

Annual Report 2014



“If in any kind of development efforts, one gender is left behind, then there cannot be real development, even for the dominant gender”
Sabra Bano, Director



Director Sabra Bano during the 2014 Gender Election Observation Mission in Tunisia

Vision and Mission

Gender Concerns International strongly believes that women collectively possess the power to improve their lives and advance their communities. As director of Gender Concerns International, Ms. Sabra Bano states: “there cannot be real development if one gender is left behind”. Investing in women’s leadership is crucial to making a difference now and in the future. Empowering women to believe in their abilities as catalysts for change will allow them to encourage others and strive for gender equality. Ms. Sabra Bano, has emphasized that the ‘three R’s’ are essential in achieving gender equality: **Recognition, Respect, and Resources.**

Gender Concerns International works towards building the capacity of women, women’s organisations, civil society organisations, and government officials to lobby and advocate for

a gender-inclusive society. In order to successfully achieve gender equality in every society, especially in fragile environments, women’s political participation, female leadership, and inclusive governance are necessary steps that must be taken. The importance of gender-sensitive **electoral reform** in national institutions and decision-making bodies should be acknowledged, in order to strengthen **inclusive democracy.**

Countries in Focus

Afghanistan, Pakistan, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, Sierra Leone, Myanmar

Strategy

- To **build capacity** of targeted communities to achieve gender equality.
- To connect and **facilitate communication on gender equality** among individuals, organisations and governments.

Areas of Expertise

- Gender Election Observation Missions (GEOM)
- Lobbying and advocacy
- Development and facilitation of training programmes
- Launching campaigns and organising conferences, seminars, workshops and forums
- Consultancy and advice on gender issues
- Project planning and management



A female MP in Afghanistan being interviewed for the radio as part of Gender Concerns’ Khaweri Kawen programme in Afghanistan

Looking Back: Activities in 2013

During 2013, Gender Concerns had the pleasure of working on several important projects in Libya, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

In November 2013, the **Marboua café** – a safe meeting place for women and female human activists – was officially opened by the Swiss Ambassador to Libya, His Excellency Erwin Hofer and the director of Gender Concerns, Ms Sabra Bano. This programme continued in 2014 and will be discussed later in this report. Another programme in Libya that started in 2013 was the **Dastoor programme**, which will also be discussed later on. In Afghanistan, the **Bayan I programme** started in November 2013. This programme aimed at increasing the number and the capacity of female politicians in Afghanistan. In June 2013, the **Khaberi Kawen programme** started in Afghanistan, aimed at developing the skills of female members of parliament; this programme will also be mentioned again later in this report. In Pakistan, the Organisation conducted a **Pre-election Assessment Mission** in March 2013. This mission found that election observation would be necessary to monitor and support women’s electoral participation.

“2014 was an active year for Gender Concerns with a multitude of different projects and one common aim: strengthening the position of women in democracies”



Sabra Bano,
Director

2014 Activities and Programmes

In 2014, Gender Concerns carried out new activities and continued to carry out existing programmes in Libya, Tunisia and Afghanistan. In addition, Gender Concerns participated in an event relating to its work in Egypt.

LIBYA: DASTOOR PROGRAMME

In 2014, Gender Concerns was active in its two-year Dastoor programme in Libya on women’s inclusion in the constitutional drafting process.



Gender Concerns Libya Head of Operations Nyghat Siddique, Director Sabra Bano and Ambassador Nataliya Apostolova, Head of the EU Delegation to Libya at the launch of the Dastoor programme

After the Gender Election Monitoring Mission in Libya during the first elections in 2012, Gender Concerns started the Dastoor programme. The programme gives **diverse support for women’s inclusion in the constitutional drafting process** through networking, capacity building, dialogue, lobby and advocacy.

Since the Dastoor programme’s initiation in 2013, its goal has been to strengthen the position of women in the drafting process of the new constitution. Women from member organisations received training on women’s constitutional rights and constitutional drafting. Following this training, the **Gender-**

Sensitive Constitution was compiled. It was the result of cooperation between women’s and civil society organisations, members of the Constituent Assembly, and the international community. The Gender-Sensitive Constitution outlined the women’s constitutional rights, which needed to be included in the new Libyan Constitution in order for it to be gender-sensitive. Members of the Women for Democratic Transformation Platform (WDT) presented the Gender-Sensitive Constitution to the Libyan Constitution Drafting Assembly (CDA) in December 2014.



Members of Libyan Women’s Organisations during the Dastoor programme

As part of the Dastoor programme, Gender Concerns International and the WTD Platform (see below), with the support of the German Federal Foreign Office, produced a short film to be shown during the activities. This film was written, directed and produced by Maia Marie-Cecile Darne. **“Our revolution, Our Constitution”**, is a short documentary on Libyan women and their participation in the country’s democratic transition, asking the question: Three years after the beginning of the revolution, are women involved in political decision-making?

The film was released on the occasion of the anniversary of the Libyan revolution, to reiterate the vital role of women in democratic processes.

The video features interviews of leading Libyan women who voice their commitment to action and the need for participation.

This programme was funded by the EU.

“A future with increased numbers of women as political party leaders, heads of polling stations, candidate representatives and electoral staff can benefit all citizens in an equal development process.”

Sabra Bano, Director

LIBYA: WDT PLATFORM

Gender Concerns supported the Women’s Democratic Transition (WDT) Platform in 2014, on the occasion of the third anniversary of the Libyan Revolution.

The activities under the WDT umbrella included organizing and conducting training **sessions, conferences and awareness-raising campaigns** at the regional and national level. These activities were implemented in order to provide the skills, the network and the strategic capabilities needed by the female parties involved, both to ensure their voice in the democratic system and the continuation of the program. The WDT Platform was instituted to monitor, advise, and support the Libyan government’s implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and its consultations on the Libyan draft Constitution. The WDT also supported the empowerment of women’s organizations and women political leaders.



Billboard put up by the WDT promoting female political participation

Examples of empowerment activities carried out by the WDT are the new billboards around Tripoli, which the WDT Platform installed, promoting women's participation in constitutional development in 2014. Moreover they conducted a gender-focused assessment mission of the elections of the Constitutional Drafting Assembly (CDA) to ensure that free and fair conditions were in place to enable women's participation.

A full partnership between the WDT and the Libyan Forum for Civil Society, who had been in turn funded by the German Federal Foreign Office, made these activities possible.

*“In the pursuance
of democracy,
gender equality is crucial
– because all voices
must be heard.”*

Sabra Bano, Director

LIBYA: MARBOUA CAFE

Under the Marboua programme Gender Concerns established a political café in Tripoli,

to ensure a **safe and secure place for Libyan women to communicate**, develop ideas and to discuss. This programme started with the opening of the café in November 2013. Since its inauguration, the political café has been used for various activities and events. Gender Concerns International's recommendation, following the successful programme, was to establish more political cafés in other Libyan cities.

For the programme Gender Concerns International cooperated with the Committee to Support Women's Participation in Decision Making and the Libyan Forum for Civil Society. The programme was furthermore supported by the Human Security Division of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs.



Inside Marboua Political Cafe in Libya

The café hosted several events in 2014, including “Constitution and Women's Dialogue – Inspiring Change: Our Revolution, Our Constitution”, “Peace and Security Dialogue – Gender Task Force Meetings”, and “Discussion on the land rights of women and post-conflict zones”.

This programme is funded by the Swiss Embassy in Tripoli.

TUNISIA: GEOM 2014

In 2014, Gender Concerns observed both the Tunisian Parliamentary Elections on the 26th October 2014 as well as the Presidential Elections on 23rd November 2014 with

support from the German Federal Foreign Office.



Two women who having voted during the 2014 election observed by Gender Concerns

The mission comprised of 110 female observers, deployed across all 22 governorates. The **Parliamentary Election was monitored from a unique gender perspective**, with a focus on women's inclusive governance in Tunisia.

The GEOM found that Tunisian women play an increasing role in the public sphere. However, many steps remain in order to ensure full voter equality, such as improved voter registration, electoral reform, voter education, and more.

In addition to observing the elections, the mission **built the capacity of local women's organisations** to observe elections through a gender perspective through the extensive collaboration with Gender Concerns.



Sabra Bano at the launch of the 2014 GEOM in Tunisia

The mission was undertaken jointly with local partner organisations: Tunisian League for the Defense of Human Rights (LTDH), Tunisian Association of Democratic Women (ATFD), Association of Tunisian Women for Research

and Development (AFTURD) and Gender Concerns Tunisia. It was a continuation of the partnership that began with the joint GEOM in 2011. In addition, the Tunisian Independent High Authority for the Elections (ISIE) cooperated and assisted Gender Concerns in its mission.

This programme was funded by the German Federal Foreign Office.

AFGHANISTAN: Khaberi Kawen



Women and female MPs during the Khaberi Kawen programme

The Khaberi Kawen programme aimed at **developing the skills of female members of parliament** in order to enhance their political campaigns through the utilization of new media and sustainable platforms and to effectively communicate and network with the press, their peers, and the public. In addition to public appearances on radio programmes and public events, such as press and video conferences, capacity building workshops on the topics of online and radio communication were held for Afghan women.

The Khaberi Kawen programme was implemented by Gender Concerns International and its partner organization, the WHMO. This programme was sponsored by the embassy of the United States in Kabul.

This programme was funded by the US Department of State.

AFGHANISTAN: BAYAN II

In December 2014, Gender Concerns started its Bayan II programme, which is a continuation of its successful Bayan I programme.

The Bayan II programme runs from December 2014 to December 2016. It was launched to foster national influencing on women's right with a boarder audience to **increase public support for inclusive security, inclusive peace building and political participation**. The programme consists of capacity building sessions for the partners and encourages participants to promote women's rights at various high-level meetings and events to bring political attention to the existing situation.

Target groups in this programme include official bodies at the central level in Kabul, social and governmental institutions across all levels of Afghan society, and various Civil Society Organisations. On the international level, the advocacy activities are aimed towards bodies in The Hague, Brussels, and the United Nations' Commission on the Status of Women in New York. The programme also includes capacity building interventions with local partners and aims to engage participants in the call to promote women's rights in accordance with the Dutch National Action Plan and the UN Security Council Resolution 1325.

The Bayan II Initiative **will further continue to implement various activities** strengthening WOs and CSOs in the region on the topics of security, peace and political participation in 2015.

This project was conducted in a consortium with Cordaid and Oxfam Novib. Partners during this project include the Development

and Support of Afghan Women and Children Organisation (DSAWCO), the Afghan Women's Network (AWN) and Women Human Rights and Media Organisation (WHMO).

This programme was funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.



Women during the Bayan II programme

EGYPT: EVENT AT THE EU PARLIAMENT

On 17 March 2014, the director of Gender Concerns, Ms Sabra Bano, was invited to speak at a conference held at the EU Parliament.



Sabra Bano at the EU Parliament in 2014

The event – “International Observation of Egypt's Referendum – Challenges Ahead” – was a roundtable and an interactive dialogue held at the European Parliament in Brussels. The event was hosted by the Global Network for Rights and Development (GNRD) and Eija-Riitta Korhola, Member of the European Parliament. The aim of the conference was to explore the findings and recommendations of the international observers on the Egyptian's new constitutional referendum and the challenges that lay ahead for the

Egyptian's parliamentary and presidential elections. Gender Concerns was contributing to the conference with its extensive experience on election observation.

An excerpt from Ms Bano's speech: "Only with the equal representation of men and women can gender related issues such as discrimination, child care, education, political representation, rape, domestic violence and divorce law be addressed. A gender-balanced society is a strong, prosperous and fair society for all.

Therefore, with the upcoming elections in Egypt, it is highly important to include women in electoral processes. In 2011 when anti-government protest began in Tahrir Square, women bravely played their part in the protests against Mubarak. The women of Egypt have been instrumental in the revolution – but their equality, namely in the political sphere, is far from a reality.

That said, following the failure of the parliament elected in 2012 to make significant women's rights reforms, Egypt was under significant pressure from women's rights organisations. Feminists had seen the elections as an opportunity to push for gender equality. In response, Egypt passed a more gender equal constitution into law on 16 January 2013."

"Our 2014 activities contributed to sustainable development and women's empowerment in a number of countries"

Sabra Bano, Director

2014 Achievements and Results

- Gender Concerns collected important gender-specific data on female electoral participation in Tunisia during the 2014 GEOM
- Gender Concerns implemented some unique programmes taking alternative approaches to female inclusion: the Organisation created a cafe as a political platform for women, enabled women to participate in the process of drafting their own country's constitution in Libya, and empowered female politicians through use of social media and the radio in Afghanistan,
- Gender Concerns was invited to share its experience and knowledge at the EU Parliament
- Gender Concerns maintained good relations with the governments of all countries it operated in, allowing for sustainability of its projects and the implementation of the recommendations given by the Organisation
- Gender Concerns continued to build partnerships with local organisations and governments, paving the way for future cooperation

The Way Forward: upcoming activities in 2015

Gender Concerns has many exciting and meaningful activities ahead for 2015. The following provides an overview of what 2015 will bring for the Organisation.

Gender Concerns' **Dastoor programme** in Libya will continue until May 2015. The activities planned for 2015 include – among others – lobbying by Gender Concerns and the WTD promoting the recommendations in the Gender-sensitive constitution towards

important stakeholders in both Libya and the International Community.

As part of the 2014 GEOM in Tunisia, Gender Concerns will hold a **MENA Conference** on 29th and 30th October 2015 in Tunis as part of Gender Concerns' Post-Election phase of its GEOM 2014. The MENA Conference will create the foundation for a joint regional strategy and action plan to address the gender gaps highlighted during election observations. The conference will involve Civil Society Organisations and representatives from across the MENA Region, including Morocco and Libya.

Moreover, Gender Concerns will publish its **GEOM report** on the 2014 election observation in Tunisia in 2015. This report will detail all observations, containing key information about the current status of female political participation, barriers to women's inclusion as well as recommendations.

In the context of the **Bayan II programme**, a series of activities will be implemented in 2015. Among these activities are a series of radio broadcasts highlighting the importance of gender equality; a Leadership Training Programme, focused on bettering the qualifications of female politicians, created to maximize the effective participation of women as more qualified political nominees. The Programme will train more women in order to contribute to more effective gender policies, foster a more inclusive atmosphere for women to join the political sphere. Moreover, esteemed guests from partner organisations in Afghanistan will be invited to The Hague and Brussels to share their own individual messages about how to best affect gender-related change and promote inclusion in Afghanistan. They will present their messages to the Dutch government, the European Parliament (EP), and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO).

Donors in 2014



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Gender Concerns International
Headquarters: Raamweg 21-22,
2596 HL, The Hague, the Netherlands
P: 00 31 (0) 70 4445082
F: 00 31 (0) 70 4445083
W: www.genderconcerns.org
E: sbano@genderconcerns.org