

Baliamoune-Lutz, Mina

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The effectiveness of foreign aid to women's equality organizations in the MENA: Does aid promote women's political participation?

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WIDER Working Paper No. 2013/074

The effectiveness of foreign aid to women's equality organizations in the MENA

Does aid promote women's political participation?

Mina Baliaoune-Lutz*

July 2013

Abstract

In this paper, we address the question of whether official development assistance promotes gender equality in the Middle East and North Africa region by examining the effects of aid to Women's Equality Organizations and Institutions on women's political empowerment, measured by the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments. We use panel data (covering the period 2002-10) from 13 Middle East and North African countries and control for several relevant variables, including secondary school enrolments, adult fertility rates, autocracy, and official development assistance targeting family planning and reproductive health. The econometric results suggest that official development assistance .../

Keywords: development aid, gender equity, women's empowerment, MENA

JEL classification: D63, F35, O15

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* University of North Florida, email: mbaliamo@unf.edu

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... to women's equality organizations and institutions is effective in increasing women's political empowerment. We find that autocracy exerts a negative influence on women's political empowerment. In addition, higher adolescent fertility rates are found to be associated with smaller proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments. We comment on the policy implications of the main findings.

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publications@wider.unu.edu

UNU World Institute for Development Economics Research (UNU-WIDER)
Katajanokanlaituri 6 B, 00160 Helsinki, Finland

Typescript prepared by Liisa Roponen at UNU-WIDER.

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The goal of gender equality also remains unfulfilled, again with broad negative consequences, given that achieving the MDGs depends so much on women's empowerment and equal access by women to education, work, health care and decision-making.

Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General, United Nations
Foreword to *The Millennium Development Goals Report* (United Nations 2012)

1 Introduction

Gender equality and women empowerment have, for the last several years, been an important topic for international agencies, many national governments, and civil society. Millennium Development Goal 3 (MDG3) is specifically about promoting gender equality and empowering women. However, greater gender equality clearly has a significant implications for the targets associated with the other seven MDGs. Recent reviews of progress towards achieving MDG3 note that progress has been 'sluggish' and that this goal remains unfulfilled (Waage et al. 2010; Sachs 2012; United Nations 2012). While some progress has been made, the levels of women's participation in politics and business remain low in many countries.

The Middle-East and North Africa (MENA) region in recent years has substantially reduced gender inequality in education and health outcomes but inequality in employment remains significant in many countries in the region (Klasen and Lamanna 2009; United Nations 2012). Several MENA countries tend to have highly discriminatory social and legal institutions—including restricted civil liberties, restricted physical integrity and discriminatory family codes—which put women at a clear disadvantage (Cerise and Francavilla 2012). A recent World Bank (2013) study noted:

the MENA Region exhibits a gender equality *paradox* [emphasis added]. Although, most MENA countries have made admirable progress in closing their gender gaps in education and health outcomes, these investments in human development have not yet translated into commensurately higher rates of female participation in economic and political life.

Although in the last two decades, the Beijing call for at least 30 per cent reservations for women in electoral bodies (United Nations 1995) seems to have contributed to increasing the share of women in national parliaments in many countries, the impact of women on policymaking in their countries remains limited (Tinker 2004). In the MENA region, in particular, there is currently (as of April 2013) only one country, Algeria, where women hold at least 30 per cent (31.6 per cent) of the seats in the lower house¹ (see Table A3). The proportion of seats held by women is between approximately 20 per cent and 26.7 per cent in five countries (Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Mauritania, Iraq, and Tunisia). Women in eight MENA countries (including Morocco) hold between 10 per cent and 17 per cent of parliamentary seats, while this proportion is 3.1 per cent or lower in Iran, Lebanon, Egypt (2 per cent),

¹ However, Algeria had a low proportion of seats held by women in the national parliament until 2011. The proportion was 3.2 per cent, 3.4 per cent, 6.2 per cent, and 7.7 per cent in 1997-99, 2000-01, 2002-06, and 2007-10, respectively.

Oman, (1.2 per cent), and Yemen (0.3 per cent). Thus, women in most MENA countries tend to be denied the opportunity to influence parliamentary debates and laws, given that in order to be able to make an impact in these areas a critical mass of women in national parliaments (especially in the lower house) is needed (Childs and Krook 2008; Swiss, Fallon and Burgos 2012).

The primary goal of this paper is to address the question of whether foreign aid promotes gender equality in the MENA region by examining the effects of aid to Women's Equality Organizations and Institutions (ODA_WEOI) on women's political empowerment. We use panel data (covering the period 2002-10) from 13 MENA countries and control for several relevant variables, such as the share of women in secondary education, political institutions, adolescent fertility rates, and aid targeting reproductive health and family planning. Based on the empirical results of the paper, we outline some policy implications on why and how donors should provide more aid targeting women's equality organizations and institutions.

This study aims to make a novel contribution to the literature on the effectiveness of aid in general (by focusing on official development aid [ODA] to women's equality organizations and institutions in the MENA region, instead of assessing aid effectiveness by focusing on growth or income effects of ODA as is often done in the aid effectiveness literature), and on the area of the impact of aid on women's political empowerment in particular. This is the first empirical study to examine the effects of official development assistance to women's equality organizations on women's political empowerment.²

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. The next section briefly discusses the relevant literature and the current state of women's political empowerment in the MENA region. Section 3 describes the data and methodology and presents the empirical results. Section 4 provides a summary and discussion of the main findings and their policy implications.

2 Gender equality and women empowerment

2.1 Related literature

This paper relates to three important strands of the economic and political science literature. First, the present study relates to research on aid effectiveness. Second, by exploring the impact of specific types of ODA, as well as other factors (such as school enrolments, and political institutions) on women's political empowerment, this study also relates to the literature on the development effects and determinants of gender equality in general and the factors that influence women's empowerment and active political participation in particular. Third, the present study relates to the vast and continuously expanding research on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), including the assessment of country progress and the factors that may hinder or facilitate progress towards achieving specific goals, and the role of the MDGs in sustainable development.

Aid effectiveness and allocation, and gender equality

The literature on aid effectiveness (which is concerned to a large part with the growth effects

² A Google's search on 30th March 2013 revealed that there is not a single empirical study (at least in English) on this topic.

of aid) and aid allocation is quite vast. The growth effect of aid is not a topic explicitly and directly addressed in the present study.³ However, this paper relates to the literature on the effectiveness of ODA because it examines the effectiveness of ODA to women's equality organizations and institutions in promoting women's empowerment, and in doing so we are ultimately assessing whether aid is effective in promoting growth and development, assuming women's empowerment is good for growth and development.

Appendix Tables A1 and A2 (Appendix A) display the DAC's gender equality policy marker indicators (including definition, criteria of eligibility, and examples of activities), and statistics of aid in support of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, 2009-10 (average, 2009 US\$ millions). The information in Appendix Table A1 shows that this type of ODA includes many activities but at the same time there is a certain degree of vagueness. The numbers in Appendix Table A2 show that ODA to women's equality organizations and institutions constitutes an insignificant percentage of total aid support to gender equality, although this has changed somewhat in the last two years.

The figures in the table show that in 2009-10, DAC member countries allocated US\$24.866 billion to gender equality but only US\$0.41 billion was allocated for support to women's equality organizations and institutions, representing only about 1.6 per cent of the total amount targeting gender equality.

Gender equality and women's empowerment and development

The role of gender equality in development, growth, and poverty reduction has been documented in many studies⁴ Furthermore, the role of women's political empowerment in promoting gender equality and societal wellbeing has been emphasized in many studies (see for example, Grown, Rao Gupta and Kes 2005). An important area where women's political participation can have a significant impact is in peace and political transition processes. For example, a recent study by International Alert (2012) points out that the representation and increased involvement of women in politics and in the public sphere has been one of the positive results of peace processes and political transitions in the Great Lakes region in Africa during the last ten to fifteen years, although several challenges remain. The presence of women at the negotiating table in the official peace processes could allow the inclusion of provisions in favour of more gender equality. In a GenderNet Practice Note prepared for the DAC Network on Gender, Justina Demetriades (2009: 3) notes:

Rwandan women parliamentarians worked with national and international NGOs, UN agencies and the Ministry of Women's Affairs to use statistics on gender-based violence (GBV) to lobby for a GBV bill. This evidence confirmed the prevalence and importance of GBV to parliamentarians, resulting in the acceptance of the bill in which domestic rape and other kinds of 'private' family issues are classified as criminal offenses (UNDP Rwanda, UNDP/BRIDGE e-discussion, March 2007)

³ There is a vast and interesting recent literature on aid effectiveness. See for example, Dalgaard, Hansen and Tarp (2004); Addison, Mavrotas and McGillivray (2005); Rajan and Subramanian (2008); Balamoune-Lutz and Mavrotas (2009); Doucouliagos and Paldam (2009); Winters and Wright (2010); Mekasha and Tarp (2011), and Balamoune-Lutz (2012).

⁴ See, for instance, Klasen (1999, 2002); Knowles, Lorgelly and Owen (2002); Seguino and Floro (2003); Esteve-Volart (2004); Stotsky (2006); and Balamoune-Lutz and McGillivray (2009).

Millennium Development Goals

There is a large and continuously expanding body of literature related to the Millennium Development Goals.⁵ As we get closer to the target year of 2015, many researchers have started to focus on altering the current indicators or proposing new ones for the post-2015. For example, Manning (2009: 5) argues that it is difficult to provide an answer to what he qualifies as a fundamental question: whether the MDG framework has had any influence in changing behaviour and thus influencing outcomes in the desired direction. However, the author posits that the MDG framework ‘has been influential in international discourse about development, a useful tool for advocacy, and a positive influence on data collection. Its impact on the donor community appears to be quite varied’.

Waage et al. (2010) argue that the few targets that were assigned to goals that were broadly defined (such as poverty reduction, gender, and environmental sustainability) did not capture the breadth of the involved sectors. This resulted in very substantial gaps in the coverage of goals, with targets failing to address important development needs for that sector, and, due to goal and target fragmentation, potential synergies and linkages among sectors are not adequately (if at all) exploited. The authors point out that the ‘gaps in goals could have contributed to underinvestment in areas that are key to realization of the MDGs’ overall development vision’. Related specifically to MDG3, Waage et al. (2010: 7) note the following:

MDG 3’s very narrow scope failed to capture several intrinsic women’s rights issues such as freedom from violence and adult literacy, which are two areas of extreme inequality. In some cases, these gaps have been addressed by additional targets, but these late additions, relative to original targets, tend not to have leadership or easily measured indicators...

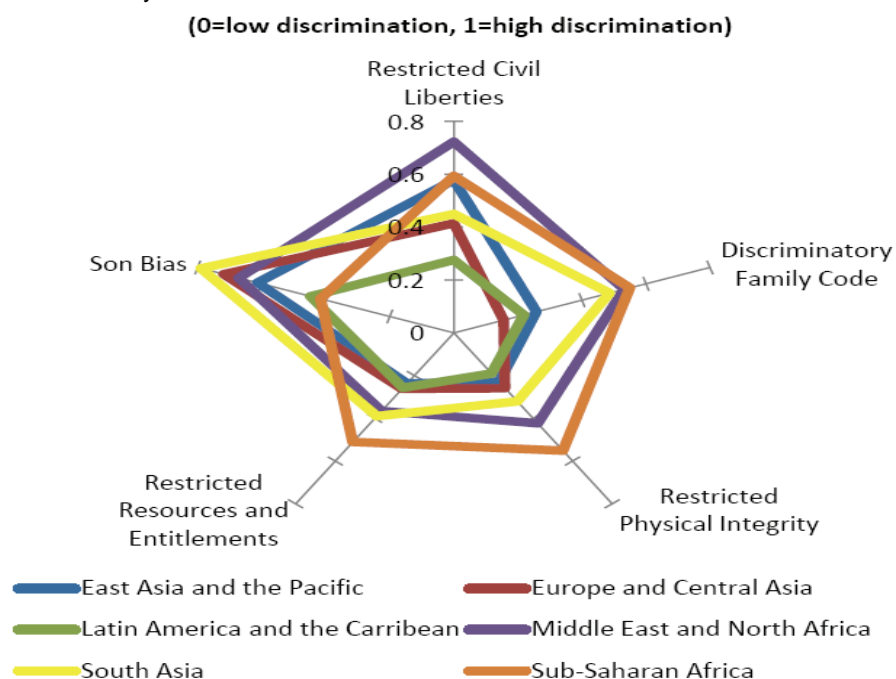
Karver, Kenny and Sumner (2012) focus on the process of developing a second generation of MDGs, which they label ‘MDGs 2.0’, and propose additional targets and indicators. For example they propose adding to Goal 3 in MDG 2.0, ‘to develop and implement strategies that give young people everywhere a real chance to find decent and productive work’, with the potential new MDG area of assessing the percentage reduction in the gap between youth unemployment and total unemployment.

2.2 Women’s political empowerment in the MENA region

There are wide disparities across the MENA countries in the extent of women’s political empowerment. In the 2000s, in countries such as Tunisia, Iraq, and Sudan women held 20 to 27 per cent of seats in national parliaments, while in Yemen and Iran women held (in the late 2000s), respectively, less than 1 per cent and 3 per cent of the parliamentary seats. Even in Egypt and Jordan the proportion of parliamentary seats held by women did not reach 10 until 2010; and in Egypt the number went down to 2 per cent in 2012. In Algeria (prior to 2011) and Turkey, it remained below 10 per cent throughout the 2000s. Recent OECD studies on discriminatory social institutions suggest that the MENA region has very high restrictions to women’s civil liberties (the highest restrictions in the world) and very high physical

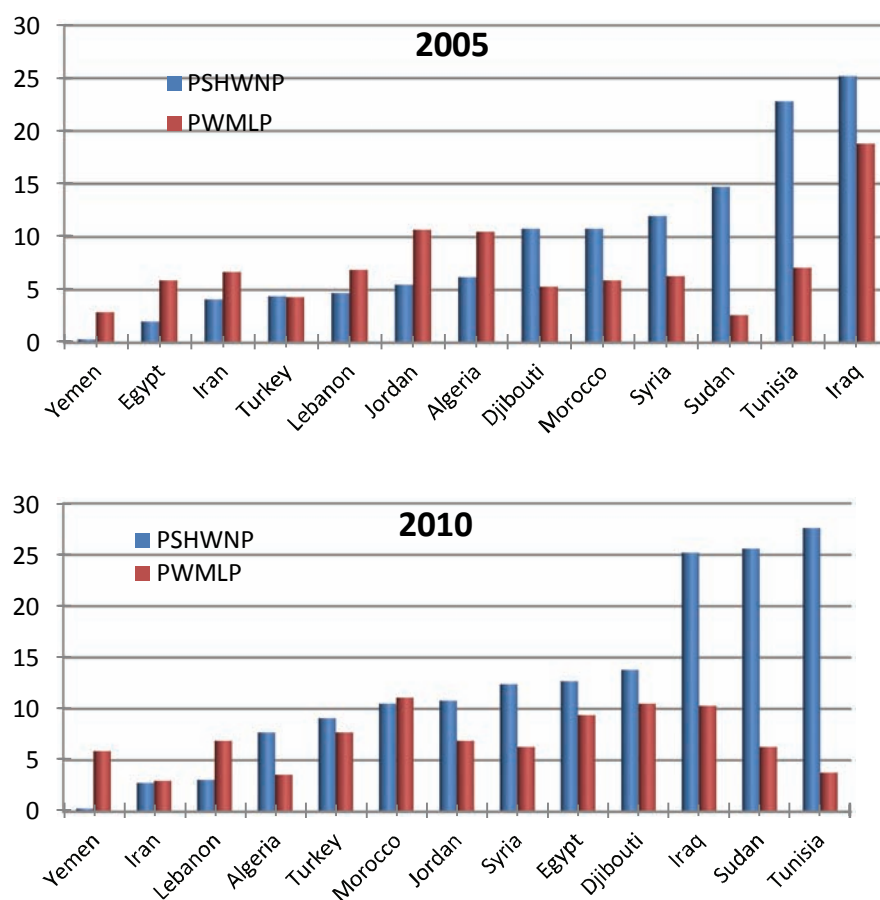
⁵ See, for example, Filmer, Hasan and Pritchett (2006); Clemens, Kenny and Moss (2007); Saith (2006), Hulme (2007), Bourguignon et al. (2008); Dercon (2008); Fukuda-Parr (2008); Sumner and Tiwari (2009); Vandemoortele (2009); Waage et al. (2010); Karver, Kenny and Sumner (2012), and Sachs (2012).

Figure 1: Discriminatory social institutions



Source: Cerise and Francavilla (2012).

Figure 2: Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments (PSHWNP, %) and proportion of women in ministerial level positions (PWMLP, %)



Source: See Appendix B for data description and source.

restrictions (see Figures 1 and 2), and progress on promoting women's political empowerment over the last several years has been uneven. The 2012 *World Development Report* (World Bank 2012) notes that women in most regions of the world have limited influence in political decisionmaking, and that '[d]espite recent improvements, the situation is particularly striking in the Middle East and North Africa, where only about 1 parliamentarian in 10 is a woman (up from 1 in 25 in 2000)'.⁶

Moreover, in spite of the increasingly widespread gender equality in voting in elections, MENA women sometimes are not able to practice their right to vote to gain political empowerment. Blaydes and El Tarouty (2009: 380) examine voting behaviour (in the 2005 elections) in Egypt and conclude the following:

[C]lientelistically-based voter recruitment tends to empower women economically rather than politically as elections provide an opportunity for disadvantaged women to auction their voice to the highest bidder. In contrast, women who vote for Islamist candidates may be able to increase the influence of their political support by creating common knowledge about the popularity of their candidate and by reducing the effectiveness of government violence.

Similarly, Liddell (2010) highlights the primacy of 'clientelism and personalism' over ideology and institutions in Moroccan politics. He reports that despite some positive trends emanating from the 2009 local elections in Morocco, party leaders remained afraid of empowering women and youth.

Women's political empowerment was also found to be hindered by financial constraints. For example, in a recent qualitative study, Shojaei, Samsu and Asayesh (2010) examine the effects of occupation and income on women's participation in top political positions in Iran and find that inadequate financial resources act as 'structural obstacles to Iranian women in top political positions'.⁷

3 Empirical analysis

3.1 Data and methodology

We examine the effects of ODA to women's equality organizations and institutions (ODA_WEOI) on women's political participation. Women's political participation (an indicator of women's empowerment) is represented by the proportion of seats (per cent) held by women in national parliaments (*PSHWNP*). We believe this is a better measure than the proportion of women in ministerial level positions, as the former reflects active political participation, while the latter is usually (at least in the MENA region) the result of appointment decisions by the head of state (president, king, or prime minister; often appointing women to social affairs, women affairs, or youth ministries), involving in most cases no significant active political participation on the part of the female minister. In

⁶ See also Balamoune-Lutz (2011).

⁷ Several other studies have also argued that financial constraints are a major barrier to women's political empowerment in MENA countries. See, for example, Campbell (2010); Waring (2010); Kasapoglu and Özerkmen (2011) and Al Maaitah et al. (2012).

addition, women's representation in parliamentary bodies is one of the target indicators in the United Nations MDG3 (promoting gender equality and empowering women.)

We use panel data (covering the period 2002-10) from 13 MENA countries (Algeria, Djibouti, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Sudan,⁸ Syria, Turkey, Tunisia, and Yemen) and control for female secondary school enrolment percentages, adolescent fertility rates, and indicators of political institutions.⁹ We focus on ODA disbursements in constant US dollars. Data on foreign aid are from the OECD database online, while data on political institutions (polity and autocracy) are from the Polity IV project database (Marshall and Jaggers 2012). All other data are from the World Bank World Development Indicators database online. Description of the variables is provided in Appendix B.

The methodology consists of performing panel data estimations using a fixed-effects estimator.¹⁰ We use the following base specification.

$$y_{i,t} = \alpha y_{i,t-1} + \mathbf{X}_{i,t} \beta + \eta_i + \xi_t + \varepsilon_{i,t} \quad (1)$$

where y is the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments (PSHWNP) and \mathbf{X} is a row vector of regressors, η_i is the individual (country) fixed effect, ξ_t is a time-specific effect, and $\varepsilon_{i,t}$ are disturbances assumed to be serially uncorrelated.

Panel data allow us to control for factors that vary across countries, those that are unobserved and unmeasured, and factors that (when omitted) may cause omitted variable bias. Thus, it tackles the problem of potential endogeneity resulting from omitted variables. Nevertheless, we need to point out that a major caveat to the fixed-effects estimator is that the estimates can be biased if the dependent variable is persistent—lagged values of the dependent variable are correlated with current values. In this case, an appropriate procedure is the dynamic panel estimation (DPE); see, for example, Hansen and Tarp (2001). However, DPE may not be feasible here because the number of countries is small. Nonetheless, as part of the robustness checks we use lagged ODA values (Table 4).

There are large variations across countries in the amounts of ODA targeting women's equality organizations and institutions, reproductive health, and family planning. Figure 3.1 shows that in 2002, some of the countries that received higher amounts of ODA to women's equality organizations and institutions (ODA_WEOI) had, in general, lower shares of women in national parliaments. This seems to have somewhat continued in 2010. Similarly, there is no evidence that countries which received higher amounts of ODA targeting reproductive health and family planning (Figures 3.2) have stronger women empowerment (higher female political participation). In fact, the figures suggest that countries, such as Jordan, received the

⁸ Djibouti and Sudan are sometimes included in the MENA region and other times are excluded (see, for example, the definition of MENA by the International Monetary Fund). In this study, they are included in the MENA region in order to increase the sample size. Excluding these two countries does not change the relevant results or their interpretation.

⁹ We exclude GDP per capita (income) from the RHS due to the high correlation between income, and secondary (0.84) school enrolments.

¹⁰ We perform both fixed- and random-effects estimations and use the Hausman test (and report the test results in the relevant tables) to determine which specification is appropriate. In all cases, the fixed-effects estimator turned out to be more appropriate.

Figure 3.1: ODA targeting women's equality organizations and institutions

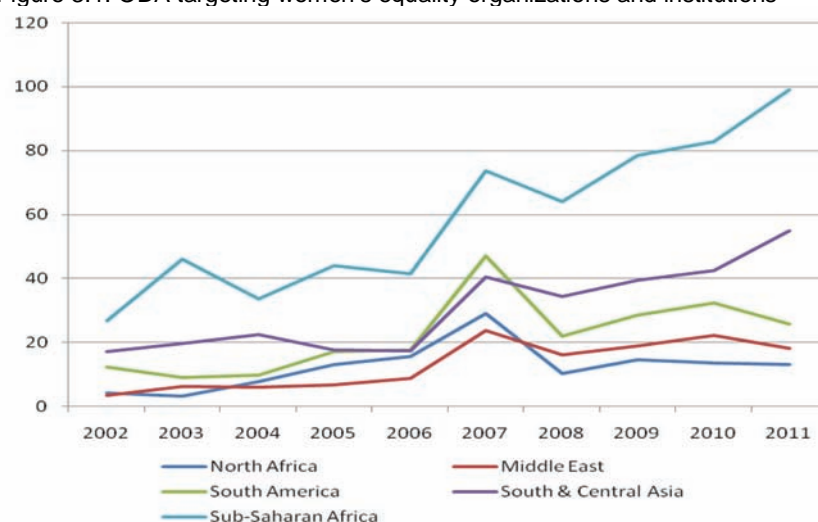


Figure 3.2: ODA targeting reproductive healthcare

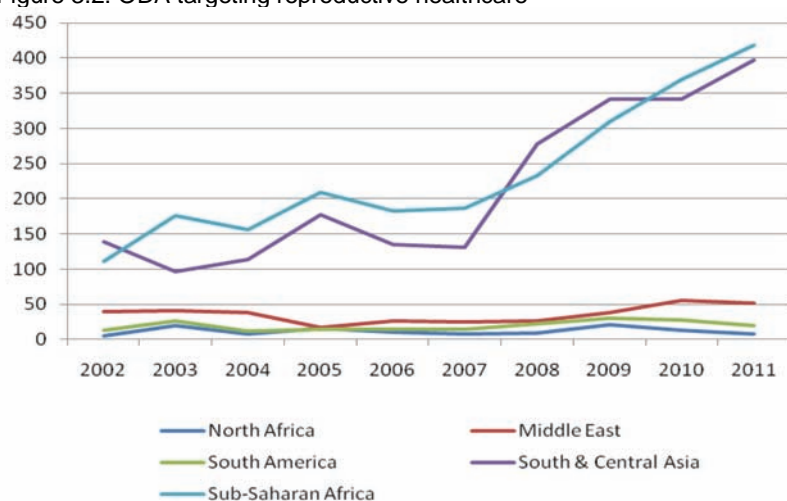
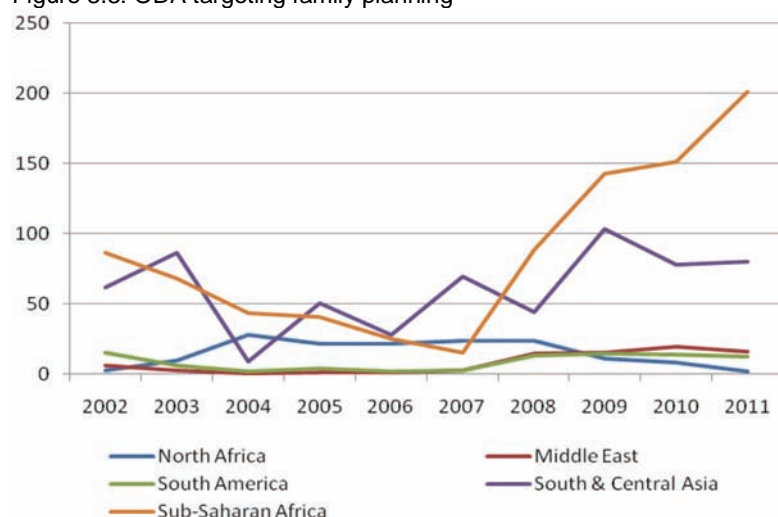


Figure 3.3: ODA targeting family planning



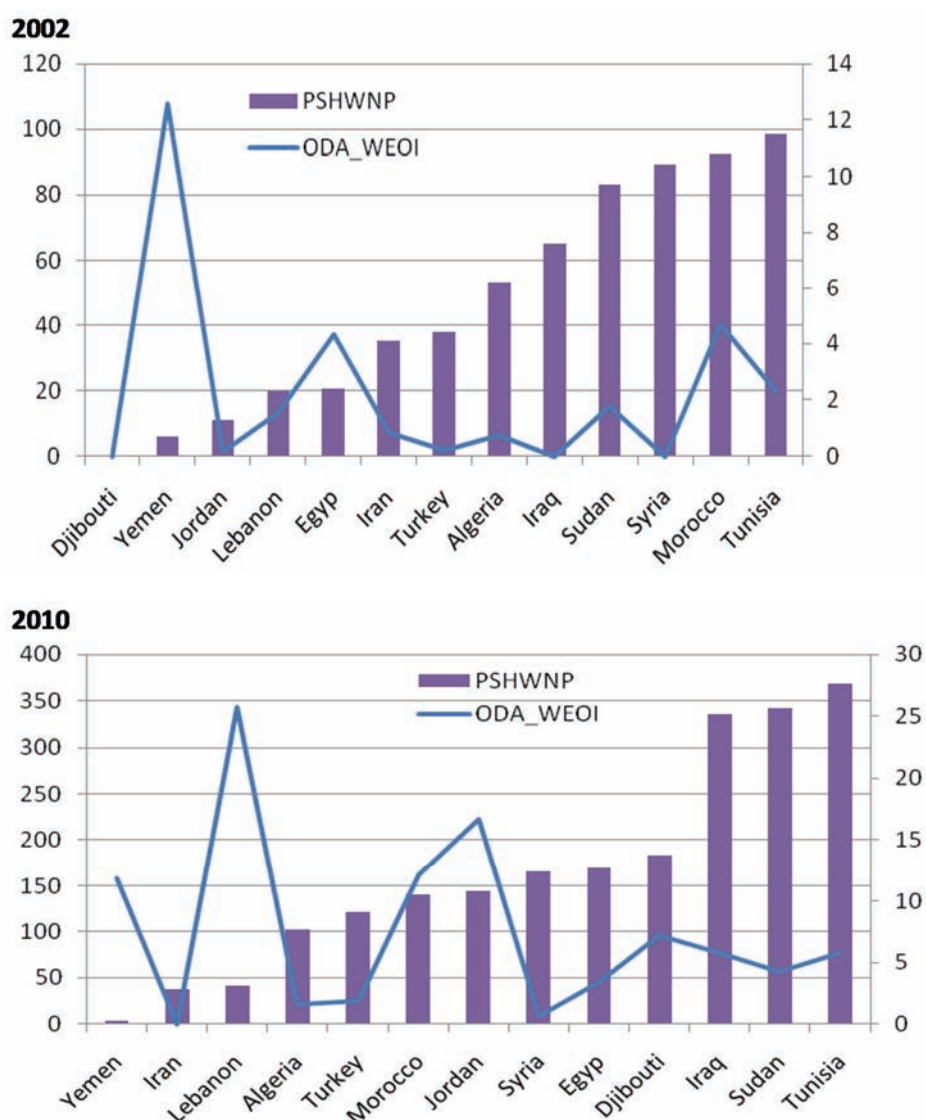
Source: See Appendix B for data description and source.

highest amounts of ODA targeting women's equality organizations and institutions and aid targeting reproductive health (as well as the highest amounts of ODA for family planning in 2010) but have very low (and below average) proportion of women in the national parliament

(1.3 per cent in 2002 and 10.8 per cent in 2010). Overall, it appears that there is no significant positive linear correlation between the three types of ODA and the proportion of women in national parliaments. On the contrary, at least in 2002, there was a significant negative linear correlation especially between women's political participation and ODA to family planning and reproductive health (on a per capita basis). This may suggest that higher amounts of this type of ODA are allocated to countries where there is lower female political empowerment.

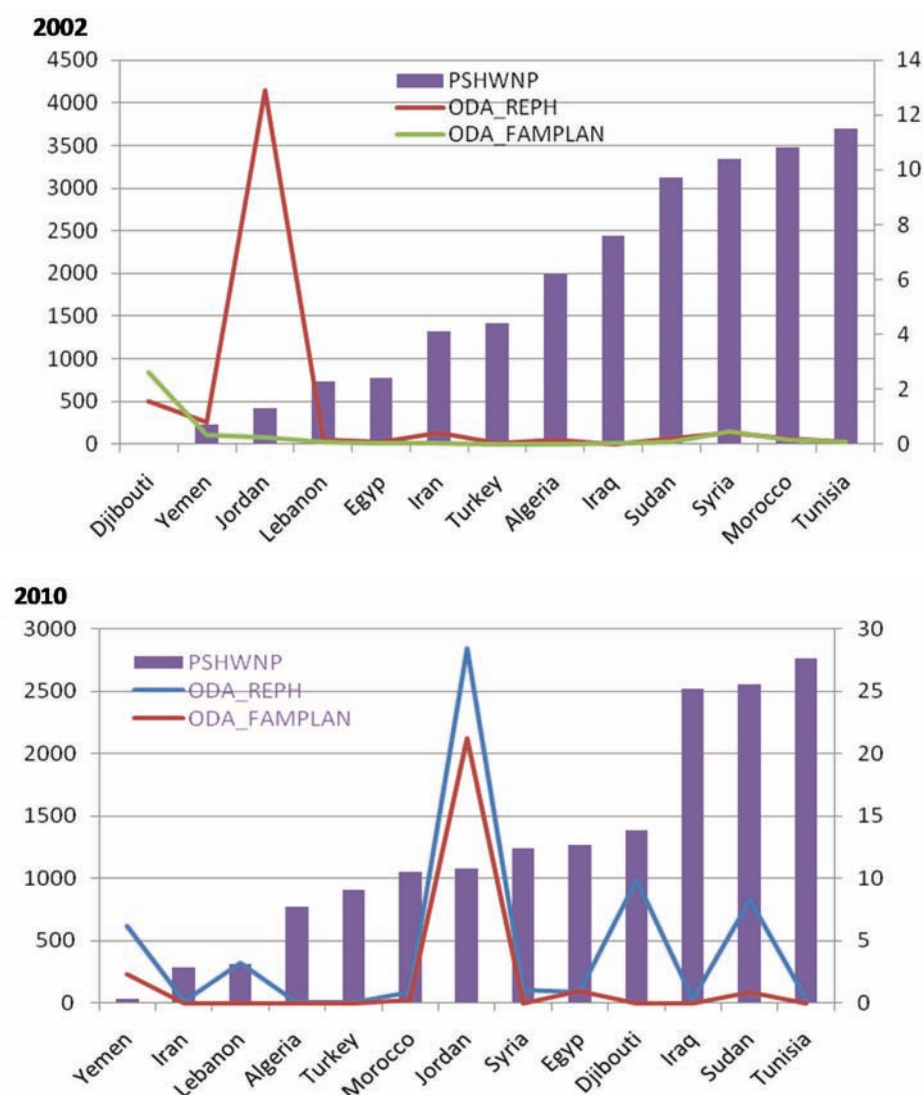
It is also important to note that there is no significant positive correlation between the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments and the proportion of women in ministerial level positions. In Yemen, a country that has high gender inequality and where the female share of seats in national parliament (0.3 per cent in 2010) is the lowest in the region, 5.7 per cent of ministerial positions are held by women. This is greater than the female share of ministerial positions in Tunisia which (at least until 2011) had the highest female share of parliamentary seats in the region. This suggests that, as pointed out earlier, the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments could be better measure of active political participation than the proportion of women in ministerial level positions (which is often decided by the head of state or the head of government).

Figure 4.1 ODA to women's equality organizations and institutions (WEAI) and proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments (PSHWNP, per cent) in 2002 and 2010



Source: See Appendix B for data description and source.

Figure 4.2: ODA targeting reproductive healthcare (REPH) and family planning (FAMPLAN), and proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments (PSHWNP, per cent)



Source: See Appendix B for data description and source.

3.2 Descriptive statistics and correlations

Table 1 shows summarized statistics. We note that there is a wide variety across the 13 countries in all variables (also see Figures 4.1 and 4.2). The proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments varies from a low of zero (Djibouti in 2002) to 27.6 (in Tunisia in 2009 and 2010). Similarly, secondary and tertiary school enrolment rates as well as ratios of female to male enrolments vary widely. For example, female tertiary enrolments range from a low of 0.9 per cent (Djibouti in 2002) to about 59 per cent in Lebanon in 2010. Female-to-male tertiary enrolment ratios vary, from 36.5 per cent in Yemen in 2005, to 150.5 per cent in Tunisia in 2009. The maximum value of ODA to women's equality organizations is US\$984.68 (per 1,000 people per year). The maximum values of ODA for reproductive health and for family planning are US\$5,617.29 and US\$2,119.57 (per 1,000 people per year), respectively.

Table 1: Summarized statistics

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. dev.	Min.	Max.
PSHWNP	113	9.187	7.2	0	27.6
Income	115	5541	3227	1399	12618
FEM_SEC_ENR	85	62.43	25.31	12.64	95.79
FEM_TERT_ENR	74	27.28	16.01	0.9	58.79
FEM_MALE_SEC_ENR	85	89.94	16.21	44.72	112.29
FEM_MALE_TERT_ENR	74	98.08	27.99	36.51	150.53
ADOLFERT	117	37.85	25.77	4.89	97.96
ODA_WEOI	117	77.64	119.26	0	984.68
ODA_REPH	117	367.23	858.11	0	5617.29
ODA_FAMPLAN	117	95.74	333.71	0	2119.57
Autoc	107	3.80	2.23	1	9
Polity	107	-1.70	4.60	-9	7

Source: Author's calculations (for data description and source, please see Appendix B).

Table 2: Correlation [P values]

Variable	PSHWNP	Income (log)	ODA_WEOI	ODA_REPH	ODA_FAMPLAN	ADOLFERT	FEM_MALE_ SEC_ENR	FEM_MALE_ TERT_ENR	FEM_SEC_ ENR	FEM_TERT_ ENR	AUTOCRACY
INCOME (log)	-0.159 [0.09]										
ODA_WEOI	0.021 [0.82]	-0.211 [0.02]									
ODA_REPH	-0.113 [0.23]	-0.193 [0.03]	0.245 [0.00]								
ODA_FAMPLAN	-0.129 [0.17]	-0.035 [0.70]	0.099 [0.28]	0.303 [0.00]							
ADOLFERT	0.005 [0.85]	-0.557 [0.00]	-0.109 [0.23]	-0.045 [0.62]	-0.044 [0.63]						
FEM_MALE_SEC_ENR	0.163 [0.14]	0.529 [0.00]	-0.107 [0.32]	0.029 [0.78]	0.068 [0.53]	-0.576 [0.00]					
FEM_MALE_TERT_ENR	0.367 [0.00]	0.541 [0.00]	-0.093 [0.42]	-0.016 [0.89]	0.072 [0.53]	-0.787 [0.00]	0.895 [0.00]				
FEM_SEC_ENR	-0.124 [0.26]	0.843 [0.00]	-0.172 [0.16]	0.045 [0.68]	0.099 [0.36]	-0.527 [0.00]	0.777 [0.00]	0.743 [0.00]			
FEM_TERT_ENR	-0.023 [0.84]	0.774 [0.00]	-0.163 [0.16]	0.027 [0.81]	0.141 [0.22]	-0.378 [0.00]	0.821 [0.00]	0.682 [0.00]	0.873 [0.00]		
AUTOCRACY	0.163 [0.09]	-0.155 [0.11]	-0.128 [0.19]	-0.086 [0.37]	0.071 [0.46]	0.085 [0.38]	0.218 [0.04]	0.091 [0.45]	0.043 [0.63]	-0.044 [0.72]	
POLITY	-0.185 [0.05]	0.391 [0.00]	0.076 [0.43]	0.049 [0.61]	-0.054 [0.57]	-0.148 [0.12]	-0.094 [0.40]	-0.072 [0.55]	0.135 [0.22]	0.257 [0.03]	-0.933 [0.00]

Source: Author's calculations (for data description and source, please see Appendix B).

The correlation coefficients displayed in Table 2 show that the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments has no significant linear association with any of the other variables except for its positive correlation with the ratio of female to male tertiary school enrolment rates, the positive correlation with autocracy, the negative correlation with polity, and the weakly significant negative correlation with income per capita. In particular there seems to be no significant linear correlation between female political empowerment and any of the three types of ODA. Similarly, the correlation between ODA to women's equality

organizations and all other variables is nonsignificant, except for its negative linear correlation with income per capita and positive association with ODA targeting reproductive healthcare (0.24). ODA_REPH seems to also have significant (positive) association with ODA targeting family planning (0.3). Consistent with many studies (e.g., Klasen 1999, 2002; Knowles, Lorgelly and Owen 2002; Balamounie-Lutz and McGillivray 2009), the correlations between income per capita and the measures of gender equality in education as well as female secondary and tertiary school enrolment rates are all positive and significant (exceeding 0.5 in all cases). Income also has significant positive correlation with polity and negative correlation with adolescent fertility rates. In addition, all indicators of women's access to secondary and tertiary education have the expected negative (and statistically significant) correlation with adolescent fertility rates.

3.3 Estimation results

Fixed-effects estimation results are displayed in Tables 3 and 4. The results in columns (1) and (2) in Table 3 indicate that ODA to women's equality organizations and institutions has a positive (significant at the 10-per cent level) effect on women's political empowerment (PSHWNP), while adolescent fertility rates, as well as the interplay between ODA_WEOI and adolescent fertility rates, have negative effects with the influence of the former being statistically significant at the 1-per cent level. On the other hand, female secondary school enrolments do not seem to have an effect on women's political empowerment.

Table 3: Using ODA and *secondary* school enrolments; fixed-effects (FE) estimates
Dependent variable: Women's political empowerment (PSHWNP)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Constant	20.33*** (7.5)	21.23*** (7.5)	25.72* (13.6)	26.17* (13.8)	26.42* (13.7)
FEM_SEC_ENR	0.101 (0.07)	0.11 (0.07)			
FEM_MALE_SEC_ENR			0.042 (0.11)	0.040 (0.12)	0.037 (0.12)
ODA_WEOI	0.020* (0.01)	0.020* (0.01)	0.023** (0.01)	0.024** (0.01)	0.024** (0.01)
ODA_FAMPLAN				-0.0003 (0.001)	
ODA_REPRO					0.0002 (0.0004)
ADOLFERT	-0.49*** (0.12)	-0.48*** (0.11)	-0.53*** (0.13)	-0.53*** (0.13)	-0.54*** (0.13)
Polity 2	0.30 (0.19)				
Autoc		-0.55* (0.31)	-0.55* (0.32)	-0.54* (0.33)	-0.54* (0.32)
ADOLFERT X ODA_WEOI	-0.0008* (0.0004)	-0.0008* (0.0004)	-0.001** (0.0004)	-0.001** (0.0004)	-0.001** (0.0004)
Obs	81	81	81	81	81
R-Squared					
Within	0.35	0.36	0.34	0.34	0.34
Between	0.06	0.06	0.09	0.09	0.09
Overall	0.03	0.03	0.05	0.05	0.04
Hausman Test ^a	33.66	35.71	48.97	40.66	44.11
[Prob > χ^2]	[0.00]	[0.00]	[0.00]	[0.00]	[0.00]

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. * indicates significance at 0.10, ** indicates significance at 0.05 and *** indicates significance at 0.01; ^a Ho: difference in coefficients not systematic.

Source: see text.

In columns (3)-(5), we replace female secondary enrolments by the ratio of female-to-male secondary school enrolments. This is in order to try to explore whether there are effects of gender inequality in secondary education on political participation. There is no statistical evidence that gender inequality in secondary education influences women's political participation. However, the statistical significance of the positive effects of ODA_WEOI improved. Note that we have included the variable 'female secondary school enrolments' although it has a somewhat significant negative correlation with adolescent fertility rates (Table 2) to try to capture the effects of female secondary education that are not reflected by the impact adolescent fertility rates. The nonsignificance of the effects of secondary school enrolments as well as of the ratio of female-to-male secondary enrolments remains the same even after excluding adolescent fertility rates from the right-hand side (results not shown but may be obtained from the author upon request.)

Table 4: Using *lagged* ODA and secondary school enrolments; fixed-effects (FE) estimates
Dependent variable: Women's political empowerment (PSHWP)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Constant	20.42** (7.6)	17.11** (7.7)	18.89** (7.8)	20.04** (7.6)	17.11** (7.8)	18.89** (7.8)	23.09* (13.54)	22.61* (13.49)	22.98* (13.60)
FEM_SEC_ENR	0.13* (0.07)	0.15** (0.07)	0.14* (0.07)	0.13* (0.07)	0.15* (0.07)	0.14* (0.07)			
FEM_MALE_SEC_ENR							0.073 (0.11)	0.070 (0.11)	0.072 (0.11)
ODA_WEOI	0.015* (0.007)	0.013* (0.007)	0.014* (0.007)	0.015* (0.007)	0.014* (0.007)	0.014* (0.007)	0.018** (0.007)	0.018** (0.007)	0.018** (0.007)
ODA_FAMPLAN		0.002 (0.001)			0.002 (0.001)			0.0017 (0.0013)	
ODA_REPRO			0.004 (0.004)			0.004 (0.004)			0.0003 (0.0004)
ADOLFERT	-0.47*** (0.11)	-0.43*** (0.11)	-0.46*** (0.12)	-0.47*** (0.12)	-0.43*** (0.12)	-0.46*** (0.12)	-0.51*** (0.13)	-0.50*** (0.13)	-0.51*** (0.13)
Autoc	-0.70** (0.33)	-0.72** (0.32)	-0.64** (0.33)	-0.70** (0.33)	-0.72** (0.32)	-0.65** (0.33)	-0.70** (0.34)	-0.71** (0.34)	-0.68* (0.34)
ADOLFERT X ODA_WEOI				-0.0005* (0.0002)	-0.0004 (0.0002)	-0.0005 (0.0004)	-0.0007** (0.0002)	-0.0006** (0.0002)	-0.0007** (0.0002)
Obs	80	80	80	80	80	80	80	80	80
R-Squared									
Within	0.37	0.40	0.38	0.37	0.40	0.38	0.34	0.36	0.35
Between	0.05	0.04	0.04	0.05	0.04	0.04	0.08	0.08	0.08
Overall	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.04	0.05	0.05
Hausman Test ^a [Prob > χ^2]	32.95 [0.00]	37.54 [0.00]	35.31 [0.00]	32.81 [0.00]	37.90 [0.00]	35.65 [0.00]	66.75 [0.00]	45.36 [0.00]	52.67 [0.00]

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. * indicates significance at 0.10, ** indicates significance at 0.05 and *** indicates significance at 0.01. ^a Ho: difference in coefficients not systematic; In other estimations (results are available upon request), I controlled for SSA (Sudan) and for fragility/conflict years (in particular in Yemen, Sudan and Syria) but the results remained unchanged and the coefficients on these dummies were statistically nonsignificant. I also included a variable for religious denomination for Shiite (fully Shiite countries such as in Iran and partially Shiite countries such as in Lebanon, Syria and Iraq) versus Sunni, especially because of the differences in inheritance laws but this variable religious denomination was not significant.

Source: see text.

We have also tried to examine the effects of ODA targeting family planning (ODA_FAMPLAN) and ODA targeting reproductive healthcare (ODA_REPH). However, we could not find any support for a positive influence of these types of ODA on women's political empowerment. In addition, we find that the interplay between ODA_WEA and adolescent fertility rates exerts a negative effect on women's political empowerment, suggesting that in the presence of higher levels of adolescent fertility rates, more ODA_WEA is associated with lower proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments.

As mentioned earlier, we perform robustness checks by using lagged values of ODA and report the results in Table 4. Using lagged ODA has the advantage of alleviating the potential problem of endogeneity that may result from simultaneity. The estimates shown in columns (1)-(6) in Table 4 confirm the results derived earlier, in that ODE_WEA has a positive impact on women's political empowerment, while autocracy and adolescent fertility rates have negative effects. The result associated with autocracy is in contrast with the findings in Stockemer (2011) who finds that non-democratic states in Africa have more female members in parliament than democratic states.

We also find that female secondary enrolments have a positive effect on women's political empowerment. The results in columns (7)-(9) of Table 4 seem to provide similar statistical evidence, but gender equality in secondary education does not appear to have a statistically significant (at the 10-per cent level or better) impact, although the variable has a positive coefficient. In addition, the interplay of ODA_WEA and adolescent fertility has a negative effect which is statistically significant (as in Table 3) but rather small in magnitude.

4 Summary and discussion

The question this paper addresses is relevant and timely for at least two reasons. First, women in the MENA region played an important role in the Arab Spring. However, the active participation of women in the Arab Spring has not been the same across countries, quite plausibly due to differences in gender equality (Tunisia, for example, versus Libya or Yemen), and we may expect the consequences of the Arab Spring for women empowerment and gender equality to be different in different countries. Furthermore, the rise of Islamist parties that have secured *de jure* (and possibly also *de facto*) political power in some countries seems to create new concerns about the fate of gender equality.

The Arab Spring and also the recent developments in the MENA region may cause foreign donors to rethink their aid allocation strategies. Harrigan (2011) who assesses the aid allocation process to North Africa in the past few decades, argues that the fact that past aid flows to the region have been strongly influenced by donor political interests 'has reduced the effectiveness of aid which, with the exception of Tunisia, has not been associated with sustained economic growth'. Furthermore the author suggests that the Arab Spring could provide an opportunity to reappraise aid flows to North Africa, and argues that 'future flows need to support the democratization process, generate pro-poor growth, support social safety nets and address the pressing issues of widening inequalities and unemployment'.

The empirical results obtained in this paper suggest that ODA to women's equality organizations and institutions (ODA_WEO) is in general effective. The independent effect of ODA_WEO is between 0.015 and 0.02, suggesting that a US\$200 increase in ODA (per 1,000 people; or US\$0.20 per capita, per year) to women's equality organizations and

institutions increases the proportion of shares held by women by about 3 points. We find that autocracy has a significant negative influence on women's political empowerment in the MENA countries, suggesting that autocratic regimes in general do not provide an institutional environment that would support women's political empowerment. We also find a robust negative effect from adolescent fertility. The evidence on the effects of female secondary school enrolments is less robust. We discuss the main policy implications of the empirical results in the next paragraphs.

First, women's equality organizations and institutions, which have grown remarkably in the post-Cold War era, have received large amounts of foreign aid in recent years. For example, total aid commitments to WEOI in Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia was about US\$11.5 million in 2010, up from US\$3.83 million in 2000, and reached a high US\$71.33 million in 2011 (while the gross disbursements were about US\$13.9 million on 2011). Indeed, women's equality organizations and institutions are using higher amounts of aid and are expected to continue to do so for the next few decades. It is, thus, important to assess the effectiveness of this type of foreign aid. Given that there seems to be empirical evidence (albeit preliminary) of the effectiveness of ODA to women's equality organizations and institutions in promoting women's political empowerment, there appears to be a case for increasing the allocation of this type of official development assistance. In addition, we argue that evidence of effectiveness may also be used to convince private donors to increasingly target women's equality organizations and institutions, especially at community and non-governmental levels.

Second, to the extent that women have significant political participation—a critical mass in national parliaments—we may expect a stronger push for gender equality. In this case, foreign aid to women's equality organizations and institutions could play a crucial role in enhancing women's role in shaping policies and laws in their countries. Indeed, the question of 'critical mass' is extremely important since only with much higher levels of parliamentary participation than currently exist in most MENA countries would women be able to affect major policies and laws. A critical mass for female parliamentary participation is also very important in post-conflict (post-revolution) parliaments (as has been observed in the case of Rwanda). It has been argued that women's contribution to world peace and economic and social progress could be significantly enhanced if their share in top political and policy and decisionmaking positions is high (Fukuyama 1998; Hunt 2007).

A number of studies have argued that women differ from men in their political and policy preferences (Edlund and Pande 2002; Edlund, Haider and Pande 2003; Chattopadhyay and Duflo (2004); Miller 2008; Beaman et al. 2010) and that 'increased female representation in politics is associated with significant changes in policy-making' (Franceschet, Krook and Piscopo 2009). Such changes in policy-making could be more significant the higher the proportion of women in national parliaments. In turn, changes in laws and policies that lead to more support for women's rights can enhance women's political empowerment by enabling more women to participate in politics. Foreign aid to women's equality organizations and institutions could play a *catalytic* role in this process; for example by funding women political leadership training programmes. In addition, previous studies have demonstrated that women in national parliaments can make a significant impact on health and education (Miller 2008; Chen 2010). Thus, an increase in the size of women's parliamentary representation may contribute to the effectiveness of foreign aid targeting health (including family planning) and education by including these sectors in the country's list of priority areas.

Third, the evidence on the positive influence of ODA to women's equality organizations and institutions is good news. On the other hand, given that this type of ODA is a very small proportion of total aid support to gender equality (see Table A2), one would hope that other types of aid programmes that may significantly affect women's wellbeing, such as aid targeting family planning and reproductive health would also contribute to promoting women's political empowerment. However, we find that neither ODA to family planning nor ODA to reproductive health has a positive impact on the share of seats held by women in national parliaments. Given that several studies have noted the ineffectiveness of aid to family planning to significantly reduce fertility rates in many countries (Pritchett 1994; Dalgaard and Hansen 2010) it is worth investigating whether foreign aid to family planning would be more effective if instead aid amounts are allocated directly to women's equality organizations and institutions with the view to promote women's political empowerment and higher parliamentary (lower house) representation, since a critical mass of female parliamentarians would support policies favouring a reduction in fertility rates and policies that tackle issues of importance to women (as noted in the previous paragraph).

Finally, and perhaps more importantly, in order to understand how the positive effects of ODA to women's equality organizations and institutions on women's political empowerment work, future research should examine the channels through which ODA_WEO is distributed and its various uses. Given the available data (and the macro-focus of this paper), this seems to be very difficult if not impossible to undertake at the macro level. In particular, it would be extremely helpful to identify what are the activities financed (fully or partially) with aid to women's equality organizations and institutions. How do they actually promote equality? Do they also focus on political empowerment and how? Surveys and micro-level studies of disaggregated foreign aid use should help shed light on these issues.

Indeed, there is a major challenge for donors, as argued by Nanivazo and Scott (2012), "to ensure that gender is, and remains, a development priority in an era of 'priority overload' in development policy, and globalization...The danger is that gender equality will be subsumed into wider discussions about inequality reduction in order to reduce priority overload, so negating the importance of gender'. Further investigating the effects of aid to women's equality organizations and institutions on women's political empowerment may provide useful insights for donors on how to address the challenge.

Appendix A

Table A1.

THE GENDER EQUALITY POLICY MARKER	
DEFINITION	<p>An activity should be classified as gender equality focused (score Principal or Significant) if:</p> <p>It is intended to advance gender equality and women's empowerment or reduce discrimination and inequalities based on sex.</p>
CRITERIA FOR ELIGIBILITY	<p>Gender equality is explicitly promoted in activity documentation through specific measures which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Reduce social, economic or political power inequalities between women and men, girls and boys, ensure that women benefit equally with men from the activity, or compensate for past discrimination; or b) Develop or strengthen gender equality or anti-discrimination policies, legislation or institutions. <p>This approach requires analysing gender inequalities either separately or as an integral part of agencies' standard procedures.</p>
EXAMPLES OF TYPICAL ACTIVITIES	<p>Examples of activities that could be marked as principal objective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -- legal literacy for women and girls; -- male networks against gender violence; -- a social safety net project which focuses specifically on assisting women and girls as a particularly disadvantaged group in a society; -- capacity building of Ministries of Finance and Planning to incorporate gender equality objectives in national poverty reduction or comparable strategies. <p>Such activities can target women specifically, men specifically or both women and men.</p> <p>Examples of activities that could be marked as significant objective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -- activity which has as its principal objective to provide drinking water to a district or community while at the same time ensuring that women and girls have safe and easy access to the facilities; -- a social safety net project which focuses on the community as a whole and ensures that women and girls benefit equally with men and boys.
<p>N.B. Support to women's equality organisations and institutions (CRS sector code 15170) scores, by definition, principal objective.</p>	

Source: OECD (2012).

Table A2: Aid in support of gender equality and women's empowerment, 2009-10 average (in 2009 US\$ million)

	Principal	Significant	Sub-Total: Gender Equality focused	Not targeted	Total: aid screened	Not screened	Sector allocable, total	Support to women's equality organisations and institutions
Australia	192	1,134	1,327	1,611	2,938	169	3,107	8
Austria	12	72	84	305	389	2	391	4
Belgium	95	523	618	494	1,111	177	1,289	9
Canada	1,003	336	1,339	1,027	2,366	146	2,512	7
Denmark	80	740	821	528	1,349	13	1,361	24
EU Institutions	53	1,593	1,645	9,364	11,009	213	11,222	33
Finland	19	406	425	433	858	0	858	5
France	12	2,138	2,150	4,205	6,355	475	6,830	2
Germany	237	3,760	3,996	3,962	7,959	1,382	9,340	33
Greece	2	107	108	77	185	0	185	0
Ireland	14	238	252	210	462	0	462	9
Italy	15	83	98	445	544	139	683	8
Japan	98	1,167	1,265	9,854	11,119	1,497	12,616	0
Korea	18	63	81	1,381	1,463	0	1,463	1
Luxembourg	11	52	64	74	138	59	197	0
Netherlands	190	348	538	4,001	4,539	0	4,539	20
New Zealand	12	105	117	60	177	0	177	2
Norway	209	620	829	1,826	2,655	0	2,655	71
Portugal	1	20	21	224	246	14	260	0
Spain	270	639	909	2,435	3,344	63	3,407	127
Sweden	294	1,143	1,437	291	1,728	3	1,731	15
Switzerland	16	128	144	732	876	0	876	1
United Kingdom	182	1,921	2,103	2,546	4,649	1,357	6,006	24
United States ¹	10	4,505	4,515	...	4,515	16,710	22,525	9
Total DAC members	3,044	21,842	24,886	46,087	70,974	22,420	94,693	410

(1) : In the case of the United States, the gender marker for 2009 was assigned based on a text search through project descriptions (using terms such as "girl" or "woman"); resulting data on gender equality-focused aid is not comparable with those reported by other donors. The United States is implementing an improved data collection procedure for the gender marker and will resume reporting for 2011 flows. The data presented are for 2009 only, with the exception of Sector Allocable and Support to women's organisations and institutions.

Source: OECD (2012).

Table A3: Women's legislative representation and use of quotas in the MENA region

Country	Lower or single House % Women	Upper House % Women	Quota/Appointed Seats
Algeria	31.60	5.10	A 2012 quota law stipulates that any party list of candidates for legislative elections or elections to wilayas and communal assemblies must include a one-third proportion of women candidates.
Bahrain	10.00	27.50	Women appointed to upper chamber.
Egypt	2.00	2.8	2011 election law: one woman should be included on each party list.
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	3.10	---	
Iraq	25.20	---	Quota Law: one out of first three candidates on a list must be woman.
Israel	20.00		Voluntary party quotas: Israel Labor Party 25% quota with no placement stipulation; Meretz-Yachad, women should make up 40% of party lists, Likud: at least one woman among to 10 after primaries.
Jordan	10.80	11.70	Reserved seats: Cabinet adopted a new 'temporary' election law (2010), raising the number of reserved seats for women from 6 to 12.
Kuwait	6.30	---	
Lebanon	3.10	---	
Libya	17.00	---	Article 15, Law on the Election of the National General Congress, May 2012, provides for the mandatory alternation of male and female candidates on the list of candidates submitted by parties for the proportional contest.
Morocco	17.00	2.20	Reserved seats: Voluntary Party quota, The Socialist Union of Popular Forces has 20% quota for party lists.
Oman	1.20	18.10	Both men and women are appointed to the upper house.
Saudi Arabia	0		
Sudan	24.61	17.90	Reserved seats: 25%.
Syrian Arab Republic	12.00		
Tunisia	26.70	---	According to 2011 quota law on parity at least half of party list is made up of women, alternating between men and women throughout the list.
Turkey	14.20	---	
United Arab Emirates	17.50	---	1 woman elected, 7 appointed.
Yemen	0.30	1.80	Both men and women are appointed to the upper house.

Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union (www.ipu.org) and Global Database of Quotas for Women (<http://www.quotaproject.org/>). Adapted from Tripp (2012).

Appendix B: Data description and source

ODA_WEOI: DAC official development assistance to women's equality organizations and institutions, gross disbursements in constant prices (2010 US\$ millions). I divided by population and multiplied by 1,000 to get ODA per 1,000 people. Source: OECD aid statistics database online.

ODA_REPH: DAC official development assistance to reproductive health care, gross disbursements in constant prices (2010 US\$ millions). I divided by population and multiplied by 1,000 to get ODA per 1,000 people. Source: OECD aid statistics database online.

ODA_WEOI: DAC official development assistance to family planning, gross disbursements in constant prices (2010 US\$ millions); I divided by population and multiplied by 1,000 to get ODA per 1,000 people. Source: OECD aid statistics database online.

PSHWNP: Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments (per cent). Source: World Bank World Development Indicators database online.

Income (log): Log of GDP per capita, PPP (current international \$). PPP GDP per capita is gross domestic product converted to international dollars using purchasing power parity rates. An international dollar has the same purchasing power over GDP as the US dollar has in the United States. Source: World Bank World Development Indicators database online.

FEM_SEC_ENR: Secondary enrolment (total, gross), female. The percentage of girls and boys enrolled in secondary levels in public and private schools. Gross enrolment is total enrolment, regardless of age, to the population of the age group that officially corresponds to the level of education shown. Source: World Bank World Development Indicators database online.

FEM_TERT_ENR: tertiary enrolment (total, gross), female. The percentage of girls and boys enrolled in tertiary levels in public and private schools. Gross enrolment is total enrolment, regardless of age, to the population of the age group that officially corresponds to the level of education shown. World Bank World Development Indicators database online.

ADOLFERT: Adolescent fertility rate (births per 1,000 women ages 15-19). World Bank World Development Indicators database online.

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