

No Revolutions without Equality and Justice: The struggle for women's rights in rethinking development in the Arab region

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ABSTRACT Kinda Mohamadieh highlights the shortcomings of the last two decades of policy practice in the Arab Region. She looks at the positions of feminist and women's groups on economic and social rights and policies in the Arab region addressing how to enforce equality and gender justice in the policymaking in the region. She discusses the economic and social demands that lie at the heart of the revolutions witnessed in the Arab region, as well as the challenges to reclaiming citizenship and democracy within a system of global governance tilted to serve a mainstream orthodox economic model. She highlights the need for deepening the perspective and position of feminist and women's groups on economic and social rights and policies in the Arab region.

KEYWORDS productive policies; investment and trade policies; women's empowerment; democracy; international financial institutions

Introduction

Women have been at the centre of citizens' movements and various forms of activism that led to the peoples' revolutions and uprisings in the Arab region. Women in their multiple capacities and roles; as students, activists with industry and labour groups, as intellectuals, teachers, mothers, civil society leaders, all contributed to making the revolutions a reality.

Peoples' revolutions and uprisings in the Arab region have inspired change on various levels, including the re-emergence of citizens' engagement in the public sphere. Many people saw an opportunity to re-establish the societal contract between the citizen and the state. Moreover, peoples' revolutions and uprisings surfaced the need to understand better the interface between political governance, social and economic policies, and peoples' right to development. It was economic grievances, poverty, inequalities, unemployment, deterioration of wages – the violations of social and economic rights – that have underpinned revolutions and uprisings in the Arab region. During this moment of transition and the struggle for sustainability of democratic practice in the Arab region

is also the rethinking the development paradigm, and the quest towards the right to development in the region's economic and social policy design.

The revolutions and transitions have made it clear that citizens must engage and actively practice their citizenship, in its economic, social, political, as well as cultural dimensions. It is citizenship and rights that have been reclaimed as the source of legitimacy for decision making and as a mechanism for maintaining accountability.

Challenges for women's rights

Alongside the optimism are the threats of a backlash against women's rights, which has quickly emerged after the fall of the old regimes in several of the Arab countries. The assault on women's groups and activists have emerged in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya. It seems that women's rights and struggles could witness a significant backlash and spaces for taking forward women's demands are already closing.

The emerging male-dominated leadership seems to forget that democracy without equality in all aspects, in law and practice, would present another form of authoritarianism (International Civil Society Action Network, 2011). The transitional political processes in Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya – including transitional committees – lacked fair representation of women. Political parties of an Islamist identity won majority in Egypt and Tunisia and in Morocco in the 2011 elections. Women were not fairly represented in national parliaments. Moreover, the role of religion in terms of defining women's roles and political, economic and social status has been increasing. Within such context, women's rights could become part of the political game whereby groups use it as a tool for gaining an image of liberalism, or for responding to the political ideology of their opposition, while not integrating gender equality in their practice nor internalizing the struggle for women's rights, equality, and justice in their work programs (Mustafa, 2011). Accordingly, for women in the Arab region, and specifically in countries that witnessed peoples' revolutions, there is a threat of

re-emergence of old struggles and there is a need to focus on expanding spaces for women's demands *vis-à-vis* other political, social, and civic stakeholders.

The big question is whether the revolutions laid down the foundations for a governance system and policy practice built on rights, equality, and justice. Indeed, would the peoples' movements potentially establish a framework to question the economic and social governance structures from a rights' approach? Given the global economic governance within which Arab realities are closely intertwined, is it possible to achieve an economic revolution at the national level, including re-organizing social and power relations that influence re-organizing economic realities? Are we able to address the distribution of economic resources and promote economic independence of women, which is closely intertwined with achieving more political participation? Overall, do the movements stand to reflect a revolution in reality when considered in terms of their impact on the realities of rights, equalities, inclusion, and gender justice?

Shortcomings in the policy practice in the Arab region

What is evident from the previous decades of political rule and policy practice in the Arab countries is the neglect of the national development project (vision/strategy) and the decay in statecraft. The interest of rulers focused on gaining support of the international community, including major economic blocks and international financial institutions, by adopting the accepted orthodox economic recipes. Economic orthodoxy was used to build international support, despite the oppressive nature of the political governance and the blunt abuse of human rights. In this way, political and economic powers converged, and economic resources were increasingly centralized and monopolized under the control of the few that were either part of the ruling family, party, or close to those circles.

For the last three decades, economies in the Arab region have been increasingly constructed

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Figure 1: Growth, wages, and labour productivity in Egypt.

Source: GDP growth annual percent: World Bank available at <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG>

- Labour productivity percentage change: Own calculations based on $Labour\ productivity = \frac{GDP}{Total\ Employment}$ formulation. For this calculation GDP data is retrieved from World Bank GDP (current US\$) available at <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD/countries>
- Total employment data is retrieved from ILO LabourSta available at <http://laborsta.ilo.org/>
- Growth of real minimum monthly wage in percent p.a.: as calculated in *ILO Global Wage Report 2010–2011* noted that annual growth rates are generally calculated based on nominal values and the CPI published by the International Monetary Fund. Available at <http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms.145265.pdf>
- Data compiled and graph prepared by Bihter Moschini – Arab NGO Network for Development

around a form of growth that neglects development objectives and peoples' economic and social rights. Policymakers have prioritized integration in the global economy through trade and investment liberalization, borrowing, expansion of privatization deals and public–private partnerships, and overall economic deregulation.¹ Macroeconomic policies were re-oriented to prioritize inflation targeting, attracting foreign direct investment (FDI), and increasing openness to trade and capital flows (UNCTAD, 2011). The role of macroeconomic policies in supporting a longer-term development-oriented strategy was neglected. Concurrently, national productive capacities have been marginalized along with the national development project generally, which includes addressing inequalities, empowering people through employment generation and just wage policies, and establishing comprehensive rights-based social plans (UNDP/League of Arab States, 2009).

Despite sustained economic growth and labour productivity gains in most Arab countries, the

wage share of national incomes has either stagnated or declined (see Figures 1 and 2). The United Nations Commission for Trade and Development (UNCTAD) shows that for Egypt, Tunisia, and Morocco, the wage share averaged around 33 percent of national income since the mid-1990s, with some short-lived improvement around 2005, after which it has declined (UNCTAD policy brief). Wage depression has been associated with labour market flexibility and prioritizing competitiveness of export-oriented sectors. Consequently, we saw countries achieve economic growth, while poverty, unemployment, and inequities were on the rise. Indeed, while Arab countries achieved an average gross domestic product (GDP) growth between 5 and 6 percent (2007/2008), poverty ranged between 8 and 30 percent across the Arab region, while unemployment stood around 14 percent in 2009 and reached 40 percent in countries like Sudan and Yemen (Joint Arab Economic Report, 2009/2010).² It is worth noting that unemployment is concentrated among women and young persons, whereby the International

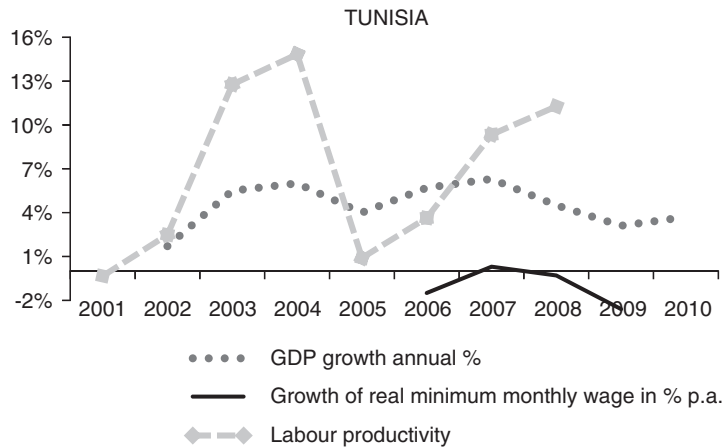


Figure 2: Growth, wages, and labour productivity in Tunisia.

Sources:

- GDP growth annual percent: World Bank available at <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG>
- Labour productivity percentage change: Own calculations based on $Labour\ productivity = GDP/Total\ Employment$ formulation. For this calculation GDP data is retrieved from World Bank GDP (current US\$) available at <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD/countries>
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Labour Organization (ILO) have reported an average of 21.5 percent of unemployment among young people of the Arab countries in 2010, rising to an average of 33 percent among young women in the same year (Tzannatos *et al.*, 2011).

The social and economic policies were not designed to serve the development goals and rights of citizens. The kind of growth achieved did not work for women and equality, nor did it work for a lot of other societal factions and groups. Inequalities, reflected in wages, access to employment, and overall social vulnerabilities, were increasing among regions (centre and peripheries), among men and women, and young and older populations.

Establishing a development strategy and rethinking the role of the developmental and democratic state

372 The core challenge for peoples' and officials in the Arab countries lies in rebuilding the national

development project (vision/strategy). This necessitates reclaiming policymaking, and re-enforcing the principles of sovereignty, equality, justice, and the right to development. Because policy-making was too often a reaction to what was expected, demanded, and sometimes conditioned by external actors the state in the Arab region took a passive strategy, rather than an 'activistic and idealistic' role (Reinert, 1999).

Today, building a new societal contract in the Arab countries requires rethinking the role of the state. This includes thinking through various roles of the state as a major element in establishing well-functioning markets, and as a social investor and proactive agent for long-term investment in the real economy. These various roles would address process and institution building, income distribution and social and gender justice, and promotion of the adequate form of economic growth that could positively contribute to strengthening its former roles (Reinert, 1999).

Feminist and women's groups on economic and social rights and policies in the Arab region

Women's civic and political rights as well as their economic, social, and cultural rights and empowerment are closely interlinked. Economic, social, and cultural pressures placed on women in Arab societies hinder the process of achieving progress on the political and civic fronts. Economic independence is an essential factor for achieving higher participation in the public sphere, and higher political voice and representation. Access to education and job opportunities – grounded in the framework of decent work³ – are necessary entry points for economic independence. This interface reflects the internal relationship between different kinds of freedoms, which is reflected in Amartya Sen's approach to 'development as freedom', under which he articulates how 'economic unfreedom', in the form of extreme poverty, can make a person subject to violations of other kinds of freedoms, while 'political unfreedom' can also foster 'economic unfreedom' (Sen, 2000, cited in Chimni, 2008: 5).

Addressing women's participation at the economic level cannot be detached from the overall reform of economic and development models adopted in the Arab region. Systemic revisions of policies for achieving women's rights and economic empowerment need to be integrated into the overall revision of development policies and efforts towards economic justice, building the productive sectors, eradicating poverty, creating employment, and reforming education. Moreover, addressing women's rights cannot be undertaken in a piecemeal approach that focuses on specific indicators and marginalizes the broader policy context. A piecemeal approach would lead to the paradoxical outcomes that the World Bank (WB) refers to as the 'paradox in gender equality' in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. The latter is used in reference to the delink between the progress achieved by countries in the region in closing gender gaps in education and health outcomes, from the ability to achieve higher rates of female participation in economic and political life (Vishwanath, 2012).

Women's groups in the Arab region have often not been vocal on economic rights as much

as political and civic rights. It remains a challenge to build a movement on the economic and social front when women's rights groups are facing a backlash on the political and personal rights' front. However, it is important to realize that this focus on one aspect of the rights' discussion is not limited to the Arab region or to civil society organizations. Indeed, it is observed that scholarly feminist work often focuses on one aspect of violation of women's rights to the exclusion or neglect of others, which poses a challenge to addressing the universality of rights (Fagbonbe, 2008: 406).⁴

Today, feminist and women's rights groups along with other civil society organizations have a major role in ensuring that reforms in the Arab countries fully embody principles of justice, human rights, non-discrimination, and equality. They face the challenge of ensuring that women's rights are at the centre of the undertaken reforms, including constitutional and other legislative reforms, as well as overall political, economic, social, and cultural reforms. These groups face the challenge of shifting from a defensive position to a more proactive role in public policymaking, thus elaborating and promoting alternatives on all fronts. Feminist and women rights' groups need to strengthen and deepen solidarity and common platforms for struggles against economic and social oppression. Such platforms would provide the scene to strengthen social movements and put at the heart of various societal struggles the notions of equality and non-discrimination.

Equality and gender justice and development-focused policymaking

One of the core challenges facing peoples' and officials in the Arab countries today lies in designing alternative development paradigms and rebuilding the national development project (vision/strategy). Yet, the interface between challenges emerging out of globalization, undemocratic global economic governance, lack of stability, occupations and internal conflicts in the Arab region, along with multiple forms of violence and discrimination against women intensify the challenges facing the debate around alternative development paradigms.

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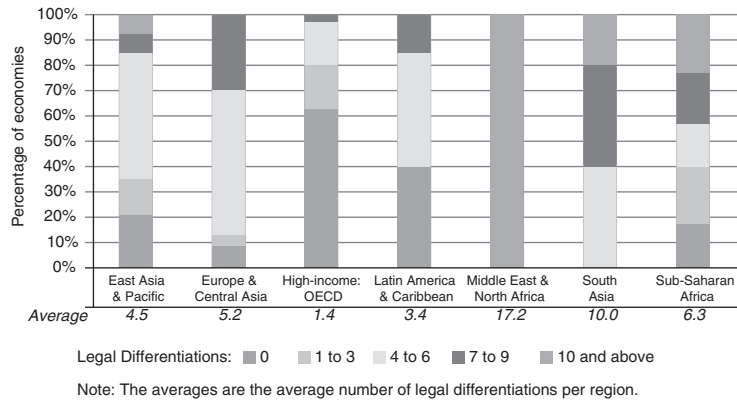


Figure 3: Legal differentiation in the Middle East and North Africa

Source: World Bank/International Finance Corporation, 2012. *Women Business and the Law 2012*: 14. Available at <http://wbl.worldbank.org>. The Middle East and North Africa region witnesses the highest average of legal differentiations between men and women compared with other regions. Greater lack of parity is associated with lower labour force participation by women

Rethinking development paradigms necessitates rethinking variety of economic policy tools, including trade, investment, finance, tax and other policies. These policies ought to be redesigned in support of nationally identified long-term dynamic development processes, and within a sequence that is aligned with the achieved levels of development and targeted development objectives. At the heart of such processes is rebuilding productive sectors, employment generation, redistribution, and the equal opportunity for everyone to participate in and benefit from these processes. Moreover, this necessitates rethinking regulatory frameworks and related public institutions in support of developmental goals set in place.

Within such context, the focus would not be on the levels of achieved economic growth, but on how economic growth is created and how trade, investment, and finance dynamically interacts with development objectives such as employment generation, reduction of poverty, and overall redressing of inequalities.

Within the same context, there is a need to unpack the assumption that economic growth would automatically spill over into more spaces for women's economic empowerment and if so, break the cycle of political and personal rights' repression. There is a need to look closer at what

women's employment, and progress on women's economic and social rights. Moreover, there is a need to investigate the kinds of growth policies that actually feed into the process of redressing inequalities that women suffer from. This includes investigating the policies that would contribute to empower and enforce the rights of women, and the kind of gender-based positive discrimination measures and laws that are needed to redress the discrimination by law and practice that is evident today (see Figure 3).

It is essential to struggle for the framework of rights, equality, inclusion, and gender justice as the basis for redesigning these policies. It is as well crucial to situate the extent to which these policies serve progress on the equality and justice front as main indicators for measuring their success or failure.

Re-thinking productive policies

Arab economies have generally witnessed a regress in productive sectors manifested in stagnating shares of agriculture and manufacturing to GDP and a rapid expansion in low value added services activities, combined with a regress in the contribution of productivity to employment (Arnim *et al.*, 2011). Addressing the unemployment challenge in the Arab region cannot be

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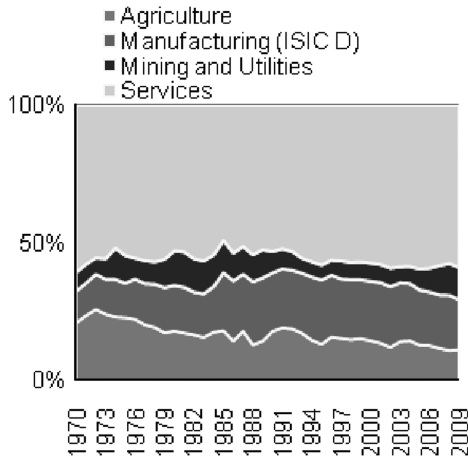


Figure 4: Percentage of Contribution of Various Sectors to GDP – Tunisia

Source: Arnim *et al.*, (2011). Source of data: Authors estimates based on data from National Account, UNSD

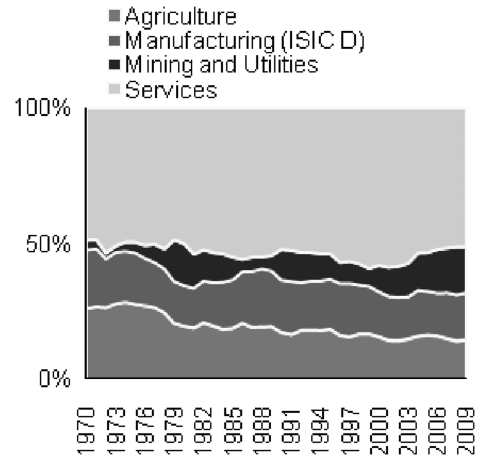


Figure 5: Percentage of Contribution of Various Sectors to GDP – Egypt

Source: Arnim *et al.*, (2011). Source of data: Authors estimates based on data from National Account, UNSD

detached from addressing the challenge of reviving the productive capacities and breaking away from the concentration on patterns of low productivity and low job generation. Re-establishing the development policies in the areas of agriculture, industry, and services would necessitate a structural transformation that is only enabled through a deliberate and dynamic policy framework under which trade, investment, and finance policies are established to support and expand policy space and not burden it.

Choosing to promote equality and gender justice through productive sector policies would necessitate an understanding of the roles that women play in these sectors, the forms of discrimination by law and practice that they face, and accordingly developing policy approaches and mechanisms that deliberately and positively promote gender equality and justice.

When it comes to agriculture, women's employment in the Arab region has been highly concentrated in this sector. The share of women's employment outside the agricultural sector is as low as 20 percent (year 2008) in the MENA countries, compared with 40 percent globally (United Nations MDGs Review, 2010). In fact, the MENA region was the only region where women's employment in agriculture increased

significantly in the last decade, from 33 percent of total female employment in 1996 to 39 percent in 2006 (World Bank, 2009).

In the aftermath of the global economic and financial crisis (2008) the agricultural sector suffered a decline, specifically in North African countries, which can be linked to a reduction of agricultural exports (Tzannatos *et al.*, 2011). This placed increased stress on women's employment opportunities and their sources of income, thus increasing the incidence of poverty among them. The concentration of women's employment in this sector reflects the broader shortfalls they face in terms of access to education, health-care services, and social security. In addition, inadequate investment in rural infrastructure and limited access by women to land and credit add layers to the vulnerabilities of women's engagement in the agricultural sector.

Accordingly, the policies related to the agricultural sector highly influence the opportunities for enhancing women's participation in this sector, including moving their participation from a vulnerable status to the paid and decent work framework.

Redressing the decline in the agricultural sector given its social and economic role cannot be undertaken without an active role by the state

in clarifying a longer-term policy for developing the sector. Such a strategy would address the legal framework needed to support a kind of investment in this sector that is productive. This legal framework should be respectful of the rights of the rural communities, and empowering small-scale farmers that are the majority of the communities involved in this sector in the Arab countries, and among which women's participation is concentrated. Such an active role for the state as an entrepreneur and proactive investor in productive capacities – within a policy that attracts a wider pool of investors to the sector – does not refute a role for the private sector. On the contrary, it complements it and secures a development-oriented policy that is as well conducive to the participation of the private sector.

Similarly, a comprehensive and dynamic development plan that integrates a gendered lens is needed in various productive sectors, including in industry and services.

Rethinking investment and trade policies

Designing trade and investment policies to benefit development objectives is crucial to a successful development trajectory. Otherwise, rules established through trade and investment agreements often do hinge on national policy space for development. Furthermore, the discussion around the linkages between investment and trade policies to development cannot be gender blind, especially in a context where development challenges and inequalities are disproportionately concentrated among women.

Linking investment and trade policies to a development strategy that give due consideration to equality and gender justice necessitates re-orienting the management of foreign trade and investment to support such processes, including investing in sectors that are core to women's economic empowerment. Moreover, this necessitates thinking the various roles of public and private investments, differentiating between 'productive' and 'unproductive' investments, and rethinking regulatory frameworks and related institutions in support of broader development goals.

376 When discussing investment policy and FDI, policymakers in the Arab region and advice

coming from various international financial institutions have often focused on the need to establish an 'enabling environment' to attract investment and improve the business climate. This often focused on promoting more investment zones where investors are credited with lower regulation and taxation, as well as strengthening investor rights (IMF, 2011), relaxing labour market regulations, and signing on to more investment and trade liberalization agreements (the latter 'often' include chapters on investment and investor protection rules). While signing bilateral investment treaties and free trade agreements (FTA) have not been empirically linked to attracting higher levels of FDI, the rules established through these agreements have often hinged on the national policy space and limited the policy tools that allow tightening the linkage between investment and development.

For example, Arab countries have considered establishing Qualified Industrial Zones (QIZ) as tools to attract FDI. Both Jordan and Egypt have established several of these zones (Ghoneim and Awad, 2009).⁵ Evidence showed that women employment was significant among the local labour employed in these zones. In Jordan, around 60 percent of the Jordanians working in QIZs are females, who are often very young, aged between 18 and 30, mostly single with secondary school education and little or no previous work experience (Ghoneim and Awad, 2009: 20).⁶ However, experience showed as well that the impact of the QIZ on productivity and employment of the local population have been minimal (Ghoneim and Awad, 2009). Worse, the QIZs have been associated with serious violations of workers' rights, including extended working hours, no pay, physical and sexual abuse, and deprivation of other basic human and labour rights.⁷ Some analysts may present the high numbers of women participation in QIZ as a positive aspect. However, it is essential to question the kinds of jobs women are being offered and whether these trends of increased employment for women reflect improvements on the equality and justice front, or re-enforce discrimination and violation of rights that women suffer from.

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It is imperative that investment policy frameworks in Arab countries be revised from a feminist and gender perspective to understand how national investment policies and FDI affects women's roles at home and in the labour market, and how gender affects foreign investment and its contributions to development (Braunstein, 2006).

International financial institutions in the Arab region⁸

In the aftermath of peoples' revolutions in the Arab region, international financial institutions expanded their role and lending in the region. The International Monetary Fund (IMF), the WB, and the European Investment Bank (EIB) were quick to offer their services and increase their lending in the Arab region.⁹ The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) was given a new mandate to intervene in Egypt, Tunisia, Jordan, and Morocco. The G8 and G20 made it clear that any assistance to the countries witnessing change will be channeled through the international financial institutions and multilateral development banks.¹⁰

At the forefront of its report entitled 'Economic Transformation in MENA: Delivering on the Promise of Shared Prosperity' that was presented to the G8 Summit (May 2011), the IMF focused on the need for 'substantial increase in the pace of economic growth' followed by a direct call for 'policies that support an enabling environment for the private sector' and focus on 'macro-economic stability needs' (IMF, 2011). The IMF continues to underline the need for revisiting the role of the public sector and providing space for a vibrant private sector – including more commercial approach to public activities such as competitive tendering and contracting out some public services to the private sector (IMF, 2011: 11). The Report's recommendations focus on improving the business climate, including promoting more of the investment zones where investors are credited with lower regulation and taxation, as well as strengthening investor rights. It calls for developing financial systems with a wider reach – focusing on liberalization of entry and reassessing

role of state banks,¹¹ as well as fostering trade integration – focusing on further liberalization of trade in services, liberalization of capital flows and investment, and freedom of establishment (IMF, 2011: 12–13). The report recommends as well relaxing labour market regulations. Besides, the IMF continues on to caution against additional spending for social purposes¹² and recommends that governments focus on 'better-targeted social protection mechanisms' (IMF, 2011: 13) such as cash transfers and other forms of income support.

It is evident that the IMF continues focusing its policy recommendations on tight fiscal and monetary policies, including austerity measures and inflation targeting, as well as trade and financial liberalization and deregulation,¹³ while avoiding any alternative targets for macro-economic policies that could be more enshrined in development objectives related to employment and productive capacities. Indeed, while the Fund was rapid to add rhetoric around social policies, pro-poor development, and inclusivity to its discourse, there appears to be very little difference between what is being advocated to Arab governments and peoples today and what was advocated to Arab dictators yesterday (Bond, 2011). This kind of 'discourse repackaging' is not new to the international institution. Similarly, in the aftermath of the crisis, the IMF reinvented itself as an institution that can address the crisis, and had adopted over the years pro-poor gender and environment language as a package for the same orthodox policy advice it promotes.

It is clear that the priorities of these institutions revolve around re-enforcing the economic choices it promoted with previous regimes, while avoiding to discuss the proven inadequacy of such choices for the development challenges that Arab countries have been facing. Accordingly, they are keen to present the shortcomings of the economic model they promoted to previous regimes as stemming from applying the model under undemocratic oppressive contexts and not as a failing of the economic model itself.¹⁴ This presents an attempt to re-establish the space for promoting orthodox economic advice and the underlying assumption of neo-liberalism, which assumes

strong links between economic liberalization and democratic transformation.¹⁵

The social and gendered-differentiated impacts of these macroeconomic policies often go unstudied or noted (Braunstein, 2012), while the accepted discourses on these policies and the related technical models illustrating them remain 'bearers of gender' (Elson 1998, cited by Braunstein, 2012: 33). In a letter to the IMF's managing director, civil society organizations stressed that such policies that focus on shrinking government spending on basic needs have deepened poverty worldwide, especially among women and girls who constitute the majority of the poor and increased women's home-based care and reduced their time available for paid work. The letter notes 'IMF-required public sector downsizing has also eliminated jobs and benefits, which particularly impacts women who are the first to lose jobs and last to be rehired because they are (usually falsely) assumed to be secondary breadwinners. This tragic pattern increases women's unpaid labour at home, and in subsistence farming and the informal sector. The IMF's failure to recognize this unpaid labour in national accounts further reinforces gender inequality'.¹⁶

Other international financial institutions that are expanding their role in the Arab region, including the EIB and the EBRD, also replicate this approach. For example, in its Technical Assessment Reports prepared for Egypt and Tunisia, the EBRD refers the shortcomings of the policies implemented in the previous period to 'pathologies linked to the implementation and focus of reforms, and their incompleteness, rather than limitations inherent in market-oriented economic systems' (EBRD, 2011). Accordingly, this approach often limits the capacity of these institutions to identify the mismatch between several areas of policy liberalization and the levels of development in these countries, and accordingly limits their ability to propose and develop interventions that are more well entrenched with the development objectives at the national level.

Such a role for international financial institutions in the region might present a way towards restraining the revolution within certain boundaries and convincing governments that the only

option on the economic front is to re-stabilize the previous economic models instead of democratically redesigning economic choices and nurturing alternative development policies at the national level. Conditioned policy-based loans have the potential of intensifying gender inequalities or reinforcing them and undermining the ability of women to break out of poverty. Indeed, such context contributes to marginalizing the demands for women's rights and gender issues, which in turn impacts the spaces for women to change and to take on different roles. It could reflect a backlash against thinking economic alternatives and policies in support of women's rights in the Arab countries. Such influence by global economic and financial powers should not escape the scrutiny of the people and civil society, including women's rights groups, labour groups, as well as political parties.

Conclusion

While the region is facing different forms of change and at various levels, there is an increasing attempt by various actors and groups to claim their interventions in the service of the revolutions' goals and peoples' aspirations. Increasingly, policy makers in the governments and transition governments, political parties, labour groups, and various civil society organizations articulate their agendas in reference to the revolutions goals and citizens' rights, or with higher reference to social and pro-poor rhetoric.

This stems from the reality that – after the peoples' revolutions and uprisings – the source of legitimacy of policy processes is increasingly rooted in citizen's rights and the principles of freedom, equality, and justice. Yet, equality and justice cannot be achieved without equality and justice for women and women's rights.

Challenges on this front emerge from national dynamics as well as global realities. Indeed, it is evident that within today's global economic governance, there is a threat of 'reducing the meaning of democracy to electing representatives who irrespective of their ideological affiliations are compelled to pursue the same social and economic policies' (Chimni, 2006: 1). Furthermore, fostering national leadership that prioritizes national

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public interest based on democratic and developmental visions and strategies remain a challenge in Arab countries. This context sums the main challenges to reclaiming citizenship and democracy in the Arab countries and the possibilities for a clash down on spaces for people to draw up new economic and social realities.

Seeking to break away from attempts for re-enforcing or re-establishing oppression of people's rights and demands necessitates continuous public questioning of local political stakeholders – including government officials, legislatures, as

well as active political parties – on their social and economic agendas and how it services development, at the heart of which should be the principles of equality, justice, and citizen's rights. We need to think and question the social pact that elected parties and politicians commit to, the economic and development visions that underpin their program of work, and the extent to which it makes possible breaking away from the regressive cycles against women's rights, while prioritizing equality and social and gender justice (Figures 4 and 5)

Notes

- 1 These are part of the package of neo-liberal policy reforms that came to be known as the Washington Consensus, see: <http://www.cid.harvard.edu/cidtrade/issues/washington.html>.
- 2 Arab countries have been witnessing growth in GDP since 2003, whereby they registered 7.3 percent GDP growth rate in 2003 compared with 3 percent in 2002. This continued throughout 2004, 2005, and 2006, where Arab countries registered an average growth rate of 7.3 percent, 8 percent, and 6.6 percent, respectively. The percentage of GDP growth rate achieved by Arab countries in 2008 was around 6.6 percent, up from 5.2 percent in 2007. (Joint Arab Economic Report 2010 and 2009; available online at: <http://www.amf.org.ae/content/joint-arab-economic-report>). For more information, see: <http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/decent-work/lang-en/index.htm>
- 3 Decent work framework refers to work opportunities that are productive, deliver fair income, guarantees rights at work, social protection, gender equality, and social dialogue. <http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/decent-work/lang-en/index.htm>.
- 4 Fagbonbe argues that 'It is not uncommon for feminist human rights scholars to focus on domestic violence, such as female genital cutting or veiling. Although such a focus is not of itself unreasonable, the neglect of other areas is problematic' Fagbonbe (2008).
- 5 QIZ is a US trade initiative to promote the political goal of effective normalization between Israel and its Arab neighbours, Egypt and Jordan. QIZ were created based on the amendment of the United States-Israel FTA in 1996 to extend the preferential duty free treatment for products of Israeli origin in the United States market, to include exports from geographically designated areas in Egypt and Jordan given specific rules of origin requirements.
- 6 Ghoneim and Awad explain that these numbers can be explained by the fact that: 'activities are concentrated in garment and apparel sector, which is apparently better suited for female skills and or deemed less desired by Jordanian males'.
- 7 'Statement On Labor Strikes in the Qualifying Industrial Zones (QIZ)', 25 April 2011. Available at: <http://www.menaobservatory.org/statement-on-labor-strikes-in-the.html>, accessed on 8 June 2012) and 'Jordan: Report notes regular abuse of workers in Qualified Industrial Zones', 16 May 2006. Available at: <http://www.irinnews.org/Report/26884/JORDAN-Report-notes-regular-abuse-of-workers-in-Qualified-Industrial-Zones> (accesses on 8 June 2012)
- 8 This section is based on the article entitled: The Demands for New Development Models at the Center of the Peoples' Revolutions in the Arab Region: Threats from Multilateral and Regional Financial and Development Institutions (Mohamadieh, 2011).
- 9 The IMF noted its offer to assist in developing *the economic strategy of the MENA countries and translating it into a costed multi-year sector-by-sector development agenda, embedded in a medium-term macroeconomic framework* (IMF, 2011). The World Bank announced additional lending under the Development Policy Lending. Available at: <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/MENAEXT/0,,a,bcontentMDK:22946182pagePK:146736piPK:146830theSitePK:256299,00.html>. World Bank Program Information Document (29 April 2011), Report No.: AB6555. Available at: <http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/main?pagePK=64193027&piPK=64187937&theSitePK=523679&menuPK=64187510&searchMenuPK=64187283&siteName=WDS&entityID=000001843.20110601141936> and <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/NEWS/0,,contentMDK:23018433pagePK:64257043piPK:437376theSitePK:4607,00.html>

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- 10 As early as February 2011, in a statement resulting from their meeting in Paris, the G20 countries announced that they stand ready to support Egypt and Tunisia, with responses at the appropriate time well coordinated with the international institutions and the regional development banks to accompany reforms designed to the benefit of the whole population and the stabilization of their economies; <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-02-19/g-20-country-ready-to-support-egypt-tunisia-after-revolts.html> (accessed 25 October 2011) and <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/3/12/5955/Business/Economy/G-offers-Egypt,-Tunisia-help,-not-blessing.aspx> (Accessed 25 October, 2011)
- 11 The report states: 'Areas of action include strengthening the financial infrastructure (e.g., credit information and creditor rights); enhancing competition by removing barriers to entry and reducing regulatory tolerance toward large exposures and connected lending, reassessing the role of state banks; developing the non-bank financial system; and deepening local debt and equity markets to provide alternative sources of finance' (IMF, 2011: 12).
- 12 The report states: 'With mostly limited fiscal space, MENA oil importers confront the immediate challenge of preserving macroeconomic stability while building social cohesion. Additional spending in the short term is understandable and necessary to ensure social cohesion. Nonetheless, oil importers cannot afford to strain public finances, in order not to derail – over the medium-term – the pursuit of the new inclusive growth agenda. To this end, they will need to partially offset some of the additional cost of higher subsidies and other support measures through cuts elsewhere. In the same vein, they will also need to avoid introducing measures that would raise spending on a permanent basis. To preserve market confidence and prevent further escalation of the cost of funding, governments should detail credible plans for unwinding emergency measures' (IMF, 2011: 7).
- 13 This set of policies has been described by Dani Rodrick as Augmented Washington Consensus reduction (Rodrick, 2006, cited by Braunstein, 2012: 2).
- 14 The report states that 'economic reforms had started in several countries during the last decade. But in the context of declining state legitimacy, low levels of political participation, nepotism, perceptions of corruption and predation, and little accountability, reforms were too partial to take real hold or to transform sclerotic intuitions. Often they were perceived to increase inequality, and benefit the politically connected elite' (World Bank, 2011: 1).
- 15 This approach claims that by undertaking reforms of regulations pertaining to competition, investment, dispute settlement, and so on, new economic stakeholders would play a bigger role in the national economy. (Griswold, D., 2007. Trade, Democracy and Peace: The Virtuous Cycle. Available at: <http://www.cato.org/pub.display.php?pubid=10712>. It is worth noting that in 2001, the Bush administration called for the democratization of the Arab region through promoting bilateral FTAs.
- 16 'Women's Letter to Christine Lagarde' (August 2011). Statement signed by more than 40 organizations worldwide. Available at: <http://www.genderaction.org/campaigns/lagarde711.html>.

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