective leadership (Stockemer & Sundström, 2019). Morocco's central challenge, in this respect, lies not in the absence of legal frameworks or procedures, but in weak enforcement and limited sustained political will (Mohamed, 2024). Building institutional frameworks around mentoring, leadership development, and an inclusive political culture, rather than settling for identity-based representation alone, represents the more durable path forward, one in which female leadership becomes an ordinary and integral feature of Moroccan political life rather than an exception to it (Benbelli, 2023; Zerhouni, 2016; "Women, Gender, and Politics," 2018).

Bibliography

Abiola-Akiyode-Afolabi. (n.d.). *Political participation, feminist organizing and the creation of inclusive democratic spaces*.

African National Congress Women's League. (n.d.-a). *African National Congress Women's League*. In Wikipedia. Retrieved August 29, 2025, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African_National_Congress_Women%27s_League

African National Congress Women's League. (n.d.-b). *ANC Women's League*. Retrieved August 29, 2025, from https://www.anc1912.org.za/anc-womens-league/

African National Congress Women's League. (n.d.-c). ANC Women's League (ANCWL). *South African History Online*. Retrieved August 29, 2025, from https://sahistory.org.za/article/anc-womens-league-ancwl

ARDD. (2024). *Ahead of the election in Jordan: Women, youth and the rise to the 20th parliament*. Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development.

Baliamoune-Lutz, M. (2016). The effectiveness of foreign aid to women's equality organisations in the MENA. *Journal of International Development, 28*(3), 320–341. https://doi.org/10.1002/jid.3212

Bari, F. (2005). *Women's political participation: Issues and challenges*. United Nations.

Beaman, L., Duflo, E., Pande, R., & Topalova, P. (2012). Female leadership raises aspirations and educational attainment for girls: A policy experiment in India. *Science, 335*(6068), 582–586. https://doi.org/10.1126/science.1212382

Behavioural Insights Team. (2019). *Applying behavioural insights to gender equality*.

Benbelli, S. (2023). *Women's experiences of representation and marginalization in Morocco: Taking stock and outlining future trajectories*. Arab Reform Initiative. https://www.arab-reform.net/publication/womens-experiences-of-representation-and-marginalization-in-morocco-taking-stock-and-outlining-future-trajectories/

Boyer, R. (2018). *Minds make society: How cognitive sciences explain human behavior and social organization*. Cambridge University Press.

Challenging patriarchy: Moroccan women and political leadership. (2019). *Middle East & North Africa Studies, 27*(3), 113–130.

Charrad, M. M., & Zarrugh, A. (2020). The redistributive effects of gender and youth quotas: Case studies of Tunisia and Morocco. *Comparative Sociology, 19*(4–5), 506–534. https://doi.org/10.1163/15691330-BJA10028

ConstitutionNet. (2021, August). *Calls grow to increase women's representation in Morocco's parliament ahead of elections*. Retrieved August 29, 2025, from https://constitutionnet.org/news/calls-grow-increase-womens-representation-moroccos-parliament-ahead-elections

Diplomatist. (2025, March 10). *The role of media in shaping perceptions about women leaders*. Retrieved August 29, 2025, from https://diplomatist.com/2025/03/10/the-role-of-media-in-shaping-perceptions-about-women-leaders/

Durban University of Technology. (n.d.). *Young women are the future of South Africa*. Retrieved August 29, 2025, from https://www.dut.ac.za/young-women-are-the-future-of-south-africa/

European Partnership for Democracy. (2023). *Gender action plan (GAP) Morocco*. https://epd.eu/content/uploads/2023/08/GAP-Morocco.pdf

Fakih, A., & Sleiman, Y. (2022). The gender gap in political participation: Evidence from the MENA region. *Review of Political Economy, 36*(1), 154–177. https://doi.org/10.1080/09538259.2022.2035268

Government of South Africa. (n.d.). *Florence Matomela Memorial Lecture: The importance of the 1956 Women's March*. Retrieved August 29, 2025, from https://www.gov.za/news/speeches/florence-matomela-memorial-lecture-importance-1956-womens-march-ms-angie

Hteit, R. (2023). *Gender parity legislation: Tunisia*. SDG16.plus. https://sdg16.plus

Ibourk, A. (2023). *Revitalizing women's labor force participation in North Africa: An exploration of novel empowerment pathways*. Policy Center for the New South. https://www.policycenter.ma/sites/default/files/2023-07/Revitalizing%20Women%20s%20Labor%20Force%20Participation%20in%20North%20Africa%20An%20Exploration%20of%20Novel%20Empowerment%20Pathways.pdf

iKNOWPolitics. (n.d.). *International knowledge network of women in politics*. Retrieved August 29, 2025, from https://iknowpolitics.org/env

Istiqlal Party. (n.d.). *Party positions regarding the advancement of women*. Retrieved August 29, 2025, from https://www.istiqlal.info/faq/

Kadi, Y. (2015). *Youth political participation and attitudes in contemporary Morocco*. POMEPS Studies.

Krook, M. L., & True, J. (2012). Rethinking the life cycles of international norms: The United Nations and the global promotion of gender equality. *European Journal of International Relations, 18*(1), 103–127. https://doi.org/10.1177/20531680241293602

Le360. (2021, September). *Élections 2021: La jeunesse istiqlalienne déjà en ordre de bataille*. Retrieved August 29, 2025, from https://fr.le360.ma/politique/video-elections-2021-la-jeunesse-istiqlalienne-deja-en-ordre-de-bataille-221547/

L'Opinion. (2025a, August). *Interview avec Khadija Ezzoumi: Malgré les succès notables, des obstacles majeurs persistent*. Retrieved August 29, 2025, from https://www.lopinion.ma/Interview-avec-Khadija-Ezzoumi-Malgre-les-succes-notables-des-obstacles-majeurs-persistent_a64775.html

L'Opinion. (2025b, August). *Le Parti de l'Istiqlal lance un forum pour propulser les jeunes compétences féminines*. Retrieved August 29, 2025, from https://www.lopinion.ma/Le-Parti-de-l-Istiqlal-lance-un-forum-pour-propulser-les-jeunes-competences-feminines_a69240.html

L'Opinion. (2025c, August). *Parlement – Représentation féminine: Cap sur le tiers des sièges pour les élections de 2026*. Retrieved August 29, 2025, from https://www.lopinion.ma/Parlement-Representation-feminine-Cap-sur-le-tiers-des-sieges-pour-les-elections-de-2026_a70746.html

Mail & Guardian. (2016, January 7). *Attempts to rejuvenate ANC Women's League under fire*. https://mg.co.za/article/2016-01-07-attempts-to-rejuvenate-anc-womens-league-under-fire/

Mohamed, F. (2023). Socio-cultural factors and women's representation in political leadership: Case study Mbale City Councils. *Open Access Library Journal, 10*(e10847), 1–14. https://doi.org/10.4236/oalib.1110847

Mohamed, F. (2024). Political rights of Moroccan women: Ambition clashing with practical enforcements. *Rowaq Arabi, 26*(2). https://cihrs-rowaq.org/political-rights-of-moroccan-women-ambition-clashing-with-practical-enforcements/?lang=en

Multiculturalism, gender and political participation in Morocco. (2020). *Journal of Gender Studies in North Africa, 14*(1), 23–42.

Naciri, R. (n.d.). *The women's movement and political discourse* [Manuscript in preparation].

National Democratic Institute for International Affairs. (2023). *General discussion submission to CEDAW (GR40)*. OHCHR. Retrieved August 29, 2025, from https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/cedaw/general-discussion/2023/gr40-national-democratic-institute-international-affairs.docx

National Democratic Institute. (n.d.-a). *Empowering women for stronger political parties*. Retrieved August 29, 2025, from https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/Empowering-Women-Full-Case-Study-ENG.pdf

National Democratic Institute. (n.d.-b). *Win with Women Global Action Plan*. Retrieved August 29, 2025, from https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/WWW%20ACTION%20PLAN%20ENG.pdf

Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy. (2024). *Jordan School of Politics (SoP) programme description*.

OECD. (2021). *Gender and behavioural insights: Driving change in public policy*. OECD Publishing.

ONMPRI. (n.d.). *Organización Nacional de Mujeres Priistas (ONMPRI Nacional)*. Retrieved August 29, 2025, from https://www.onmprinacional.org/

PRI Oaxaca. (n.d.). *Impulsa PRI el empoderamiento de las mujeres con taller "Activismo Digital"*. Retrieved August 29, 2025, from http://prioaxaca.org.mx/Saladeprensa/Nota.aspx?y=36885

PRI Zacatecas. (n.d.). *Presenta el ONMPRI programa de trabajo de su estructura estatal*. Retrieved August 29, 2025, from http://www.prizacatecas.org.mx/Saladeprensa/Nota.aspx?y=30648

Stockemer, D., & Sundström, A. (2019). Women's representation across different generations: A global perspective. *Social Sciences, 8*(5), 151. https://www.mdpi.com/2076-0760/5/4/75

Tripp, A. M., & Kang, A. (2008). The global impact of quotas: On the fast track to increased female legislative representation. *Comparative Political Studies, 41*(3), 338–361.

U.S. Department of State. (n.d.). *Regional campaign schools programs mobilize thousands across the Middle East and North Africa*. Middle East Partnership Initiative. Retrieved August 29, 2025, from https://mepi.state.gov/campaignschools/

UN Institute for Training and Research. (2025). *Gender equality and women's empowerment programme*. UNITAR.

UN Women, & UNDP. (2021). *Gender equality in public administration*.

United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, & Center of Arab Women for Training and Research. (2007). *Strengthening women's*

leadership and participation in politics and decision-making processes in Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia. CAWTAR Clearinghouse. https://www.cawtarclearinghouse.org/storage/5077/Mapping-of-the-Situation-of-Women-Participation-in-politics-in-Algeria-Morocco-and-Tunisia-EN.pdf

USAID/Morocco. (2018). *Gender analysis report*. Banyan Global. https://banyanglobal.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/USAID-Morocoo-Gender-Analysis-2018.pdf

Westminster Foundation for Democracy. (n.d.-a). *Five ways policymakers and political parties can nurture women leaders*. Retrieved August 29, 2025, from https://www.wfd.org/commentary/five-ways-policymakers-and-political-parties-can-nurture-women-leaders

Westminster Foundation for Democracy. (n.d.-b). *Strengthening women's essential role in political decision-making within Morocco*. Retrieved August 29, 2025, from https://www.wfd.org/where-we-work/strengthening-womens-essential-role-political-decision-making-within-moroccan

Westminster Foundation for Democracy. (n.d.-c). *WFD support for women's political leadership*. Retrieved August 29, 2025, from https://www.wfd.org/news/wfd-support-womens-political-leadership

Westminster Foundation for Democracy. (n.d.-d). *Women's representation in parliament: Morocco*. Retrieved August 29, 2025, from https://www.wfd.org/story/womens-representation-parliament-morocco

Wilson Center. (n.d.-a). *From city council to president: Women in Mexican politics*. Retrieved August 29, 2025, from https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/city-council-president-women-mexican-politics

Wilson Center. (n.d.-b). *Mexico seeks to empower women in politics*. Retrieved August 29, 2025, from https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/mexico-seeks-to-empower-women-politics

Women, gender, and politics in Morocco. (2018). *Moroccan Journal of Political Science, 9*(2), 77–95.

World Bank. (2015). *World development report: Mind, society, and behavior*. World Bank Publications.

YouTube. (2021). *ANC Women's League officially launches Young Women's Desk* [Video]. Retrieved August 29, 2025, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZQgIVxoOZ5U

Zerhouni, S. (2016). Women in Moroccan politics: An assessment of the quota system. *African Scientific Journal, 1*(1), 35–47. https://africanscientificjournal.com/index.php/AfricanScientificJournal/article/view/35/34