THE EFFECTIVENESS OF FOREIGN AID TO WOMEN’S EQUALITY ORGANISATIONS IN THE MENA

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Abstract: We use panel data (covering the period 2002–2010) from 13 MENA 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 results suggest that official development assistance to women’s equality organisations and institutions is effective in increasing women’s political empowerment. We find that autocracy exerts a negative influence on women’s political empowerment while higher adolescent fertility rates are associated with smaller proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments. We comment on the policy implications of the main findings.

Keywords: development aid; gender equity; women’s empowerment; MENA

JEL: D63; F35; O15

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. However, recent reviews of progress towards achieving Millennium Development Goal 3 (MDG3) note that progress has been ‘sluggish’ and that this goal remains unfulfilled (Waage et al., 2010; United Nations, 2012). In particular, women’s participation in politics and business remain low in many countries. Thus, gender equality and women’s empowerment remains a critical goal in the post-2015 development agenda and is the stated objective of sustainable development goal 5.¹

¹The world community has adopted a post-2015 agenda for sustainable development and identified 17 goals, referred to as Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs are clearly influenced either directly (e.g. SDG 5—achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls—and SDG 10—reduce inequality within and among countries) or indirectly by women’s empowerment.

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The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region has substantially reduced gender inequality in education and health outcomes, but inequality in employment remains significant in many countries in the region (Klasen & Lamanna, 2009; United Nations, 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.

The Beijing call for at least 30 per cent reservations for women (quotas)\(^2\) in electoral bodies (United Nations, 1995) seems to have contributed to increasing the share of women in national parliaments in many countries in the last two decades. Nevertheless, 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 house\(^3\) (Table A3). 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 & Krook, 2008; Swiss, Fallon & 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 organisations and institutions (ODA_WEOI) on women’s political empowerment. Aid to WEOI supports government programmes as well as civil society programmes and initiatives. An example of aid to government programmes is a grant of US$9.616million in 2007 to support the ‘program for the fight against gender-based violence through the empowerment of women and girls in Morocco’. Examples of official development assistance (ODA) in support of WEOI provided to non-governmental organisations include a grant in 2005 (over US$2.3million) to support Arganier cooperatives in Morocco’s rural areas in the south specifically aimed at improving women’s job opportunities; two grants in 2009 totalling over US$3.2million to promote networking for women’s rights and to support KAI Farmer Field Schools (focused on rural women) in Egypt; and ODA grant to the Tunisian Association Beity (my house) for women’s economic and social rights in 2013.\(^4\)

We use 2002–2010 panel data from 13 MENA countries and control for several relevant variables, including the share of women in secondary education, political institutions, adolescent fertility, and aid targeting reproductive health and family planning. Based on the empirical results, we outline some policy implications on why and how donors should provide more aid targeting WEOI.

This study aims to make a novel contribution to the literature on the effectiveness of aid in general (by focusing on ODA to WEOI in the MENA region, instead of assessing aid’s impact on growth or income as is often performed in the aid effectiveness literature), and

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\(^2\)It is worth noting that there exists an important literature on the effects of quotas on women’s empowerment. Interesting discussions are presented in Caul (2001), Dahlerup (2003), Rai \etal\. (2006), Frechette \etal\. (2008) and Jones (2009).

\(^3\)However, Algeria had a low proportion of seats held by women in the national parliament until 2011. This proportion reached 7.7 per cent in 2007–2010.

\(^4\)Source: http://www.openaiddata.org/
on the impact of aid on women’s political empowerment in particular. This is the first empirical study to examine the effects of ODA to women’s equality organisations on women’s political empowerment.5

The remainder of the paper is organised 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 economics 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.

2.1.1 Gender equality and women’s empowerment and development

The role of gender equality in development, growth and poverty reduction has been documented in many studies6 Furthermore, the role of women’s political empowerment in promoting gender equality and societal well-being has been emphasised in many studies (for example, Grown et al., 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 10 to 15 years, although several challenges remain. The presence of women at the negotiating table in the official peace processes can allow the inclusion of provisions in favour of more gender equality as noted in Demetriades (2009).

2.1.2 Aid effectiveness and aid in support of gender equality and women’s empowerment

The literature on aid effectiveness (which is concerned to a large part with the growth effects 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.7 However, this paper relates to the

5 A Google’s search on 31 October 2015 revealed that there is not a single empirical study (at least in English) on this topic, except for a UNU-WIDER working paper version of the current study published in 2013.
6 For instance, Klasen (2002), Esteve-Volart (2004), Stotsky (2006), Baliamoune-Lutz and McGillivray (2009) and Baliamoune-Lutz (2015).
7 There is a vast and interesting recent literature on aid effectiveness. For example, Dalgaard, Hansen and Tarp (2004), Addison, Mavrotas and McGillivray (2005), Baliamoune-Lutz and Mavrotas (2009), Winters and Wright (2010) and Baliamoune-Lutz (2012).
literature on the effectiveness of ODA because it examines the effectiveness of ODA to WEOI in promoting women’s empowerment, and in doing so, we are ultimately assessing whether aid is effective in promoting growth and development through this channel, given the clear evidence in the literature on the positive growth and development effects of women’s empowerment.

Appendix Tables A1 and A2 display the Development Assistance Committee’s (DAC) 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, 2009–2010 (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 WEOI constitutes an insignificant percentage of total aid support to gender equality, although this has changed somewhat in the last 2 years.

The figures in the table show that in 2009–2010, DAC member countries allocated US $24.866billion to gender equality but only US$0.41billion was allocated for support to WEOI, representing only about 1.6 per cent of the total amount targeting gender equality.

2.1.3 Factors influencing women’s political empowerment
A number of factors influence women’s political participation in national legislatures and foreign aid may operate through these factors (as channels) to impact women’s political participation. Studies generally identify three types of barriers to women’s political participation: political, socio-cultural and socio-economic obstacles (Shvedova, 2007; Paxton et al., 2010; Waring, 2010; Beauregard, 2014). Political barriers often reflect the fact that existing political systems and environments are male-centred, as Shvedova (2007) notes, ‘[p]olitical life is organized according to male norms and values, and in some cases even male lifestyles’. Notably, there is a growing literature documenting that compared with other regimes, democracies are more likely to support women’s rights, including women’s participation in politics (Tremblay, 2007; Waylen, 2008). However, some studies have argued that authoritarian regimes can also support women’s rights (Jamal, 2010; Mervis & Nyemba, 2013). For example, Mervis and Nyemba (2013) conclude that ‘it is imperative to note that democracy is not synonymous with equal representation of women in political institutions neither does it depict increased participation of women in politics. It certainly has not translated into increased women political participation’ (p. 174).

Cultural (or socio-cultural) factors include stereotyping women’s abilities and participation in politics and leadership positions, the influence of patriarchal ideology and religion in some societies (Paxton & Hughes, 2007; Kivoi, 2004). Socio-economic factors include lack of adequate financial resources, illiteracy and weak access to education and occupational choices, and the dual burden of balancing non-domestic work obligations with domestic activities. This is generally supported by findings in a vast literature documenting women’s overrepresentation in low-paid jobs and in unemployment (feminisation of poverty and unemployment). A number of studies (e.g. Karl, 2001; Shvedova, 2007; Kivoi, 2004) have documented lack of finance as a major constraint to women’s political participation. Shvedova (2007) reports that the ‘two most overwhelming obstacles for women in entering parliament are lack of constituents and lack of financial resources’.

Thus, while aid targeting women may not go directly to women’s electoral campaigns, it can alleviate financial and other constraints by enabling women to access costly research
on gender empowerment, and to undertake either directly or indirectly outreach and public information through ODA-funded WEOI. Importantly, WEOI have the potential to both increase women’s interest in political participation by raising awareness of women’s obligations and rights (especially when institutional reforms are occurring) and of the impacts on society that are expected from women’s strong political participation and empowerment.

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 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (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 restrictions (Figure 1), and progress on promoting women’s political empowerment over the last several years has been uneven (Figure 2). The 2012 World Development Report (World Bank, 2012) notes that women in most regions of the world have limited influence in political decision-making, 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)’. 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 & El Tarouty, 2009). Women’s political empowerment was also found to be hindered by financial constraints (Shojaei, Samsu & Asayesh, 2010).

3 EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

3.1 Data and Methodology

Women’s political participation (indicator of women’s empowerment) is represented by the proportion of seats (per cent) held by women in national parliaments. 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 (often appointing women to social affairs, women affairs or youth ministries), involving in most cases no significant active political participation.

8See also Baliamoune-Lutz (2011).
9Several other studies have also argued that financial constraints are a major barrier to women’s political empowerment in MENA countries. For example, Campbell (2010); Waring (2010); Kasapoglu and Özerkmen (2011) and Al Maaitah et al. (2012).
by the female minister. In addition, women’s representation in parliamentary bodies was one of the target indicators in the United Nations MDG3.

We use 2002–2010 panel data from 13 MENA countries (Algeria, Djibouti, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Sudan, Syria, Turkey, Tunisia and Yemen) and control for female secondary enrolment percentages, adolescent fertility rates and indicators of political institutions. 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 & 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. We use the following base specification.

\[ y_{i,t} = \alpha y_{i,t-1} + X_{i,t}\beta + \eta_i + \xi_t + \epsilon_{i,t} \] (1)

where \( y \) is the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments (PSHWNP) and \( X \) is a row vector of regressors, \( \eta_i \) is the individual (country) fixed effect, \( \xi_t \) is a time-specific effect and \( \epsilon_{i,t} \) 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. Nevertheless, we need to note 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); for example, Hansen and Tarp (2001). However, DPE may not be

Figure 1. Discriminatory social institutions

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feasible here because the number of countries is small. Nonetheless, as part of the robustness checks we use lagged ODA values (Table 4).

We observe large disparities across regions in the amounts of ODA targeting WEOI, reproductive health and family planning across regions (Figures 3.1–3.3) but also across countries within the MENA region (Figures 4.1 and 4.2). In 2002, some of the countries that received higher amounts of ODA to WEOI (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 that received higher amounts of ODA targeting reproductive health and family planning (Figure 4.2) have higher female political participation. In fact, the figures suggest that countries, such as Jordan, received the highest amounts of ODA targeting WEOI 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 association especially between women’s political participation and ODA (per capita) to family planning and reproductive health. 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

Figure 2. Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments (PSHWNP, per cent) and proportion of women in ministerial level positions (PWMLP, per cent)
Figure 3. Official development assistance targeting women’s equality organisations and institutions; Official development assistance targeting reproductive health care and Official development assistance targeting family planning

Source: See Appendix B for data description and source.

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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).

Table 1. Summarised Statistics

| Variable               | Obs | Mean   | Std. dev. | Min.  | Max.  |
|------------------------|-----|--------|-----------|-------|-------|
| PSHWNP                 | 113 | 9.187  | 7.2       | 0     | 27.6  |
| Income                 | 115 | 5541   | 3227      | 1399  | 12 618|
| FEM_SEC_ENR            | 85  | 62.43  | 25.31     | 12.64 | 95.79 |
| FEM_TER_T_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_FAMILPLAN          | 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] | 0.021 [0.82] | -0.211 [0.02] | | | | | | | | |
| ODA_WEOI | -0.113 [0.23] | -0.193 [0.03] | 0.245 [0.00] | | | | | | | | |
| ODA_REPH | -0.129 [0.17] | -0.035 [0.70] | 0.099 [0.28] | 0.303 [0.00] | | | | | | | |
| ODA_FAMPLAN | 0.005 [0.85] | -0.557 [0.00] | 0.109 [0.23] | -0.045 [0.62] | -0.044 [0.63] | | | | | | |
| ADOLFERT | 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_SEC_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_MALE_TERT_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_SEC_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] | | |
| FEM_TERT_ENR | 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] | |
| AUTOCRACY | -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).
3.2 Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Table 1 shows summarised statistics. We note that there is a wide variety across the 13 countries in all variables (Figures 4.1 and 4.2). The PSHWNP varies from a low of zero (Djibouti in 2002) to 27.6 (in Tunisia in 2009 and 2010). Thus, at least prior to 2011, the share of women in national parliaments was very low in most countries, averaging less than 10 per cent. The maximum value of ODA to women’s equality organisations is US $984.68 (per 1000 people per year). The maximum values of ODA for reproductive health and for family planning are US$5617.29 and 2119.57 (per 1000 people per year), respectively. While all three types of ODA are low, aid to women’s equality organisations is particularly so. As can be observed in Table A2 (Appendix A), the percentage of DAC total aid that is used to support WEOI was less than 0.5 per cent.

The correlation coefficients displayed in Table 2 show that the PSHWNP 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 organisations and all other variables is nonsignificant, except for its negative linear correlation with income per capita and positive association with ODA targeting reproductive health care (0.24). ODA_REPH seems to also have significant (positive) association with ODA targeting family planning (0.3).

3.3 Estimation Results

Fixed-effects estimation results are displayed in Tables 3 and 4. The selection of right-hand side variables is based on the discussion in Section 2 and data availability for the countries in our sample. The results in columns (1) and (2) in Table 3 indicate that ODA to WEOI 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.13

In columns (3)–(5), we try to explore whether there are effects of gender inequality (using the ratio of female-to-male secondary enrolments) in secondary education on political participation. As noted in Section 2, a number of studies found that female illiteracy and women’s limited access to education constitute a major obstacle to their political participation in national legislatures. The results show that there is no statistical evidence that gender inequality in secondary education influences women’s political participation.

We have also tried to examine the effects of ODA targeting family planning (ODA_FAMPLAN) and ODA targeting reproductive health care (ODA_REPH). However, we could not find any support for a positive influence of these types of ODA on women’s political empowerment.14 In addition, we find that the interplay between ODA_WEOI

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13In alternate estimations (not shown), we used tertiary enrolments, but their impact was statistically non-significant.

14We explored the presence of a threshold effects (non-linearity) in the relationship of PSHWNP and ODA to family planning and reproductive health, but the coefficients on the squared form and on the levels of these variables were statistically nonsignificant. Results may be obtained from the author upon request.
|                  | (1)          | (2)          | (3)          | (4)          | (5)          |
|------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Constant         | 20.33***     | 21.23***     | 25.72*       | 26.17*       | 26.42*       |
|                  | (7.5)        | (7.5)        | (13.6)       | (13.8)       | (13.7)       |
| FEM_SEC_ENR      | 0.101        | 0.11         |              |              |              |
|                  | (0.07)       | (0.07)       |              |              |              |
| FEM_MALE_SEC_ENR |              |              | 0.042        | 0.040        | 0.037        |
|                  |              |              | (0.11)       | (0.12)       | (0.12)       |
| ODA_WEIO         | 0.020*       | 0.020*       | 0.023**      | 0.024*       | 0.024*       |
|                  | (0.01)       | (0.01)       | (0.01)       | (0.01)       | (0.01)       |
| ODA_FAMPLAN      |              |              |              | -0.0003      |              |
|                  |              |              |              | (0.001)      |              |
| ODA_REPRO        |              |              |              |              | 0.0002       |
|                  |              |              |              |              | (0.0004)     |
| ADOLFERT         | -0.49***     | -0.48***     | -0.53***     | -0.53***     | -0.54***     |
|                  | (0.12)       | (0.11)       | (0.13)       | (0.13)       | (0.13)       |
| Polity 2         | 0.30         | (0.19)       |              |              |              |
|                  |              |              |              |              |              |
| AutoC            | -0.55*       | -0.55*       | -0.54*       | -0.54*       | -0.54*       |
|                  | (0.31)       | (0.32)       | (0.33)       | (0.32)       | (0.32)       |
| ADOLFERT X ODA_WEIO | -0.0008*   | -0.0008*     | -0.001**     | -0.001**     | -0.001**     |
|                  | (0.0004)     | (0.0004)     | (0.0004)     | (0.0004)     | (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*    | 33.66        | 35.71        | 48.97        | 40.66        | 44.11        |
| [Prob > χ²]      | [0.00]       | [0.00]       | [0.00]       | [0.00]       | [0.00]       |
|                  |              |              |              |              |              |

Source: see text.

Standard errors in parentheses.

*Ho: difference in coefficients not systematic.

*Indicates significance at 0.10.

**Indicates significance at 0.05.

***Indicates significance at 0.01.
### TABLE 4. USING LAGGED ODA AND SECONDARY SCHOOL ENROLMENTS; FIXED-EFFECTS (FE) ESTIMATES DEPENDENT VARIABLE: WOMEN’S POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT (PSHWNP)

|                | (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)             | 0.073 (0.11)             | 0.070 (0.11)             | 0.072 (0.11)             |
| FEM_MALE_SEC_ENR| 0.073 (0.11)             | 0.070 (0.11)             | 0.072 (0.11)             | 0.073 (0.11)             | 0.070 (0.11)             | 0.072 (0.11)             | 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)            | 0.004 (0.004)            | 0.002 (0.001)            | 0.004 (0.004)            | 0.004 (0.004)            | 0.004 (0.004)            | 0.0017 (0.0013)          | 0.0003 (0.0004)          | 0.0003 (0.0004)          |
| ODA_REPRO      | -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)          |
| ADOLFERT       | -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)            |
| Autoc          |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |
| ODA_WEOI       | 0.0005* (0.0002)         | 0.0004 (0.0002)          | -0.0005 (0.0002)         | -0.0005 (0.0004)         | -0.0007** (0.0002)       | -0.00066** (0.0002)      | -0.0007** (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   | 32.95                    | 37.54                    | 35.31                    | 32.81                    | 37.90                    | 35.65                    | 66.75                    | 45.36                    | 52.67                    |
| a[Prob > X²]   | [0.00]                   | [0.00]                   | [0.00]                   | [0.00]                   | [0.00]                   | [0.00]                   | [0.00]                   | [0.00]                   | [0.00]                   |

Source: see text.
Standard errors in parentheses.
In other estimations (results are available upon request), We 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. We 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.

*Ho: difference in coefficients not systematic.
*Indicates significance at 0.10
**Indicates significance at 0.05.
***Indicates significance at 0.01.
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_WEOI is associated with lower PSHWNP.

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 ODA_WEOI 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 other studies (e.g. Stockemer, 2011) that found non-democratic states in Africa to 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 impact. In addition, the interplay of ODA_WEOI and adolescent fertility has a negative effect (as in Table 3), but it is small in magnitude.

4 SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

The Arab Spring and 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 WEOI is in general effective. The independent effect of ODA_WEOI is between 0.015 and 0.02, suggesting that a US$200 increase in ODA (per 1000 people or US$0.20 per capita, per year) to WEOI 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, WEOI, 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 were about US$11.5million in 2010, up from US$3.83million in 2000 and reached a high US$71.33million in 2011 (while the gross disbursements were about US$13.9million on 2011). Indeed, WEOI 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 WEOI in promoting women’s political empowerment, there appears to be a case for increasing the allocation of this type of ODA.
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 WEOI 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 because 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 (and 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 decision-making positions is high (Fukuyama, 1998; Hunt, 2007).

Third, the evidence on the positive influence of ODA to WEOI 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 (Table A2), one would hope that other types of aid programmes that may significantly affect women’s well-being, 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 & Hansen, 2010) it is worth investigating whether foreign aid to family planning would be more effective if instead aid amounts are allocated directly to WEOI with the view to promote women’s political empowerment and higher parliamentary (lower house) representation, because a critical mass of female parliamentarians would support policies favouring a reduction in fertility rates and policies that tackle issues of importance to women.

Finally, while this paper does not control for quotas (because the share of women in parliaments in the MENA region seems to be directly related to quotas), it is useful to look at the state of women’s political participation in each country in more details and investigate whether ODA to WEOI would be more effective targeting organisations that support campaigns for female candidates or to those that support change in legislation and regulations related to quotas or reservations for women. Indeed, in order to understand how the positive effects of ODA to WEOI on women’s political empowerment work, future research should investigate the channels through which ODA_WEOI 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 WEOI. 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.

The findings in this study come with two caveats and, thus, the results should be interpreted with care. First, while it appears that the linkages between ODA to support women’s equality organisations and women’s participation in national parliaments would seem more obvious and direct than those between other forms of aid and women’s political participation, the results do not necessarily demonstrate that ODA to WEOI causes higher women’s participation in national parliaments, notwithstanding the use of lagged values of ODA (Table 4). It is possible that the results may reflect the fact that countries (in our sample) that adopt laws consistent with ‘Western liberal’ human rights norms both receive more aid and have higher women’s participation in parliament. Second, measuring women’s political empowerment solely using
the PHSWNP seems somewhat restrictive. There are a variety of other measures that could have been considered, such as participation in voting, party membership or leadership, measures of political engagement and representation in subnational government. Unfortunately, these measures could not be incorporated in the empirical analysis because of unavailability of consistent data for most of the countries in our sample. Future research should focus on elucidating these points further.

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### APPENDIX A

#### TABLE A1

| THE GENDER EQUALITY POLICY MARKER |
|-----------------------------------|
| **DEFINITION**                    |
| An activity should be classified as gender equality focused (score Principal or Significant) if: |
| It is intended to advance gender equality and women’s empowerment or reduce discrimination and inequalities based on sex. |
| **CRITERIA FOR ELIGIBILITY**      |
| Gender equality is explicitly promoted in activity documentation through specific measures which: |
| 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. |
| This approach requires analysing gender inequalities either separately or as an integral part of agencies’ standard procedures. |
| **EXAMPLES OF TYPICAL ACTIVITIES** |
| Examples of activities that could be marked as principal objective: |
| -- 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 society; |
| -- capacity building of Ministries of Finance and Planning to incorporate gender equality objectives in national poverty reduction or comparable strategies. |
| Such activities can target women specifically, men specifically or both women and men. |
| Examples of activities that could be marked as significant objective: |
| -- 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. |

**N.B.** Support to women’s equality organisations and institutions (CRS sector code 15170) scores, by definition, principal objective.

Source: OECD (2012).
### TABLE A2. AID IN SUPPORT OF GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT, 2009–2010 AVERAGE (IN 2009 US$ MILLION)

| Country         | 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       | 2,018               | 169         | 3,107                  | 8                                                       |
| Austria         | 12        | 72          | 84                                 | 305         | 310                 | 2           | 304                    | 4                                                       |
| Belgium         | 96        | 523         | 618                                | 494         | 1,111               | 177         | 1,289                  | 9                                                       |
| Canada          | 1,000     | 396         | 1,396                              | 1,627       | 2,366               | 146         | 2,512                  | 7                                                       |
| Denmark         | 80        | 70          | 281                                | 528         | 1,349               | 13          | 1,361                  | 24                                                      |
| EU Institutions | 53        | 1,053       | 1,645                              | 9,364       | 11,009              | 213         | 11,222                 | 33                                                      |
| Finland         | 19        | 406         | 425                                | 433         | 858                 | 0           | 858                    | 5                                                       |
| France          | 12        | 2,139       | 2,150                              | 4,205       | 6,355               | 473         | 6,830                  | 2                                                       |
| Germany         | 237       | 3,760       | 3,996                              | 3,562       | 7,050               | 1,362       | 9,210                  | 39                                                      |
| Greece          | 2         | 107         | 138                                | 77          | 185                 | 0           | 185                    | 0                                                       |
| Ireland         | 14        | 236         | 252                                | 210         | 462                 | 0           | 462                    | 9                                                       |
| Italy           | 15        | 83          | 98                                 | 445         | 544                 | 139         | 683                    | 8                                                       |
| Japan           | 96        | 1,167       | 1,265                              | 9,604       | 11,191              | 1,497       | 12,615                 | 0                                                       |
| Korea           | 18        | 63          | 81                                 | 1,581       | 1,443               | 0           | 1,463                  | 1                                                       |
| Luxembourg      | 11        | 52          | 64                                 | 74          | 138                 | 59          | 197                    | 6                                                       |
| Netherlands     | 190       | 349         | 538                                | 4,001       | 4,559               | 0           | 4,559                  | 20                                                      |
| New Zealand     | 12        | 105         | 117                                | 60          | 117                 | 0           | 177                    | 2                                                       |
| Norway          | 209       | 620         | 829                                | 1,625       | 2,655               | 0           | 2,655                  | 71                                                      |
| Portugal        | 1         | 23          | 24                                 | 724         | 246                 | 14          | 266                    | 0                                                       |
| Spain           | 270       | 639         | 909                                | 2,430       | 3,344               | 63          | 3,407                  | 127                                                    |
| Sweden          | 264       | 1,143       | 1,437                              | 291         | 1,738               | 3           | 1,731                  | 15                                                      |
| Switzerland     | 16        | 126         | 144                                | 732         | 876                 | 0           | 876                    | 1                                                       |
| United Kingdom  | 192       | 1,921       | 2,107                              | 2,446       | 4,649               | 1,067       | 5,506                  | 24                                                      |
| United States $ | 16        | 4,555       | 4,516                              | 4,516       | 16,710              | 22,526      | 22,526                 | 9                                                       |
| **Total DAC members** | **3,044** | **21,842** | **24,886** | **46,987** | **70,974** | **22,420** | **94,932** | **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 to 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 Alloca 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 (AS OF 2012)

| 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                          | —                   | Quota Law: one out of first three candidates on a list must be woman.                |
| Iraq                        | 25.20                         | —                   | 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                         | —                   |                                                                                      |
| Morocco                     | 17.00                         | 2.20                | 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: A tier for women candidates only. Elected through a single nationwide constituency. According to Article 29 (2)b) of the 2008 National Election Act, ‘twenty five per cent of the women members shall be elected on the basis of proportional representation at the state level from separate and closed party lists’. Voters vote for only 1 women’s list of their choice. Only parties whose women’s lists clear the 4% threshold quality to access seats reserved for women. Seats are allocated according to proportional representation among these parties. Furthermore, ‘the seats designated to women’s lists shall be won by the candidates of those lists in the order their names appear in the list concerned from top to bottom’ (National Election Act 2008, Article 33). Following the independence of South Sudan in 2011, the mandates of the parliamentarians from the south in Sudan’s National Assembly were terminated and the statutory number of members was accordingly reduced from 450 to 354. None (some government sponsorship of women candidates) |
| Syrian Arab Republic        | 12.00                         | —                   |                                                                                      |
| Tunisia                     | 26.70                         | —                   |                                                                                      |
| Turkey                      | 14.20                         | —                   | Party quotas.                                                                        |
| 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 organisations and institutions, gross disbursements in constant prices (2010 US$ millions). I divided by population and multiplied by 1000 to obtain ODA per 1000 people. Source: OECD aid statistics database online.

**ODA\_REPH**: DAC official development assistance to reproductive health area, gross disbursements in constant prices (2010 US$ millions). I divided by population and multiplied by 1000 to obtain ODA per 1000 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 1000 to obtain ODA per 1000 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 USA. Source: World Bank World Development Indicators database online.

**FEM\_SEC(TERT)\_ENR**: Secondary (tertiary) enrolment (total, gross), female. The percentage of girls and boys enrolled in secondary (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. Source: World Bank World Development Indicators database online.

**ADOLFERT**: Adolescent fertility rate (births per 1000 women ages 15–19). World Bank World Development Indicators database online.