THE ROLE OF THE UNITED NATIONS IN IMPLEMENTING A GENDER MAINSTREAMING APPROACH POST 2011 IN EGYPT: THE WOMEN’S CITIZENSHIP INITIATIVE AS A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates to what extent the UN contributed to effective gender mainstreaming in Egypt with a special focus on political participation as voters post 2011. This study assesses the “Women’s Citizenship Initiative” through presenting achievements, challenges, the way forward and recommendations.

In the past six years, Egypt went through two parliamentary elections, two presidential elections in addition to 3 Constitutional referendums which witnessed high level of women participation as voters. In the last Presidential Elections, 44% of the voters were women. In Egypt, the UN attempted to provide support to strengthen the democratic process which was mainly focused on voter education and public outreach; upgrading the technical and operational capacity of national electoral authorities; and enhancing the participation of female voters.

A literature review was conducted followed by 28 interviews with Ministers, representatives from the concerned ministries, other government agencies, UN agencies, and stakeholders, NGOs in addition to activists, politicians, and women coalitions and women beneficiaries in addition a field visit in Qalyoubia.

This study analyzes the “Women’s Citizenship Initiative” through using the Gender mainstreaming approach which reveals several shortcomings and challenges that faced the Women’s Citizenship Initiative such as the revolution and the security vacuum; frequent ministerial changes; lengthy process for issuing ID Cards; conflict and struggle among different entities and absence of leadership; resource mobilization; unrealistic target; difficulty in reaching women and changing the mindset of women; limited capacities and poor performance; and absence of birth certificates. This study is concluded by a set of policy recommendations to guide the way forward. The findings of the study suggest that given the political endorsement of the President of Egypt, Abdel Fattah El Sisi, to the initiative and increasing government commitment to issue five million national identification ID cards instead of two million over a period of three years (2016-2019) there must be an allocated state budget for this initiative and the issuance of ID cards should be free of charge—there is a need for gender budgeting—to be able to continue this initiative and meet the target; there must be investing in the National Women Machinery to strengthen
their capacity to absorb the demand for women to issue their ID Cards in a timely and responsive manner; mainstreaming the Women’s Citizenship Initiative in other national programmes, meaning that no national programmes without ID cards it should be linked to all national programmes such as Takaful and Karam and other programme that are attractive to women; link ID cards to other functions such as the issuance of birth certificates by adding the mother’s ID number to the birth certificate of her child; expanding partnerships between NCW and other national institutions that support women as well as local NGOs; stronger Monitoring and Evaluation mechanisms in the national implementing entity to be able to track the progress, follow up, document and report on activities; establishing national database that will inform future policy formulation through empowering women; ensure that the preexisting gap of women with no IDs is not only closed but also complemented by the issuance of birth certificates and a systematic way to receive their ID cards when at the age of 16; consider the use of ICT with the upscaling of the Women’s Citizenship Initiative so that women can use it to get services from government.

Due to the above mentioned challenges the Women’s Citizenship Initiative did not contribute largely in increasing the number of women voters but still it is an example of the UN approach to Gender Mainstreaming and succeeded in raising the awareness and also played a role in capacity building which leads to a responsive decision making of the government.
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<tr>
<td>AAW</td>
<td>Alliance for Arab Women</td>
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<tr>
<td>CEDAW</td>
<td>Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women</td>
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<td>WCI</td>
<td>Women’s Citizenship Initiative</td>
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<td>CRO</td>
<td>Civil Registry Office</td>
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<td>CSOs</td>
<td>Civil Society Organizations</td>
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<td>CU</td>
<td>Coordination Unit</td>
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<td>DRG</td>
<td>Development Result Goal</td>
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<td>EFU</td>
<td>Egyptian Feminist Union</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<td>FGM</td>
<td>Female Gentile Mutilation</td>
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<td>GM</td>
<td>Gender mainstreaming</td>
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<td>HDR</td>
<td>Human Development Report</td>
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<td>HEC</td>
<td>High Elections Committee</td>
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<td>ID Cards</td>
<td>Identity Cards</td>
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<td>IR</td>
<td>International Relations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<tr>
<td>MENA</td>
<td>Middle East and North Africa</td>
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<td>MOI</td>
<td>Ministry of Interior</td>
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<td>MOFA</td>
<td>Ministry of Foreign Affairs</td>
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<td>MOU</td>
<td>Memorandum of Understanding</td>
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<td>MSAD</td>
<td>Ministry of State for Administrative Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>NCW</td>
<td>National Council for Women</td>
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<tr>
<td>NDP</td>
<td>National Democratic Party</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organization</td>
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<td>PEC</td>
<td>Presidential Elections committee</td>
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<td>PSA</td>
<td>Public Service Announcements</td>
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<td>SFD</td>
<td>Social Fund for Development</td>
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<td>SII</td>
<td>Strategic Impact Inquiries</td>
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<td>UDHR</td>
<td>Universal Declaration for Human Rights</td>
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<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
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<td>UNGA</td>
<td>UN General Assembly</td>
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<td>UN Women</td>
<td>United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women</td>
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<tr>
<td>USAID</td>
<td>United States Agency for International Development</td>
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Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

“Women’s rights will be the litmus test of a successful transition.” — Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the Union on Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (Women’s Rights During Democratic Transitions, 2012, P.6).

“If women are to have any say in the lives they lead they must enter politics.” — Fernanda Nissen, Norwegian feminist and politician (1862–1920) (Women’s Rights During Democratic Transitions, 2012, P.6).

This thesis is about the role of the United Nations (UN) in supporting Women’s Participation in Elections as voters in Egypt post 2011. This research will investigate to what extent the UN contributed to effective gender mainstreaming in Egypt with a special focus on political participation as voters post 2011. This research assesses one of the initiatives in Egypt titled the “Women’s Citizenship Initiative” in which the UN is one of the main partners in it.

1.1. Research Problem

The political transitions which occurred in 2011 in Egypt, known as part of the Arab Spring, brought about a plethora of changes; cultural, political, economic and social. These changes have put Egypt on the track of political transition. In the past six years, Egypt went through two parliamentary elections in 2011 and 2015 and two presidential elections in 2012 and 2014 in addition to 3 Constitutional referendums in 2011, 2012 and 2014.

In Egypt, the UN attempted to provide support to strengthen the democratic process which was mainly focused on voter education and public outreach; upgrading the technical
and operational capacity of national electoral authorities; and enhancing the participation of female voters.

Despite the support of the UN and other donor agencies provided to Egypt during the transition to democracy, it is not clear that we have realized positive steps in that regard. In the last Presidential Elections, 44% of the voters were women and 56% were men (Osman, 2014). In the 2012 Islamist parliament, when the quota for women was abolished, women representation did not exceed “2%” (Report on the sub regional forum, 2012) and women candidates were placed at the bottom of the party lists of the parliamentary elections. This is because the Muslim Brotherhood-led government cancelled the quota law in the parliament. When the quota system was re-introduced, women representation in the parliament of 2015 increased and reached 15% (HEC, 2015). However, women are perceived not to be sufficiently empowered. Despite all the efforts by different international development organizations, gendermainstreaming is still perceived to be ineffective. We still have five million women without ID cards (UN Joint Programme of the Women’s Citizenship Initiative) and women face difficulties to issue ID cards and even after the issuance of ID cards for some of the women the percentage is still not much in addition political participation is not about voting only but we need women to be more aware of this voting decision. The illiteracy rate of women is 33.6% versus 18.5% of men. (CAPMAS, 2014).

This research will investigate to what extent did the UN contribute to effective gender mainstreaming in Egypt with a special focus on political participation as voters post the 2011 Revolution?

1.2. Background

The issue of electoral management and voter participation is a pertinent one, particularly when in the past six years Egypt has experienced a flurry of electoral events: two parliamentary elections in 2011 and 2015 and two presidential elections in 2012 and
2014 in addition to 3 Constitutional referendums in 2011, 2012 and 2014. During that time, women were active participants and forces of change in the revolution.

Egypt witnessed higher participation of women in comparison to elections under the former regimes. In Egypt, women’s turnout as voters in the elections increased and their eagerness to engage proactively in the democratic process was very high. After the revolution, the number of women who has the right to vote reached 23,815,341 in the first parliamentary elections in 2011 and 26,160,903 in the presidential elections in 2014 (Data collected from the Ministry of State for Administrative Development, 9 February 2015) and 27,235,487 in the parliamentary elections of 2015 (Osman, 2015). The High Elections Committee and the Presidential committee announced that women voters turnout has drastically increased in all the elections that took place after the revolution. 44% of the voters were women and 56% were men in the last presidential elections (Osman, 2014). However, their representation in the Constituent Assembly, the parliament and decision making bodies was low during all the stages of the transition. In the 2012 Islamist parliament, when the quota for women was abolished, women representation did not exceed “2%” (Report on the sub regional forum, 2012) and women candidates were placed at the bottom of the party lists of the parliamentary elections. This is because the Muslim Brotherhood-led government cancelled the quota law in the parliament. However, when the quota system was re-introduced, women representation in the parliament of 2015 increased and reached 15% (HEC, 2015).

Throughout the transitional period mentioned above, the UN exerted efforts in Egypt to ensure gender equality, social justice and equal participation in the current political transition. The UN specifically targets women’s issues, as is indicated by its charter and conventions such as the convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and establishing an agency specialized for women’s issues – UN Women, plus the UN General Assembly (UNGA) Resolution 66/1304 in March 2012 which calls for “eliminating discriminatory laws, systems and practices that prevent or restrict women’s participation in the political process.” (Report on the sub regional forum,
UNDP reports predicted that without social and economic reform and gender equality being accelerated there will be political violence and uprisings.

More specifically, UN Women developed the ‘Standard Operating Principles for Women’s Participation in Democratic Transitions’ “to ensure free and fair elections for women, encourage political parties to address gender equality, support women’s civil society organizations to advance women’s interests, build accountability for women’s rights in public institutions, enhance the capacity of women in policy-making and oversight in public office and promote gender justice.” (Report on the Sub Regional Forum, 2012, P.70). The raison d’être of UN Women is to deliver outcomes that advance gender equality and improve women’s lives through supporting states to enhance their legal frameworks and their national capacities to build solid institutional accountability for gender equality, through strong coordination, partnerships, sharing of information, best practices, knowledge, and lessons learned (Report on the Sub Regional Forum, 2012).

In Egypt, the UN provided platforms to exchange experience and views on gender and for learning from different experiences (Report on the Sub Regional Forum, 2012) and provided the electoral authorities officials with the opportunity to network with election administrators, academics, experts working in the field of elections in other countries and in Egypt, and representatives of civil society organizations. UN initiatives in Egypt include the "Women’s Citizenship Initiative", a national initiative partnering with UN Women, which aims at raising women's awareness about their citizenship rights, issue ID cards for women in order to practice their rights and be able to participate as voters in the elections, organize media campaigns to raise awareness of women on their citizenship rights.

As mentioned in the UNDP Project Document titled “Strengthening of the Democratic Process in Egypt”, “an important element in the success of a transition, and of a transitional election, is the inclusiveness of the process and the degree of participation.
While voter enthusiasm and administrative measures have increased the expected voter turnout, there are still significant parts of the population that have traditionally been marginalized from political and electoral life, and which could still be left out.” (UNDP Project Document, 2011, P.8)

UN Women and UNDP in their joint programme partnering in the national initiative titled “Women’s Citizenship Initiative” supported the issuance of 2 million ID for women to enhance women political participation, raising awareness and showing the importance of the ID Cards for women to practice their citizenship rights such as their right to vote during elections. Registration enables women on the short run to have access to the polls, vote and also seek membership in political parties and, on the long run, to access government services such as medical care in a public hospital, literacy programs, processing for a property title or deed, banking services and working positions. (UN Women Joint Programme Document, 2011).

Egyptian citizens age 16 or older must possess National Identification Cards which has to be presented for any kind of government service such as processing for a property title, medical care in a public hospital, applying for a passports, voting in elections, applying for any social services as well as to obtain employment, banking services, education, and many other important transactions (Zayan, 2006) in addition ID cards are required to pass through police checkpoints, and individuals without such cards are unregistered and deprived of freedom of movement. The first machine-readable ID card was introduced in 1997 and the old paper ID card was totally abolished in 2006 (Ahram Newspaper, 2 March 2006).

Before the 25 January 2011 Revolution the National Association for Change was calling for ID cards to avoid inefficiency in elections. It was evident during the 2010 parliamentary elections in which this parliament was dissolved later. There was Greater emphasis to issue ID cards to enable them to vote and this is the first step for political participation and the way to democracy.
1.3. Research Question:

To what extent did the UN contribute to effective gender mainstreaming in Egypt with a special focus on political participation as voters post the 2011 Revolution?

1.4. Thesis structure

The thesis starts with an introductory chapter, Chapter 1, which covers the research problem, background, research question, academic and social relevance of the research. Chapter 2, which covers the methodology and the conceptual framework, Chapter 3, covers the literature review, Next chapter four, provides an overview of political participation in general and women political participation in particular. More specifically, the chapter offers an overview of the status of women’s political participation in Egypt before the 25 January 2011 revolution.

The Fifth Chapter provides an overview on the main factors that led to the revolution and women’s political participation after the 25 January 2011 revolution with a special focus on women’s participation in elections especially as voters.

The Sixth Chapter is on the UN Initiatives on Enhancing Women’s Political Participation in Elections in Egypt after the Revolution with a special focus on the Case Study of the “Women’s Citizenship Initiative”.

The Seventh chapter is a chapter on the Analysis/Findings and Assessment of the Women’s Citizenship Initiative which showed that there were several attempts from the UN after the 2011 revolution to support women citizenship not only politically such as voters in elections but also to have access to their economic and social rights. This chapter provides an assessment of the Women’s Citizenship Initiative.
1.5. Academic and Social Relevance of the Research

As a researcher, I found it of great interest and importance to analyze and study the current political transition in Egypt. We live amidst an important historical juncture in the history and politics of Egypt; as a researcher living and working in the region, I feel it is important to document the dynamics and changes taking place. Furthermore, it is particularly relevant to explore women’s participation in elections as voters which should be investigated because it is a first step for women to practice their citizenship right. I do acknowledge that this step does not necessarily lead to their full participation and empowerment given the socio-cultural and gender challenges in MENA societies. I however contend that voting remains an initial and significant step in accessing public and political landscape. A lot is yet to be done to ensure women's full integration in politics and gender equality in the society at large. I chose to focus specifically on the UN ‘Citizenship Initiative’, given the important timing of this initiative and its large scope. Also, given the efforts that the UN claimed in promoting women’s rights, it is worth investigating the UN’s role in supporting women’s participation in elections as voters and see if it had an impact in increasing the number of women voter turnout or not. Political Transition cannot succeed without ensuring women’s participation.

Examining women's political participation is important because women’s political influence is not only about a large number of women being represented in decision-making processes and positions, but it is also about their ability to influence policy debates, their capacity and their power relationships. Participation in Elections is a starting point in wider engagement in public affairs and local politics. Unfortunately, after the revolution women’s demands and expectations are not met yet (Report on the Sub-Regional Forum on Women’s Participation in Post Revolution Parliamentary Elections, 2012).

Elections were held in Egypt to pave the way to democracy. In Egypt, women were active participants and forces of change in the revolution. Media and popular accounts celebrated the very strong political participation of women in transitional elections in comparison to the elections under the former regimes.
Chapter 2: THESIS METHODOLOGY AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Thesis methodology

This study examined the UN efforts in the area of women’s participation in elections as voters in Egypt during political transition through utilizing the case study approach and focusing on the Women’s Citizenship Initiative project implemented by the UNWomen in Egypt from 2011-2017. Data from the literature review and quantitative research was complemented by a qualitative research through a field assessment in Egypt and conducting a field visit in Qalyoubia. My selection of interviewees aimed at accessing and presenting different perspectives of how the UN had an impact on voters’ turnout. I conducted 28 interviews which included individuals who were critical of the UN's role and/or provided different perspectives of how the UN impacted on voters’ turnout. I interviewed one Minister, two representatives from the concerned ministries, five representatives from government agencies, six representatives from UN agencies, one stakeholder, three from NGOs in addition to one activist, one politician, and nine women beneficiaries. At the beginning I used the purposive sampling technique and then the interviewees referred me to other interviewees so I used the snowball technique too. I have used semi-structured interviews with the interviewees to get more insight. A listing of the participants interviewed is attached an Annex III. I travelled to the Governorate of Qalyoubia in which I formed a focus group with women beneficiaries and also conducted individual interviews with them. The Governorate of Qalyoubia is a pilot chose for the Women’s Citizenship Initiative because it has a large number of unregistered women voters before the initiative and also because of its proximity that it is close to the capital of Egypt, Cairo.

In it, I surveyed and examined the UN’s focus on women’s political participation in elections as voters in Egypt during political transitions. The review focused on previous secondary literature, including existing assessments and analysis, the study concludes by providing lessons learned and way forward. In addition to the literature, quantitative
research and field assessment I examined primary non-confidential and unpublished documents provided by both the government of Egypt and the UN.

I did my best to ensure the highest possible objectivity was accounted for. I thought that one of the limitations is that I work for the UNDP so many of the interviewed people are partners to the organization I work for but I was really impressed that they were neutral and provided critical insights on the Women’s Citizenship Initiative and any other questions related to my research. One of the factors is the fact that some women beneficiaries are very cautious or careful with what they say and the statements they make because they do not want to be labeled or attacked. To overcome this limitation, I said more about myself, what I do, and I stressed on the fact that I am an Egyptian who cares about the interest of my country as a top priority. The fact that the data is collected through interviews makes it harder to derive answers and link the different ideas that people spoke about during the interviews, given that I purposely selected people who have completely different views and represent different generations.

With regards to Ethical Considerations, a sample of the interview questions and a consent form was submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the American University in Cairo (AUC). Clearance was granted indicating that appropriate measures to minimize risks were taken, along with the adequate provisions for confidentiality and data anonymity of participants if they request to hide their identity or keep any of what they state during the interview confidential. The interviewing process began with an explanation of what the study was about, why it was being conducted, why their participation and the information they provide is valuable, and how this information will be used.

2.2. Conceptual Framework:

The conceptual framework of this thesis relies primarily on the “gender mainstreaming” approach in addition the Strategic Impact Inquiries (SII)’s Global Women’s Empowerment Framework.
Gender mainstreaming approach is defined by Sylvia Walby as the “reinvention, restructuring, and rebranding of a key part of feminism in the contemporary era. It is both a new form of gendered political and policy practice and it is a new gendered strategy for theory development” (Walby, 2005, P. 31). As a practice, gender mainstreaming approach is intended as a way of improving the effectivity of mainline policies by making visible the gendered nature of assumptions, processes and outcomes. As a form of theory, “gender mainstreaming is a process of revision of key concepts in order to grasp more adequately a world that is gendered, rather than the establishment of a separatist gender theory. Gender mainstreaming encapsulates many of the tensions and dilemmas in feminist theory and practice over the last decade and provides a new focus for debates on how to move them on. There has been a significant two-way traffic between feminist theories of gender relations and gender equality practitioners from which both have benefited.” (Walby, 2005, P. 43-321) Mary E. Daly mentioned that gender Mainstreaming approach is seen as the most “modern” approach to gender equality, in addition to its wide promotion by international organizations, such as the UN, the EU, and Council of Europe. (Daly, 2005)

The UN definition of Gender Mainstreaming approach is “the process of assessing the implication for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women’s as well as men’s concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.” (Report of the ECOSOC 1997, 1997)

As noted by Emma Jeanes, David Knights and Patricia Yancey Martin, gender mainstreaming approach aims to transform the policy process and tries to do this horizontally using socialization and persuasion. As argued by the authors, UN’s commitment to gender mainstreaming approach resulted in some achievements such as
equal treatment and non-discrimination which are essential for women’s empowerment. Its impact is creating and supporting actors and institutions. UN has also been sensitive to the subject of women representation within the organization.”(Jeanes, Knights, and Martin, 2011).

As argued by Emilie Hafner Burton and Mark A. Pollack, Gender Mainstreaming approach promises a revolutionary change in the international and domestic policy process in which gender issues become a core consideration. There should be dramatic changes in the mentalities and organizations of domestic and international actors in order to fully implement gender mainstreaming. The authors argued that the origins of the concept of gender mainstreaming approach can be traced back to the international development community positioned around UNDP and the World Bank (Hafner-Burton and Pollack, 2001). They argued that the implementation of mainstreaming by the international development community and its flexible implementation by the UNDP, the World Bank and other international organizations can be described by the key causal variables such as mobilizing structures, political opportunities and strategic framing stressed by social movement theorists (Hafner-Burton and Pollack, 2001), adding that the political prospects surrounding the UNDP as well as its dominant frame provided a more welcoming environment for advocates of gender mainstreaming in the 80s and 90s, resulting in its quick acceptance by UNDP (Hafner-Burton and Pollack, 2001). In their view, UNDP became a leader in the international development community in the early implementation of gender mainstreaming guidelines and procedures. However, the implementation and creation of substantive policy remains limited and evaluations suggest that gender issues remain a largely untreated area in member states (Hafner-Burton and Pollack, 2001).

Gender mainstreaming approach was launched in Beijing where governments and actors were asked to “promote an active policy of mainstreaming gender perspective in all policies and programmes.”(Jeanes, Knights, and Martin, 2011). Its importance has been extensively discussed since then as governments committed themselves to it. Recently, it has been generally accepted by governments and international organizations that gender
equality is a prerequisite for sustainable human development rather than being a result of sustainable human development. Gender mainstreaming is necessary not only for achieving gender equality but also for achieving sustainable development of societies. (Innes, n.d.)

It incorporates a “Gender and Development” perspective and aims to have women and men have “equitable access” by looking more comprehensively at the relationship between women and men and their access to and control over decision making, resources and rewards. In addition to, “equal participation” within a specific system, this system could be a government, an organization or an entire society (Innes, n.d.).

According to an UN report, gender mainstreaming approach is essential for Social Justice and protecting human rights for both women and men but it is also more acknowledged that integrating gender perspectives in different areas ensures the effective attainment of other economic and social goals. Gender mainstreaming approach can open the door and highlight the need for changes in strategies, actions and goals to make sure that men and women can equally participate and benefit from the development process. This may result in obvious changes in organizations and government to create an environment encouraging and promoting gender equality (Gender Mainstreaming an overview, 2002).

As mentioned by Melissa Innes, gender mainstreaming approach is important since it challenges the status quo with the goal of achieving gender equality, gender mainstreaming is not an end in itself. Gender Mainstreaming approach is: a) an important characteristic of good governance that aims at making sure that policies, institutions and programmes make women’s and men’s experiences and concerns integral part of their design and distribute benefits equally between men and women; b) leads to more fairness, justice and equity for men and women and therefore strengthens the accountability of governments to achieve equal results for all citizens; c) ensures gender equality in the implementation, monitoring & evaluation of any policies and any programs in all sectors of the society; d) it involves changing the policies and the institutions to actively promote
gender equality; it is a long-term, transformative process that contribute to economic, social and cultural progress. (Innes, n.d.)

There are several reasons highlighting the added value of gender mainstreaming as follows: a) It positions people at the heart of policy-making which makes it a win-win strategy. Since it takes the gender equality perspective into account, which makes policies better defined in terms of the needs of men and women which will lead to the improvement of the practice of designing and evaluating general policies. Gender mainstreaming is a step forward to a more human and a less economic approach of development and management of democratic societies in which the lives of men and women will improve accordingly b) Gender Mainstreaming leads to better government since it leads to better informed policy-making and thus better government. Gender Mainstreaming will lead to more transparency and openness in the policy process; c) Gender Mainstreaming involves both women and men and makes full use of human resources which makes it clear that the society is now making use of the experience of both men and women thus removing the imbalances in the society and acknowledge the shared responsibilities of both women and men. (Gender Mainstreaming: Conceptual Framework, Methodology and Presentation of Good Practices, 2004)

Gender mainstreaming approach may help in reducing the democratic deficit which exemplifies many democracies; d) Gender Mainstreaming makes gender equality issues visible in the society. Gender mainstreaming approach gives a clear idea of the impact and consequences of political initiatives on both men and women and maintain a balance between men and women in the area concerned. Gender equality issues become visible and integrated into the mainstream of the society in which they were marginalized. It should demonstrate that gender equality is an essential societal issue with consequences and repercussions for the development of the society and that it is not only a "cost" or a "luxury". Gender mainstreaming approach will change attitudes towards gender equality which is usually negative and will launch a new debate on issues of equality from a different perspective. “It will change attitudes towards gender equality, too often negative, and
launch a new debate on equality issues, from a different angle to the usual one. (Gender Mainstreaming: Conceptual Framework, Methodology and Presentation of Good Practices, 2004)

However, Gender mainstreaming approach is facing criticism. Scholars like Susan Hawthorne argue that “gender mainstreaming does not allow for context sensitivity, instead it goes for a one-size-fits-all approach which actually only fits the person deemed of a standard size, the norm” (Kapur, n.d.). In her view, a gender perspective will inevitably fall victim to a politics of exclusion and inclusion in which those who do not fit within this category are banned from establishing this perception. These voices are marginalized by the strategy and the tool that claims to mainstream and empower women (Kapur, n.d.).

As mentioned in the report of the Council of Europe on gender mainstreaming approach, one of the main defects of this approach is that it is inadequately focused on the relationship between gender mainstreaming and societal change. One of the main questions that have to be revisited is how GM as a theory relates to and considers gender inequality as a societal phenomenon (Gender Mainstreaming Conceptual Framework, Methodology and Presentation of Good Practices, 2004). It is suggested that the relationship between the state and society and how they are designed for policy purposes need further explanation. Scholars must go beyond the ambiguous/vague and technocratic nature of gender mainstreaming and should work toward explaining the approach and the concept as part of a comprehensible intellectual and policy endeavor (Gender Mainstreaming Conceptual Framework, Methodology and Presentation of Good Practices, 2004).

Gender mainstreaming also replicates some of the tensions brought by the feminist theory. The three main critiques raised were the focus on women instead of gender, the obstacles linked to a gender perspective, and the incapability to question the mainstream which are all interconnected (Gender Mainstreaming Conceptual Framework, Methodology and Presentation of Good Practices, 2004).
Gender mainstreaming approach is also facing criticism from some feminists. Prudence Woodford-Berger argued that it is elusive and has unclear goals, nebulous and it demands little analytical skills, little commitment and little resources from those who carry it out. She also argues that gender mainstreaming is not doing well in advancing the situation of women. (Woodford-Berger, 2004).

Rekha Mehra and Geeta Rao Gupta argue that gender mainstreaming approach has not been followed systematically enough to support complete conclusions about its failure or success. In most cases of GM, the process of is not properly implemented or is incomplete and in some cases it is midstream. Most importantly, the process of gender mainstreaming fell short especially in the context of bi-lateral and multilateral organizations of the dimension that influences development on the ground and can display results in terms of development effectiveness. (Mehra and Gupta, 2006)

Suzette Mitchell highlighted the main reasons behind the disappointing impact of gender mainstreaming approach including lack of clarity around the term, lack of measurable outcomes and lack of funding and commitment and the embedded political agenda in a transformative approach to GM. She adds that GM will continue to be a halfhearted process and ad hoc measures that do not create actual change for gender equality unless there is an agreement or consensus on what is GM, its strengths and weaknesses and on how to having it implemented effectively and measuring its outcomes across agencies and countries. (Women, Gender and Development in the Pacific: Key Issues, n.d.)

True and Mintrom argued that the diffusion of GM approach is driven by transnational networks of non-state actors that keep GM approach on the agenda. Countries which adopt GM within their institutions through networks, alliances and agreements do so due to their link to the international society. A gendered policy approach will eventually depend on whether states create a specialized high level institution for addressing gender equality policy and most importantly have decision-makers who are in favor of it, but this
depends on the effectiveness and implementation of these mainstreaming institutions. This situation does not do a lot to guarantee women’s access to equality (Krook and True, 2010).

In addition, Emilie Hafner Burton and Mark A. Pollack, raised the problem of “measurement” in gender mainstreaming approach. Not only in books and scholarly articles but also in the “political debate between international organizations and their critics, the lack of a clear measure of mainstreaming has thus far placed limits on our ability to assess progress in gender mainstreaming. If mainstreaming is to be measured with more precision in the future, international organizations and the scholars will need to develop more precise measures of (1) the procedures to be used to mainstream gender across the policy process; (2) the operational outputs of these organizations in terms of programs, policies and projects; and (3) the outcomes of policy "on the ground" in each organization’s member state. For scholars effort needs to be expended in measuring not only the dependent variable of mainstreaming itself but also for the independent variables which could be put as determinants and criteria of success or failure in GM (Hafner-Burton and Pollack, 2001). The authors called for further comparative research on mainstreaming both within and across organizations and at various levels of domestic and international governance.

However, even if gender mainstreaming approach faced some criticism, it presents a vision of the future. At the field level, intensive contextual analysis should be conducted and should consider the specific needs of each targeted community. In addition, clear indicators have to be identified to measure the effectiveness of the development programs and appropriate tools and resources should be identified to enable putting gender parity principles into practice but at the same time build the capacity of the beneficiaries to and long-term change for gender parity (Hafner-Burton and Pollack, 2001). In addressing this question, my research does not only rely on data from national statistics but also data from personal interviews with female voters. The data from interviews will elucidate the experience of women in elections. Most importantly, it will also help us evaluate the relevance and significance of these research indicators. By offering an account of women's
experience in election, the proposed study will suggest ways to better contextualize development programs.

In order to achieve effective gender mainstreaming, a good and effective monitoring and evaluation systems should be established, process documentation of programs results to support learning from other experiences. To achieve successful gender mainstreaming, sufficient funds and resources should be availed and development agencies should work together more collaboratively and should share knowledge and resources (Hafner-Burton and Pollack, 2001). In addition to capacity building of partners.

This research/study will contribute to expanding the application of the theory by applying it to the context of Egypt. Emilie Hafner Burton, Mark A. Pollack and Sylvia Walby are among the main scholars advocating for gender mainstreaming and their work will be used to frame the analysis carried out in this study.

In addition, this research will also use the Strategic Impact Inquiries (SII)’s Global Women’s Empowerment Framework which focuses on concrete outcomes in which any organization can hold itself accountable and organizes the diversity of women’s realities into a shared framework. In each context, this framework links women’s own priorities and definitions for empowerment to 23 key dimensions of social change which was shown to be broadly relevant to women’s empowerment across many studies and contexts. In this research the most relevant dimensions are dimension 2 of Legal and rights awareness; dimension 12 of Laws and practices of citizenship; and dimension 13 of Information and access to services (Women’s Empowerment Framework, n.d.).

Women’s empowerment is a process of social change which can be assessed by its outcomes. The women’s empowerment framework views women’s empowerment through the lens of the struggle of poor women to achieve their equal and full human rights. Women
struggle to balance daily, practical, individual achievements with strategic, collective, long-term work to challenge the biased social institutions and rules (Women’s Empowerment Framework, n.d.).

The SII’s Global Framework provides an approach of organizing the variety of women’s realities into a shared framework as well as reminding us that impact measurement in any assumed dimension have to use the indicators of changes in agency, structures, and relations (Martinez and Wu, n.d.).

Women’s empowerment framework captures features of power to, over and with. Although women’s empowerment differs across particular contexts, it understands women’s empowerment as the total of changes required for a woman to realize her own full human rights, that includes the interplay of changes in the following: (CARE Gender Tool Kit)

- Agency: her own capabilities and aspirations,
- Structure: the environment that frame and conditions her choices,
- Relations: the power relations in which she negotiates her path.

Each domain - agency, structures and relations - are thoroughly related and interlinked with each other and “sustainable progress toward women's empowerment must be fixed in inter-related changes covering each of these domains” (CARE Gender Tool Kit).

The diagram hereunder applies women’s empowerment framework to the Women’s Citizenship Initiative. Providing examples of how we can address agency, relations and structures. This shift to a “programme approach” provides new opportunities for the comprehensive approach needed to achieve women’s empowerment.
Figure (1) Conceptual Framework

Source: Adapted from Women’s Empowerment Framework, n.d.
Chapter 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

When looking at the literature, the focus will be on works that addresses UN and political transitions and how the UN contributes to the advancement of women participation in elections in Egypt. My study will contribute to this body of literature by examining the political experience of women during political transition. It will elucidate the role played by the UN in supporting women’s participation in elections in Egypt and how the UN contributed to increasing women’s participation in elections in Egypt.

This research/study will build upon this body of literature to highlight the background of women’s political participation in Egypt and the UN efforts to support women’s participation in elections in Egypt.

The literature draws our attention to the ways in which the UN have been influential in promoting women's rights and the political participation. In highlighting the dissertation’s original contribution and situating it within the larger body of literature, below is a brief literature review of the relevant contributions.

This literature review is structured around four thematic, cross-cutting questions, which are: 1) Why does women participation in elections matter? ; 2) How has the topic of women's political participation and voting been studied in the literature?; 3) Why should the UN, or international organizations in general, be involved in promoting women participation in elections? ; 4) What has been the impact of international organizations on women participation in elections so far?;

Political participation in the Middle East and North Africa Region must be taken seriously as per Ellen Lust-Okar (Lust-Okar, 2008). The authors of the book emphasize the importance of political participation, and the need for greater scholarly attention on the
topic. However, they disagree on number of major issues and important questions which are: who participates and why they participate and what constitutes participation. They also raise important questions regarding the boundaries between informal or formal institutions, the extent to which these venues are integrated, and the degree to which each should be emphasized. The book also ascertains the influence of international and domestic forces and their role in shaping political participation.

The authors present different definitions for political participation, Holger Albrecht argues that political participation has to intentionally aim at influencing public policy. Meanwhile, Laila Hammad defines participation more broadly, emphasizing that it is not limited to an intentional action targeting and influencing decision-making. For example, with regards to elections, there are different perspectives on the motivation that drive voters to vote. In countries like Egypt and Jordan, the prospect of accessing state patronage and obtaining services through winning candidates attract and tempt voters to the polls. Differences in the type of the regime, thus, may explain variations in voter’s motivations.

Another important distinction is between the forms of participation, in this regard, scholars have identified two kinds of participation, participation in the formal arena and participation in the informal arena. Participation in the formal arenas such as through elections, parliaments, political parties, and participation in informal arenas such as informal mediation mechanisms and kinship networks. In this research study, I will be addressing participation elections which is participation in the formal arena. In my research/study I focus on elections, since following uprisings and regime change, people might be more apt to participate in elections now that the old corrupt regime collapsed. That is there is a sense that change is possible. Measuring participation in this formal venues is thus worth analytical and empirical investigation. Furthermore, while I will focus on female participation in elections, the interviews that I will conduct aim to ascertain women's participation in informal venues as well. That is I will try to understand through my interviewees how women were politicized and what motivated them to cast their vote. I trust that these question will contribute to identifying informal forms of female political
participation and will open up significant analytical venues on the intersection between informal and formal venues of participation.

Holger Albrecht (Albrecht, 2008) argues that understanding political participation is “not only applicable in authoritarian states of the Middle East and North Africa “ but it is also critical to a “comprehensive understanding of state-society relationships in this region.” Many distinctions should be recognized when applying the concept of political participation to the countries of the MENA region. In authoritarian regimes, the “political” sphere frequently overlaps with other spheres, such as the social and economic. According to Albrecht, various venues of participation should be analyzed. There are formal and informal venues of participation. In the past, the focus was on formal institutions (elections, legislative bodies, political parties) but currently there is also informal institutions to the depiction of political participation in the MENA.

Albrecht argues that there is no such thing as “meaningful mass participation” in the MENA and formal institutions do not “substantially affect the political, economic, and social life of the ordinary citizen.” citizens can participate in political life through informal channels such as in informal social networks, corporatist endeavors and oppositional political institutions each come with major restrictions limiting the possibility that citizens succeed in using these channels to challenge the government.

Women participation in elections play a factor in relation to gender equality, which is a main component of the process of democratization as noted by Pippa Norris and Christian Welzel (nglehart; Norris and Welzel, 2002). Support to gender equality is part of a broad cultural change that transforms societies and bring mass demands for democratic institutions which is not just a consequence of democratization. The authors examined the impact of cultural and economic variables on the percentage of women in parliament and on the community’s level of democracy. In this article the authors reviews relationship between “culture and women’s representation” and demonstrates the link between
“democratization and the proportion of women in parliaments in 65 societies worldwide” (inglehart; Norris and Welzel, 2002).

These scholars also studied the reasons of the relationship between culture and women’s representation including the role of changing values towards “gender equality, the process of modernization and economic development, cultural legacies represented by religious values, and democratic political institutions” (nglehart; Norris and Welzel, 2002).

Women Participation in Elections is important in countries going through political transition, as mentioned for instance by Maya Morsy (Morsy, 2014). She argues that women participation in transitional processes is important for achieving democracy in Egypt. This article compares Egyptian laws before and after the revolution in relation with international human rights conventions ratified by Egypt. Women must have an equal right with men to enjoy political rights including the right to vote and be elected.

Hania Sholkamy (Sholkamy, 2010) the empowerment of women has become an important and interesting issue in Egypt and in the Arab world in general. Sholkamy’s article shows that women are empowered by being part or initiator of processes and larger projects. As proposed in this research/study women’s participation in elections is important. She offered an analysis of the reasons behind women’s empowerment in the Arab world became an attractive issue to international organizations and development agencies. She highlights that women’s rights are still not realized yet despite the presence of some institutional arrangements that can deliver some changes. Despite the increasing presence of women women’s empowerment lack popularity with those women who are disempowered and with grassroots women, despite the presence and efforts of feminist activism and state support. There are several ways for measuring women empowerment some will produce positive outcomes such as illiteracy classes, income generation, community mobilization projects and micro credit. The connotation between women’s empowerment and other development goals such as good governance, poverty alleviation, or economic development can explain
the cause why small loans, small group meetings and sewing machines are supposed to empower women. “The misleading confusions and real intersections between women’s empowerment as a political end in itself and its usefulness as a vehicle to other ends (such as poverty eradication) have obfuscated the processes of empowerment. This has nurtured an assumption of gushing-up as opposed to trickle down” (Sholkamy, 2010, P.10).

Sholkamy’s article shows that women are empowered by being part or initiator of processes and larger projects as in the case of my research/study women’s participation in elections. As mentioned in her article the issue of women empowerment became an attractive issue to international organizations and development agencies.

Mary Ann. Tétreault (Tétreault, 1994) , although Egyptian women participated and were actively engaged in the revolution, still the transition period presented challenges to women’s participation in the political process. Women participated in the revolution in Egypt and Tunisia and should have equal rights as men and should reap the fruits of the revolutions equally with men as Elisabeth Johansson-Nogues (Johansson-Nogues, 2013) mentioned that women in Egypt and Tunisia after the revolutions expected to be recognized as equal partners and have the right to have a say over the future of their countries. However, these aspirations are not completely met yet.

After the first elections of the constituent assembly in Tunisia in October 2011. The party leaders of El Nahda were not flexible in their commitment for maintaining the rights of the Tunisian women. In this elections Tunisian women secured 61 of the Constituent Assembly’s 217 seats 27%. However, there are only three women ministers out of 41 ministers. Most political parties had overwhelmingly placed men at the top of their party lists.

In Egypt, the electoral law specified that all political parties are obliged to have women in their lists/ballots. However, women figured low down in these lists, only 12 seats out of 498 of the Egyptian People’s Assembly were occupied by women, this people’s assembly was disbanded as of 2013. In the first Constituent Assembly in 2012, only six
women figured on the 100-person-strong panel. Although it included more women but they all walked out before the draft was finished because they were either reportedly being “intimidated by their male homologues or found their views being ignored in the drafting of the text”. As a result, the UN specialists and Egyptian legal experts are in agreement that it is a male drafted constitution which did not prevent discrimination against women or safeguarded the limited women’s rights inherent in the Personal Status Law.

Women in Egypt and Tunisia during these political transition entailed a mixed picture. The revolution has helped somehow in advancing their political rights only as participants in elections but at the same time did not provide them with better political representation or access to policymakers to make sure that their concerns and claims are heard and integrated.

Despite the noticeable female voter turnout and noticeable female electoral gains in Egypt and Tunisia, the elections results in both countries revealed that the status of women played a very small role for voters and that the winning political parties largely combine around “a ‘not now’ approach to women’s rights”. “As Agathangelou reminds us, democracy and free and fair elections are often simply not enough for advancing women’s rights and place in society and institutions claiming to be democratic are not necessarily socially just”. In addition, feminist writings on women and revolutions show that women’s rights suffer setbacks in the post evolutionary context.

The degree of which the rights of women are ensured in countries witnessing political transitions in the Arab region such as Egypt and Tunisia will predict the longevity and sustainability of reform and the stability of the new regime as mentioned by John W. Sutherlin (Sutherlin, 2012) If Egypt and Tunisia ignore women’s rights then the majority of the population will not enjoy the fruits of the political transition and the new regimes. As the author argues failure to include “women’s political and economic issues will result in
only partial reform” that will be unstable on the long-term. Arab countries will gain a lot by promoting women’s rights.

Women played a key role in the Egyptian revolution as mentioned by Rabab El Mahdi (Abu-Lughod and El-Mahdi, 2011) an activist and scholar during a conversation held on September 23, 2011, at "Activism and the Academy: Celebrating Forty Years of Feminist Scholarship and Action," a conference held on the fortieth anniversary of the Barnard Center for Research on Women, New York, September 23-24, 2011. El Mahdi spoke about how the media speaks about the role of women in the revolution as women’s rights and their status after the revolution. Media speaks as if women were somehow passive and it denied the role that women played in Egypt such as in “the wave of labor mobilization since 2006, the role of female activists in the prodemocracy and antiwar movements since 2003, and their constant presence in the student movement”.

Women participation in elections is important as mentioned in the UNDP–UN Women Report on the Sub-Regional Forum on Women’s Participation in Post-Revolution Parliamentary Elections. Comparative Experiences from Egypt, Libya and Tunisia (2012), which documents the comparative experiences, international and regional perspectives, and debates and discussions. This forum brought parliamentarians, scholars, decision makers, experts from the three countries and other countries to share their experiences and discuss their challenges in order to draw “a road map” for the way forward and determine means of cooperation and to network and collaborate to support the strengthening and enhancement of women’s participation. This forum included academia, government representatives, members of political parties, members of committees for drafting legislation, elected and non-elected men and women candidates, media, CSOs, women election observers and representatives from international organizations. This diverse group was targeted to ensure the engagement of women and men to support efforts to the achievement of gender equality, equal participation in transition to democracy and social justice.
During the forum they discussed: 1) how to enhance women’s participation as voters and they presented a comparative analysis of the challenges and the opportunities provided by the transition to democracy and by the revolutions; 2) exploring special measures within the electoral system to enhance women’s representation; 3) challenges facing women candidates in the three countries; 4) gender sensitivities in electoral management and “how legal provisions do not provide sufficient support to women”.

At the end of the forum participants recognized the common needs of the three countries and confirmed “their readiness to pursue their efforts towards the political empowerment of women and highlighted the usefulness of exposure to other experiences, the UN representatives also expressed their satisfaction with the findings of the Forum and declared their readiness to support any country-owned and country-led initiative to increase and enhance women’s political participation”.

Women equality must be the base of all democratic processes and transitional justice. Real democracy will never be achieved without women becoming equal shareholders of the democratic process in their own countries as mentioned in the Women in Democratic Transitions in the MENA Region (2013). It highlights the challenges, struggles and successes of women in the MENA region and presents recommendations for the way forward for women in the MENA region, mentioning that the real revolution for women has yet to take place. It offers a critical analysis of the critical role of women in the rule of law and constitution making in MENA. As Nobel Prize Committee urged in 2011 “we cannot achieve democracy and lasting peace unless women obtain the same opportunities as men to influence development at all levels of society”.

Egypt is a signatory of several international conventions on human rights, Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Convention on the Elimination of
Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and UNSCR 1325. Although ratification of these conventions is perceived as a sign of commitment of the signatories and progress but it does not mean abiding to the rights intrinsic in these conventions. Women in the region participated in demonstrations aspired for democracy, equality, justice, rule of law and transparency in government.

The UN is very keen on promoting democracy and women participation in elections is part of this commitment, as noted by Kirsten Haack (Haack, 2011), who tracks the development of the idea of democracy at the UN. Away from a “practice-focused” perspective the author went deeper into the conceptual trajectory that facilitate understanding of how the UN was able to support and promote democracy internationally. The author highlighted the role played by UN Secretaries General especially Boutros Ghaly and Kofi Annan in promoting the idea of promoting democracy.

Since democracy is a debatable concept, Haack proposes “democratic continuum” to show different understanding of democracy and to have it as a framework to evaluate the UN’s interpretation of democracy against the background of the western theories of democracy. The author presented four different “visions” for democracy which are civilization, elections, governance and developmental democracy. She presented not only the four visions of democracy but also what should be. She presented questions on the ability of the UN to foster a democracy agenda based on real understanding of democracy. She confirmed that the debate over democracy will remain on the UN agenda for the coming years. The author argued that the democracy agenda not only includes elections but a wide range of liberal democratic institutions.

The UN and international organizations in general should be involved in promoting women participation in elections, as argued in the study prepared upon request of the European Parliament’s subcommittee on Human Rights titled Women’s Rights During
Democratic Transitions (2012), which provides analysis of the “policy initiatives and recent research while also assessing the possibilities for entry points relevant to the enhancement of EU action to support universal standards for promoting women’s rights in the context of democratic transitions”. The authors in this study agreed that women’s rights will be the criteria to test a successful democratic transition. The authors analyzed the gender dimension in the context of transition to democracy processes with a focus on the sociopolitical changes occurring in the region. They have paid special attention to the political participation of women to highlight the importance of gender responsive constitutions, legislations and accountability systems. The authors explores the initiatives taken to date on women’s rights by international organizations and they attempted to map “EU instruments and entry points for further action”. This study presented a pragmatic recommendations to the “EU as an external promoter of democracy and gender equality”.

The authors presented the UN’s response to women’s rights during the democratic transition in the region and have also mentioned that the UNDP produced a series of reports on the top of them the Human Development Reports in early and mid-2000s analyzing the social, economic and demographic challenges. UNDP reports predicted that without social and economic reform being accelerated there will be political violence and uprisings. The UN response to the Arab spring was impressive. In this study they mentioned initiatives done by the UN on top of them UNDP and UN Women in response to the democratic transition in the region.

The UN plays an important role in the advancement of women rights, as demonstrated by Hilkka Pietila (Pietilä and Jeane, 1990). Women contributed in the establishment of “Intergovernmental Peace Organizations since 1919” and participated in the founding events of the UN that took place in 1940. Women made their “finger prints” in the UN and the Universal Declaration for Human Rights. Many events launched in the UN and brought women issues and women on the top of the UN agenda. Four world conferences were held on women, “international convention of women’s rights including the right to control their fertility, gender perspective into the theory and practice of politics
and development and gender mainstreaming obligation to the whole UN system”. In addition to, UN agreements and conventions for the advancement of women and other structures that exist within the UN concerning women in the development process (Pietilä and Jeane, 1990).

The UN exerted creditable efforts in supporting women political participation during political transition especially in elections in Egypt as mentioned in the UNDP and UN Women study titled **Support to the Political Transition in Egypt: A Case Study** (2013). The UN has been always calling its agencies to act as one under the slogan of “Delivering as one”. The UN Women –UNDP case study on “Support to the Political Transition in Egypt” is considered one of the best practices that made the contribution and the role of the UN more obvious to the transition governments and made the UN assistance to Egypt during its transition to Democracy especially in the area of elections more targeted and coordinated and achieving better results. This study of this best practice includes a review of the Egyptian Context and “Rationale for the intervention areas under the Joint Programme, the Approach, Components and Results Achieved, as well as the Lessons Learned during Planning and Implementation. The information gathering process relied primarily on a desk top review of relevant reports complemented with interviews with UN programme officers, project management and the national project director of the Social Contract Center (SCC)”.

UNDP-UN Women provided support to the Electoral Processes in Egypt which was acknowledged by various national counterparts and the Egyptian Government requested further support to the electoral processes. The Egyptian Government appreciated the “non-interfering” approach of the UN as well as to the high quality of the assistance provided. The support provided by UNDP and UN Women to the government was focused on “strengthening institutional capacities and electoral practices, promoting civic awareness and supporting women’s acquisition of national ID cards thereby enabling them to vote if they so choose”.

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The UN launched the Women Citizenship Initiative in Egypt to enhance participation of women in elections as voters as mentioned in the study titled *The Women’s Citizenship Initiative A Case Study of an Innovation in the Governance of Public Services* (2013). The Women’s Citizenship Initiative is one of two “comprehensive intervention areas under the UN Women Egypt Country Strategy that responds to the transitional and post-transitional phases of the revolution of the 25th of January 2011”. This Initiative is an integral part of the UNDP project “Strengthening of Democratic Processes in Egypt” in which UN Women is a main partner. The Initiative was launched in 2012 for the duration of three years and it is implemented by the Ministry of State for Administrative Development, Ministry of Interior and its Civil Registry Office, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Social Fund for Development in partnership with UN Women and UNDP. The purpose of this initiative is facilitating an on-going national registration process for the issuance of two million national Identity cards (ID) for women. The overall goal is “to ensure women’s basic citizenship rights during the democratic transition in Egypt.” its specific objectives are: “Increasing Women’s Political Participation and Enhancing Women’s Economic Participation.”

This Initiative is based on “an approach combining awareness raising about the importance of ID cards, information about the registration process and documents required to register for an ID card, facilitating the process of registration and issuance of the ID Cards and linkages to the SFD micro and small credit schemes”.

The “Women’s Citizenship Initiative” received funding from the UN Women Global Programme “Gender and Democratic Governance: Delivering Services for Women.” “The Global Programme is a joint initiative of the United Nations Development Fund for Women and the United Nations Development Fund Democratic Governance Group, Bureau for Development Policy. Its purpose is to enhance women’s influence and participation in the governance of service delivery. The focus of this programme which is grounded in country level practice is on building a body of knowledge about the challenges and solutions to the gender sensitive governance of public services. This programme is a frame of reference for
the Initiative which has received support from Austria, Belgium, Sweden, Norway, Spain, Ireland, Japan, Australia, and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the European Union (EU)”.

This initiative is important because it stalks its responsiveness from the needs and condition of Egyptian women and from fostering a culture of inclusion that is critical to democratic transition that is founded upon “the rule of law, equal citizenship, and respect for human rights and dignity”. The ownership of ID cards will provide women with “a voice in the political arena in terms of the decision-making process and the shaping of policy”. Therefore, the Initiative is a model for “gender sensitive mechanisms of service delivery and outreach to marginalized communities, especially to poor and illiterate women”.
4.1. Political Participation:

**Political Participation** is defined by Holger Albrecht as a “social activity to influence governmental decision-making.” (Albrecht 2008, P.15). In line with Holger, political participation exists in every political system irrespective of whether it is democratic or authoritarian or whether it is going through political transitions. (Albrecht, 2008).

For Albrecht, political participation has to intentionally aim at influencing public policy. However, Laila Hammad (Lust-Okar, 2008) defines participation more broadly, emphasizing that it is not limited to an intentional action targeting and influencing decision-making. For example, with regards to elections, there are different perspectives on the motivations that drive voters to vote. In countries like Egypt, the prospect of accessing state patronage and obtaining services through winning candidates attract and tempt voters to the polls. Differences in the type of the regime, thus, may explain variations in voter’s motivations (Lust-Okar, 2008).

Another important distinction is between forms of participation. In this regard, Laila Alhamad and Holger Albrecht (Lust-Okar, 2008) have identified two kinds of participation: participation in the formal arena and participation in the informal arena. Participation in the formal arenas such as through elections, parliaments, political parties, and participation in informal arenas such as informal mediation mechanisms and kinship networks such as trade unions, syndicates, NGOs, media, and collective actions. In this research study, I examine participation in elections which is participation in the formal arena.

There are different types of political participation which are as follows: Conventional participation which is through using the channels of a representative
government includes voting, volunteering for a political campaign, making a campaign donation, belonging to activist groups, and serving in public office; unconventional participation includes activities that are legal, such as signing petitions, supporting boycotts, and staging demonstrations and protests; and violent participation, which refers to activities that break the law and which usually occur when legal means have failed to create significant political change. These include political assassinations, terrorism, and sabotaging an opponent’s campaign through theft or vandalism. (Political Culture and Public Opinion, 2015)

Holger Albrecht argues that understanding political participation is critical to a have a comprehensive understanding of state-society relationships in the MENA region. (Albrecht 2008) Many distinctions should be recognized when applying the concept of political participation to the countries of the MENA region. In authoritarian regimes, the “political” sphere frequently overlaps with other spheres, such as the social and economic.

According to Albrecht, various venues of participation should be analyzed. There are formal and informal venues of participation. In the past, the focus was on formal institutions (elections, legislative bodies, political parties) but currently there is also informal institutions for political participation in the MENA (Albrecht 2008). Women's participation is clear at these institutions since access to formal participation venues is often arbitrated by socio-economic and gender factors. Access to informal venues are substantial for women's mobilization. Diane Singerman in the introduction of Avenues of Participation, presented a criticism of political theory that identifies political power in the state institutions only (Singerman, 1995). Many women in the Arab region even during the Arab Spring are marginalized from participating in the formal venues, the civic spheres became sites for cultivation of activity (Bayat, 2011).

Albrecht argues that there is no such thing as “meaningful mass participation” in the MENA and formal institutions do not significantly affect the social, economic and political life of the citizens. Citizens can participate in political life through informal channels such as in informal social networks, corporatist endeavors and oppositional political institutions
each come with major restrictions limiting the possibility that citizens succeed in using these channels to challenge the government (Bayat, 2011).

Examining women's political participation in this research is important because women’s political influence is not only large number of women being represented in decision-making processes and positions but it is also about their ability to influence policy debates, their capacity and their power relationships (Report on the Sub Regional Forum, 2012). Women’s participation in elections – formal venue- as voters should be investigated because it is a first step for women to practice their citizenship right and the first step for participation in elections is having an ID card to be eligible to vote. Political participation and voting can potentially benefit women’s particular and strategic gender needs.

I do acknowledge that this step does not necessarily lead to their full participation and empowerment given the socio-cultural and gender challenges in Egypt. I however contend that voting remains an initial and significant step in accessing public and political landscape. A lot is yet to be done to ensure women's full integration in politics and gender equality in the society at large.

Political participation is part of women’s rights package. Women participation in elections is an outcome of the participation. In line with the Women’s Empowerment framework, I observed in this research how access to voting is a mean of increasing women's empowerment.

4.2. Women's Political Participation:

Women are still negotiating gendered and societal constrains that administered their participation. Women’s marginalisation from political processes and structures is the result of various functional structural and personal factors that differ in different social settings. The common array of women’s political marginalization stem from political and social discourses; political institutions and structures; and the functional and socio-cultural limitations that limits women’s collective and individual activity.
The nature of politics is an important factor for the exclusion or inclusion of women in politics. Vicky Randall defines politics as an “articulation, or working out of relationships within an already given power structure” which is opposite to the traditional view of politics that defines it as “an activity, a conscious, deliberate participation in the process by which resources are allocated among citizens.” (Randal, 1994). This conception of politics limits political activity to be in the public arena only and the private sphere of family life is concentrated as apolitical. This public-private contradiction in the traditional definition of politics is being used to disregard women from the public political domain and even if women are taken into politics they access it as wives and mothers (Farzana, 2005).

The socio-cultural dependency of women is one of the main factors to their political participation in the public political sphere. Women find it difficult to participate in politics because of the limited time accessible to them due to their dual roles in the reproductive and productive domains. Women with primary roles as wives and mothers as well as their challenging domestic responsibilities and care work, they are left with limited time to participate in politics. In some parts of Egypt women face cultural restrictions on their mobility. Mobility is an essential request for an active political participation (Farzana, 2005).

Egypt is a patriarchal society which shapes women’s relationship in Egyptian politics. Andrienne Rich defines patriarchy as: “A familial-social, ideological, political system in which men by force, direct pressure or through ritual, tradition, law, and language, customs etiquette, education, and the division of labor, determine what part women shall or shall not play in which the female is everywhere subsumed under the male.” (Rich, 1977) The ideology of the gender role is an ideological tool used by the patriarchy to reside women in the private arena of homes as wives and mothers and reside men within the public sphere. This is one of the main factors which shape the degree of women’s political participation.
Examining women's political participation is important because women's political influence is not only a large number of women being represented in decision-making processes and positions but it is also about their ability to influence policy debates, their capacity, and their power relationships. Unfortunately, after the revolution women's demands and expectations are not met yet.

Political participation is part of women's rights package. Women participation in elections is an outcome of the participation. In line with the Women's Empowerment framework, I observed in this research how access to voting is a mean of increasing women's empowerment.

4.3. History of Women’s Political Participation in Egypt before the Revolution

Early signs of women’s participation in Egypt

Women participation in the political life in Egypt goes back to the era of the pharaohs for example Cleopatra and Nefertiti were among the women who had an impact as queens on the Egyptian society. Cleopatra ruled with Antony around 31 BC in spite of her gender (Lewis, 2006). Nefertiti was the main wife of Amenhotep IV and she was recognized as an active woman in the Egyptian society (Lewis, 2006). In addition, Hatshepsut ruled Egypt from 1503 till 1480 B.C. and she established most of Egyptian economy on commerce (El Sayed, 1995). Despite the fact that not a lot of women have ruled Egypt during the pharaohnic era but they were considered as equal to men.

Women participated in formal and informal venues during the era of Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) and Islam. With the arrival of Islam, women began to have a prominent public role within their community. Many prophetic hadiths and other stories express the political and social engagement of the wives of the prophet as leaders of decision-makers and in commercial activities. Islam granted women extra and new rights in political participation, freedom of expression and inheritance. There were many prominent women such as Khadija, prophet’s first wife and a well-known merchant; Aisha, prophet’s wife, consulted by men for her knowledge in law and religion; and Um Salama,
known for her interest in knowledge (Hassan, Nasr and Morsy, 2009). By the end of the 19th century and the early 20th Century, the feminist ideology appeared as mixed with Islamic reformism and modernity. As the Islamist and historian Thomas Philipp argues: “The debate over the emancipation of women originated among Muslim reformists. They felt that the position of women had suffered, not through the commands of original Islam, but by a misinterpretation of the *Qura’n* and later un-Islamic additions.” (Sullivan, 1986)

The creator of the reformist movement was Rifaa El Tahtawi who emphasized the principle of *takhyayyur* which means “the necessity to refer to the other school of laws to find solutions to modern matters when it seems it is most appropriate.” (Esposito, 2001, P.186) Reformists Mohamed Abdou and Jamal Al Din Al Afghani also supported women’s cause, they called for a new role for women much more in line with the changes of the time. They asked for increasing the access of women to education and limiting the unilateral right of men to divorce and polygamous marriage, among other demands (Mariscotti, 2008). Mohamed Abdou also opposed the problem of patriarchal excesses committed in the name of the religion of Islam (Badran, 2009).

Qasim Amin is considered the founder of feminist credence in Egypt and the father of the modern women’s activism and women’s movement. He believed in the liberation of women to develop an independent and free Egypt. He argues that “We hope the Egyptian woman achieves high status through the appropriate avenues open to her, and that she will acquire her share of intellectual and moral development, happiness, and authority in her household...This would prove to be the most significant development in Egypt’s history.” (Amin, 1995, P.2) He called for gender equality, freedom of women and women’s empowerment. He supported women’s participation in the Political, social and affairs of Egypt.

**Egyptian Women Participation since the 1919**

Women started to play a more active political role in the late 19th century and early 20th century. Women participated in nationalist movements in 1882 and 1919 and began to publish their own advocacy publications and own magazines (Blaydes and El Tarouty,
The 1919 Revolution is a turning point in Egypt’s modern history. All Egyptians from all sectors of the society including both women and men stood united struggling for their independence. Women stand side by side with men in demonstrations and has also organized their own demonstrations. Two women were killed by the British occupation forces during the revolution. For the first time in Egypt’s history, ruling-class women joined the masses in political agitation and nationalist militancy not for women’s demands but for the same nationalist cause presented by men (Badran, 2009). Young girls met the leaders and guided the protest, distributed leaflets, others joined the streets. Gender divisions and social rules were completely deferred (Badran, 2009). Safeya Zaghloul, the wife of the nationalist leader Saad Zaghloul, was called Om El Masryeen, the mother of the Egyptians, for her charismatic participation in the 1919 revolution (Baron, 2005). As Baron argued, “The Ladies’ Demonstration” of March 1919 soon became one of the most prominent icons of revolution” (Baron, 2005). Women symbolized the revolution, the true patriot and the nation (Baron, 2005).

After the 1919 revolution, women appealed publicly to national leaders in meetings, articles, and discussions asking for more rights in the Personal Status Laws and the welfare system. Despite of this they were shortly excluded from those principles of rights and liberty that the revolution vowed to guarantee. Women were denied the right to vote and hold political office. Women’s support was no longer seen by the majority of men to be useful during this new period of independence (Badran. 2009). The patriarchal environment expected women to retreat to their homes since the militant struggle was over and the Shari’a based family rules persist to represent the legacy of Islam in the judicial system in resistance to Westernization and secularization of the state’s laws (Abu-Odeh, 2010). However, women were increasingly taking up new positions within the society, leaving their homes and they became actively involved into a parallel isolated public sphere at the margins of men dominated political life. As Badran explains, this can be considered as the first wave of women’s political feminism (Badran, 2009).

In 1920, Hoda Shaarawi was elected as head of Al-Wafd Central Women’s Committee in 1920 under the leadership of Saad Zaghloul (Women in Modern Egypt, 2015).
In 1923, Hoda Shaarawi founded the Egyptian Feminist Union (EFU) in 1923 which aims at raising the moral and intellectual standard of the Egyptian woman to enable them to realize their social and political equality with men in all aspects of life and in the same year she headed the women’s delegation to the International Alliance of Women Summit in Rome in which upon her return she and her delegation took off their veils at the Cairo railway station in front of friends and supporters (Abu-Odeh, 2010). As a response to the EFU Zaynab el Ghazaly formed the Muslim Women's Society in 1936 which main objective is to focus on welfare work (Blaydes, 2009).

The new Egyptian Constitution that was endorsed in 1924 stated that “all Egyptians are equal before the law. They enjoy equally civil and political rights and equally have public responsibilities without distinction of race, language, or religion.” However, women rights and gender equality remained a mere speculation since Article 1 of Law No.11 of 1923 constrained suffrage to males only (Badran, 2009). In the late 1930s, the feminist movement failed to address the broader needs of women. Therefore, women from the middle class began to change their orientation and address women’s political rights addressing improving the living conditions of poor women (Badran, 2009).

The 1940s witnessed important political activity for Egyptian women. In 1942 the Egyptian Feminist Party was established and in 1945 the well-known Egyptian singer Umm Kalthoum was elected as the first President of the Musicians' Syndicate. In 1948, Doria Shafiq established an organization called Bint al-Nil which aimed at establishing full political equality between women and men and to eradicate illiteracy. The women of Bint al-Nil raged Parliament in 1951 demanding female representation.

From Nasser’s era to Sadat’s era:

Since the 1952 Revolution the concept of women’s participation increased and integrated in all of activities and fields. Nasser became interested in obtaining the consensus of liberal factions of society, and also planning to give women more political rights in order to achieve this goal. He adopted a socialist ideology and Pan-Arab principles in which women’s integration was a fundamental and crucial (Sullivan, 1986). After the 1952
revolution women were given the right to candidature and to vote. Women became members of the parliament and the cabinet and became members syndicate, parties and trade unions and held senior management posts (Women in Modern Egypt, n.d.).

In 1954, Doria Shafiq organized a hunger strike with several other members of the organization to put pressure on the government to give women the right to vote. Shafiq’s hunger strike ended when President Mohamed Naguib agreed to take her petition into consideration seriously and in 1956, the new Constitution granted women the right to vote. Women activists were mainly related to the elite during this time. In addition to the right to vote, women were given full political rights as part of the 1956 Constitution. All Egyptians were to be equal under the law, all citizens irrespective of gender are to guarantee jobs with the state irrespective of gender. During these years of "state feminism" many Egyptian women were mobilized, both in terms of their political participation and their economic productivity (Blaydes and El Tarouty, 2009). This Constitution was the first constitution in Egypt and the Arab world that grant women the right to vote and to recognize women’s citizenship rights. In 1957, for the first time, 6 women ran for elections and 2 of them won parliamentary seats (Hassan, Nasr and Morsy, 2009). During the period from 1956 till 1979, women started to assume political roles, enter Parliament and be appointed to cabinet posts. In 1962, Dr. Hekmat Abu Zeid was appointed by Nasser as the first woman minister of social affairs in the modern history (Hassan, Nasr and Morsy, 2009).

In 1959 the EFU was dissolved and al-Ghazali’s Muslim Sisterhood was also banned as well as several other women-led organizations. Women’s groups were immersed into the only legal political organization, the Arab Socialist Union, and the feminist activities became limited to serving the party and the Nasserist state (Sullivan, 1986). Shafik was silenced by the military and her name was banned from any public action because she condemned Nasser’s brutal policies. Shafik disappeared from public life and lived the rest of her life under arrest (Botman, 1999). Other feminists were either forced to close their social and political activities or imprisoned (Botman, 1999). The same happened to the Islamist al-Ghazali who was imprisoned for six years and was suffering from harassment and torture (Botman, 1999).
In the 1970s, Sadat implemented a program of open-door economics (*infitah*) that was complemented by a liberalization of the political sphere which includes introducing multiple political parties (Blaydes and El Tarouty, 2009). The economic and political liberalization that began in the 1970s and continued into Mubarak’s era redefined the relationship between women and the state in Egypt. The economic and social retreat of the state was related to a declining commitment to women’s equality (Blaydes and El Tarouty, 2009). To face the state's diminishing support for the political representation of women, middle class women began to organize themselves into autonomous formal and informal groups (Blaydes and El Tarouty, 2009).

Sadat tried to undermine the Nasserist and leftist frameworks in Egypt seeking the support of the Islamists and other middle-class political allies but this alliance had serious implications for the status of women (Botman, 1999). In 1971, after the defeat of the war of 1967 and the strong pressure from the Islamist movement, Sadat amended Article 2 of the Egyptian Constitution, making the Islamic *Shari’a* as one of the main sources of legislation to reflect Sadat’s willingness to embrace the Islamist discourse. This Constitution contradict with the meaning of citizenship, specifying that gender equality applies only when it does not obstruct with the rules of *Shari’a* law. In 1980, the Constitution was amended again and *Shari’a* became the main source of legislation (Botman, 1999). The contradictory pressures on women under Sadat were enormous. Because of the *infitah* and the limited success of the policies of the privatization, the state does not promote the full employment of women anymore and started disseminating an ideology that reduced women’s public roles and encouraging women to retreat to their homes (Botman, 1999).

On the other side, the Parliament through Law No.21 of 1979 established a quota for women in the Parliament allocating thirty additional seats for women in the Parliament (Hassan, Nasr and Mosry, 2009). In 1979, Women’s participation in the Parliament reached 9% (Hassan, Nasr and Mosry, 2009). Despite of introducing the quota system for women in the Parliament it raised general dissatisfaction and the law was considered by some people as unconstitutional assuming that it is a discrimination against men (Hassan, Nasr and Mosry, 2009).
In 1980, Egypt signed the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The Egyptian government ratified it but with reservation on articles 2, 9, 16, and 29 that may contradict with the Shari’a. Sadat wanted to win both maintaining Egypt’s image abroad and at the same time do not lose the Islamists (Sonneveld, 2009) The ratification of the CEDAW represented a significant move politically demonstrating Egypt’s willingness to embrace some of the values and norms recognized at the international level.

With the end of the Sadat’s era, women still lacked strong and independent organizations and there was still no general state program for the promotion of women’s rights (Al –Ali, 2000)

**During Mubarak’s era**

Mubarak faced the same challenges that faced Sadat. He wanted to appear progressive and reformist towards women’s rights but he did so while trying to put women at the sidelines of the political mainstream. He reversed the quota system introduced by Sadat in order to please and try to neutralize the Islamists and get rid of the controversial feminist policies linked to Sadat and his wife.

Due to Egypt’s commitments at the international level and Mubarak’s political aspiration of finding an ally in the West, he made several efforts toward the achievement of women’s equality. The state created organizations dedicated to the advancement of women, like the National Council for Women which was established in 2000. Grassroots Islamist organizations appear to have the upper hand over their state sponsored counterparts in the political mobilization of women in Egypt (Blaydes and El Tarouty, 2009).

In 2000, the state launched a new Personal Status Law with the purpose of “strengthening state institutions, creating equality and justice for all citizens, making claims to religious and cultural legitimacy, improving the status of Egypt within the international community, and securing the support of international organizations.” (Al Sharmani, 2007) The new law presented two significant articles related to women. Article 17 which grants
women of urfi marriage (unregistered marriage) the right to file for divorce and Article 20 gave women the right to file for a no-fault divorce named khul’. In contrast to fault-based divorce, the khul’ was seen as revolutionary by granting women the right for separation without a need to justify the reason and even if the husband does not agree (Arabi, 2001).

Other changes that have been made during Mubarak’s era is allowing female judges to become judges in the Supreme Judicial Council. In addition, the state readopted the quota system for the women to become members in the parliament. In 2009, the parliament Law No.38 of 1972 was amended to present a quota of 64 seats for women. However, the political representation of women in the Parliament remained practically insignificant. Women in 2000 held only 11 seats around 2.49 % (Mustafa, Shukor and Rabi, 2005). The number of representation of women in decision-making positions was extremely limited.

Even if the quota system increased the number of women’s representation in the Parliament, it secured more seats and more power to the National Democratic Party (NDP) which was one of the reasons that some people were against it. The limited political participation of women was not only related to women representation in the parliament and women’s participation as voters but is was also extended to women’s participation in political life in general. Women’s participation in political life was extremely limited and it was absent in some political parties.

The programs of all Egyptian political parties during Mubarak’s era promoted the idea of the need for an enabling environment to help women enjoy their rights. However, in practice, political parties did not work towards achieving this target or may be sometimes worked against it. In the Wafd party, there were only 3 women out of 60 decision-makers (Dawood, 2010). Farida Naqash, one of the founding members of the Tagammu’ party, mentioned that:

“In the Parliamentary elections of 2005, the Tagammu’ party was the only party—other than the NDP—that nominated two women, although they both lost the elections. Also, in 2010, the percentage of women candidates from the Tagammu’ was 12 percent. The Tagammu’ also has consisted in a progressive women’s union, which is a semi-independent
organization whose leaders are members of the higher party council. The party has used the quota system since its establishment, though the number of women in the party is still low.” (Ruta, 2012, P.68)

It is obvious that women’s political participation has always been behind the level of rights recognized in the Constitution and the laws related to women. Since the 1950s opportunities for women's political and economic participation increased, though not in a linear or steady fashion. The importance of women in mobilizing and organizing other female voters was particularly apparent in the 2005 parliamentary elections (Ruta, 2012, P.68).

4.4. Status of Women’s Participation in Elections before the Revolution

Political participation is part of women’s rights package. Women participation in elections is an outcome of the participation. In line with the Women’s Empowerment framework, I observed in this research how access to voting is a mean of increasing women’s empowerment.

The agenda of women's political participation in Egypt is full of complexities. The framing of women's political participation as an aspect of liberation has continuously been challenged in Egypt. Before the revolution, women's political participation were known with the policies of the state sponsored feminism. The National Council for Women (NCW) in Egypt, the national machinery for the empowerment of women in Egypt, was usually perceived as the "regime mouth piece". Some feminist refrained from becoming members in the NCW (Allam, 2015).

In addition to separating the feminist movement from the masses, the policies adopted by the state-sponsored feminism produced class-differential and uncertain progress in the status of women in Egypt (Beth, 2005) because these policies were mainly political motivated (Allam, 2015).
This is the standard trap and trick for the feminist movements in the Third World countries, authoritarian regimes try to contain feminist movements without providing any real gains (Allam, 2015). In the case of Egypt, despite the relatively progressive policies such as laws banning female genetile mutilation (FGM) or human trafficking, rural and poor working women still pay the high price for sexual violence and corruption (Abol Qomsan, 2011).

Mubarak’s regime appropriated “gender issues” under its name and stopped any other independent initiative (Allam, 2015). Any struggles occurred by women activists or women’s rights groups against the regime were omitted and the regime accredited it to itself (Allam, 2015).

During the Mubarak’s regime, the electoral system established a quota of 64 seats representing 12.5% of the total number of seats in the People’s Assembly. In addition, the former President Mubarak had the prerogative to appoint ten members to the People’s Assembly, of whom five were women (Report on the Sub-Regional Forum on Women’s Participation in Post-Revolution Parliamentary Elections. Comparative Experiences from Egypt, Libya and Tunisia, 2012). Women’s participation in Egypt during the previous regime was weak, but so was the male participation due to the lack of trust in the process.

Under Mubarak’s regime, Egyptian voters registered through the Ministry of Interior but the registration and voter cards were produced for voters to present at the polling station were perceived as incomplete and subject to political manipulation, therefore it lacked the confidence of the population. In Egypt, turnout among both men and women in elections during the previous regime had been systematically anemic. For example, the state claimed that 27.5% of eligible voters participated in the 2010 parliamentary elections, but domestic groups such as the Egyptian Association for Community Participation Enhancement suggested that the true figure was closer to 10%. Turnout figures were unreliable in any case and there were no sex disaggregated data, making it impossible to ascertain the level of women’s participation in the polls as voters (Report on the Sub-Regional Forum on Women’s Participation in Post-Revolution Parliamentary Elections. Comparative
Experiences from Egypt, Libya and Tunisia, 2012). Noting that only 3% of women had electoral cards before the revolution (Report on the Sub-Regional Forum on Women’s Participation in Post-Revolution Parliamentary Elections. Comparative Experiences from Egypt, Libya and Tunisia, 2012).

A small number of women participated in the elections during Mubarak’s era, both as candidates and voters. At that time, the parliament passed a legislation that specified a number of seats for women in the People’s Assembly. Elections often lacked security and proper monitoring. Some female voters and some female candidates were forced to leave voting stations because of the candidates that they supported.

The year prior to the revolution witnessed increased political discussions and discussions on political reform, political activities and many coalitions were formed aiming at reforming the political life in Egypt. Opposing Political parties declared their participation in the elections of the parliament and the Shura Council as a coalition which includes 22 political parties and including all political sects (Abol Qomsan, 2011).

Although there were no constitutional or legal restrictions on women’s political participation in political parties, the parliament, or the government, there remains gaps between the laws and the actual implementation of these laws. This gap is largely due to societal attitudes, which can affect women’s political participation more than the law itself. The heavy restrictions and limits put on women’s participation in politics in Egypt are also a result of the conflict between the old and new political parties (Abol Qomsan, 2011).
Chapter 5: WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION IN ELECTIONS IN EGYPT AFTER THE REVOLUTION

Women in the revolutions of 1919 (Dar 2011, Abdel Nasser 2013) and 2011 (Taking It to the Streets: Egyptian Women Protest the Government alongside the Men yet Few Images of Women 2011)

The revolution took place due to several economic, social and political factors. One of the main factors was the lack of democracy. Before the revolution, Egyptian people lacked the motivation to participate in elections because they know that the outcome was predetermined. The 2010 parliamentary elections was considered one of the most and discreditable and scandalous elections in Egypt since it was corrupt and increased the people anger toward the regime. In addition, the representation of the Muslim Brothers dropped from 88 to 0 (Amnesty International, 2001). 28 % only of Egyptians mentioned that they had trust in the parliamentary elections and its results in the years 2005 and 2010 (Abu Dhabi Gallup Center, n.d.).
This study will start by providing a background on the 25th of January revolution. It will provide an overview of the political environment during this period and the changes that paved the way to the 25th of January revolution. Main sufferings are highlighted before narrowing the topic to women’s political participation and specifically in elections as voters since women’s participation did not occur in vacuum. The Revolution was triggered by the problems occurring in the Egyptian society (Allam, 2015).

Most Egyptians were suffering from economic and social pressures in addition to political marginalization. Many Egyptians were falling under poverty and high level of unemployment especially for youth (Allam, 2015).

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Report (HDR) 2010 for Egypt showed how young graduates lived in period of indeterminate state. The report stated that many of the Egyptian youth were trapped in "waithood" (UNDP EHDR, 2010) which is defined in the HDR as a lengthy period during which youth wait for their own lives to start.

Several scholars see the success of Egyptian revolution in forcing Mubarak to step down as a result of forging cross-class coalitions across the Egyptians (Allam, 2015). Goldstone argues that “Conversely, revolts rooted in the needs and organization of one particular class or group—peasant revolt, urban uprisings, student protests, regional rebellions — have usually been effectively repressed by regimes able to draw on other groups for support.” (Goldstone, 2012, P.457) There was an emergence of two parallel movements of workers and the middle class citizens in Egypt during the last decade (Al Aswany, 2012). The workers’ movement is more sustained and larger but workers had no unified program or national leadership. Describes: “they rarely made direct demands for democracy or regime change, as middle-class activists did after the Kifaya (Enough!) Movement.” (Bienin, 2011, P.26)

This continued until the scandalous death of Khalid Saied on June 2010 who was beaten to death by two police officers in which his friends posted the video as retaliation. His death
became a source of collective action and brought people together in solidarity. Although death is a solid source of mobilization for collective action, theorists of social movement argue that it is not a sustained one (Tilly and Tarrow, 2007). However the case of Khaled’s death proved the contrary in which people participated in online groups dedicated to him (Allam, 2015).

In 2010, Egyptians witnessed the most “opaque and messy” parliamentary elections (Dunn, 2010) which was described as “marred by fraud” (Mohyeldin, 2010). This elections witnessed vote buying, violence and excluding opposition in which the National Democratic Party (NDP) won more than 96% of the seats (El Rashidi, 2010). Several political analysts consider the parliamentary elections in 2010 as a preview of the presidential elections in 2011 (Hamzawy, 2010). This is not an overestimation since the presidential election of 2004 did not cost any better in which Mubarak won by an absolute majority over the other two candidates. Following his success in elections, he took further steps to consolidate not only his rule but also his son Gamal Mubarak. In addition, he imprisoned Ayman Noor and fired the judges who challenged the corruption and fraud in elections. El-Nagar and Abou-Dawood describe the political scene of Egypt as “a state above state” (El Nagar and Abo Dawood, 2012). Egyptians mocked in pity describing Egypt as “a big farm for Mubarak, his son and the NDP” (Aboul Komsan, 2012).

The emergence of the Kefaya (Enough) movement is an example that shows the political alienation that created opposition to the regime. Kefaya symbolized Egyptians’ frustration with the regime. Its main slogan is, la lil-tawrith, la lil-tamdid — no to inheritance, no to extension — which is a respond to Mubaraks’ desire to have his son inherit the presidency of Egypt (Allam, 2015).

These tough realities hit both Egyptian women and men. Women had double suffering from these economic and political crisis despite the media sponsored and manipulated by the regime usually spoke about several achievements that benefited women (Aboul Komsan, 2012). The appointment of women were highlighted despite it was individual cases only and it was used for political reasons and to appear to the international community that the
regime promote women’s right however in reality women were pressured and held hostages to the economic and political crisis suffered by the society. The most obvious case was the approving of the women’s quota system in the parliament and allocating 64 seats to women. Apparently it gives an image of advancement for women but in fact 56 seats went to the ruling party to further dominate the political life in Egypt.

In the economic sphere, women’s access to the labour market was not necessarily an acknowledgment of their equal rights. The introduction of “the working woman model” was a solution to the economic crises (Allam, 2015). But, despite the growth of women in the paid workforce, women were still expected to perform domestic care and labour demands. The economic policies were unsympathetic to women’s need, despite the fact that 33% of households in Egypt were headed by females (The Social Research Center, 2008). Women – especially below the middle class — had to bear the economic burden as well as the social burden. Therefore, women suffered the economic and social consequences of the Egyptian economic crises (Allam, 2015).

Socially, Limited interpretation of Sharia contributed to creating a society that is suspicious and doubtful of a woman and considering her as an incomplete human, lacking in capacity and mind (Aboul Komsan, 2012). Egyptian reformers several times tried to highlight that Islam is not the reason that subordinated women but it is the incorrect interpretation of it (Allam, 2015). These efforts goes back to the time of Sheik Rifaa Rafei El-Tahtawi, Sheik Mohamed Abdouh and Qassem Amin. Based on the Quran, these religious reformers and intellectuals argued that female subjection and seclusion was non Islamic (Jayawardena, 1986). Debate over women’s position in Islam is still widely disputed in Egypt.

The dominant culture deals with women as a weak human being creating a potential threat to the family honor. As such, women were seen as always in need for protection from men. These norms have their basis in traditions and customs not Islam, all this hinder women’s political participation. Many women who wanted to participate in political activism were challenged by these cultural practices and norms. To challenge these
restrictions, Egyptian women became very active in Internet political activism. For example, Esraa Abdel Fattah, known as Facebook Girl, contributed to establishing the 6th of April Youth Movement in 2008. In addition, Asmaa Mahfouz was recognized among others for flashing the revolution after posting a video mobilizing Egyptians to protest on the January 25th.

Furthermore, these cultural practices and norms were manipulated by security forces to sanction and deter women’s political participation and opposing the regime (Allam, 2015). In the Egyptian society which family honor is defined by its females’ honor, women’s participation in protests was considered a harm to her reputation only but to her family.

The above background highlights the contexts and the grievances in which women protesters operated in and against. Questioning women’s frame for collective action and examining the political process surrounding women’s participation will disclose why insisted on participating in elections as voters and candidates.

The Egyptian revolution witnessed exceptional women participation in which observers estimated that the percentage of women protestors reached half the protestors who were present daily in the Tahir Square (Frederiksen, 2011). Women from all sectors of the society fought, slept and shouted in the streets side by side with men breaking all the traditional stereotypes for their behavior. Women challenged the authoritative political structure and the patriarchal society. The expected benefits for women were undefined as historically women have been always sidelined once the revolution is over not only in Egypt but in several countries.

In Egypt women were active participants and forces of change in the uprising. Egypt witnessed very strong participation of women in comparison to elections under the former regimes. Women participation in the 25 January revolution takes us back to the image of women participation in the 1919 revolution, when Safeya Zaghloul led the revolution in the Tahrir Square. In the 25th of January revolution, women from all sectors of the society participated in the demonstrations and insisted on their demands for having a better future in Egypt.
Fatemah Khafagy, gender expert, activist and one of the members of the board of the Alliance for Arab Women (AAW), mentioned that “There were hundreds of women involved in organizing supplies, medications, banners, marches, international contacts, and general mobilization for this revolution. Women have been distributing blankets, but they have been also protecting their streets day and night from acts of vandalism.” (Ruta, 2012, P.93)

The Tahrir square introduced gender equality and presented acceptance and respect. Hania Sholkamy, AUC Professor and activist mentioned that eliciting Margot Badran in the 19191 revolution “the revolt that has brought the end of Mubarak’s regime has been absolutely gender neutral; Tahrir Square became for eighteen days the microcosm of the perfect Egyptian society.” (Sholkamy, 2011)

Although women were active participants in the 25 January revolution and during the transitional period they have been left on the sidelines of the political scene. The quota system have been removed and women became excluded from any formal consultative process. An incomplete women’s movement, divided between Islamists and secularists and old and young generations, is trying to unify in coalitions to defend the women’s rights mainly in two areas: women’s political rights as well as personal status rights which led to the increase in women activism.

In the past six years, Egypt went through two parliamentary election in 2011 and 2015 and two presidential elections in 2012 and 2014 in addition to 3 Constitutional referendums in 2011, 2012 and 2014. During the political transition in Egypt, women have been active and engaged participants as drivers of change. The expectations of having a genuine and credible process after the 2011 revolution increased the interest of the eligible voting population, and the electoral authorities had to face significant operational pressures given the expected high turnout rate amongst men and women voters.
After the revolution, the parliamentary election law was amended in which the quota system for women was cancelled and a mixed parallel system was adopted allocating 75% seats to “proportional representation lists (PR) and 25% to the majoritarian system.” (Report on the Sub-Regional Forum on Women’s Participation in Post-Revolution Parliamentary Elections. Comparative Experiences from Egypt, Libya and Tunisia, 2012, P.21). The only measure introduced in the advantage of women was placing at least one female candidate in every list, however it did not specify her rank in the list which led to the result that often women candidates are at the bottom of the lists which resulted in a low representation of 2% women in the 2012 parliament (Report on the Sub-Regional Forum on Women’s Participation in Post-Revolution Parliamentary Elections. Comparative Experiences from Egypt, Libya and Tunisia, 2012) but it increased in the parliamentary elections of 2015 to reach 15% (HEC, 2015).

In Egypt, during the political transition period, women’s turnout as voters in the elections increased and their eagerness to engage proactively in the democratic process was very high; however, their representation in the Constituent Assembly, the parliament and decision making bodies was low during all the stages of the transition. Their representation in parliament did not exceed “2%” (Report on the Sub-Regional Forum on Women’s Participation in Post-Revolution Parliamentary Elections. Comparative Experiences from Egypt, Libya and Tunisia, 2012 P.21) and were placed at the bottom of the party lists of the parliamentary elections. This is because the Muslim Brothers cancelled the quota law in the parliament but women representation in the parliament of 2015 increased and reached 15% (HEC, 2015).

Under the previous regime, Egyptian voters registered through the Ministry of Interior but the registration and voter cards were produced for voters to present at the polling station were perceived as incomplete and subject to political manipulation, therefore it lacked the confidence of the population. It was known that collective voting was a trend, Old men in the community were controlling the votes of women in their family and extended families, in addition to Voting Cards for Women were a lot of times being collected with
the man Leader in the community and they only go on the day of voting to all vote for the agreed upon candidate. This point was asserted in my interview with Dr. Naglaa Al Adly, Director of the External Relations and International Cooperation Department in the NCW, “most of the women who went to cast their votes in the elections before the revolution their votes were bought by money or in return of services.” Ms. Adly point that women vote before the revolution for money is reinforced by Lisa Blaydes and Safinaz El Tarouty that women “look forward to election season as an opportunity to make a small amount of extra money for their families” (Blaydes and El Tarouty, 2009, P.1). For the post-revolution electoral processes, the state decided to change the voting system to be derived from the national Identity Card (ID) database. Additionally, it was decided that in order to vote, a voter was required to present his/her national ID card. In terms of increasing women’s participation, two issues were critical: women voter know where to vote and the issue of the national Identity Cards (ID Cards). Over one million women lack ID cards and according they cannot vote and are deprived from accessing government services such as medical care in public hospitals, literacy programs, job opportunities, banking services, property title or deed. (Al Adly, 2015).

In Egypt, according to the statistics of the Ministry of Interior, almost 50 million Egyptian citizens are holders of ID cards and almost 2.5 million are eligible to vote but not holders of ID cards, most of these are poor women (UNDP project document, 2011). UN Women studies on the political participation of women show that the percentage of women without ID cards reached 80% in rural areas. Approximately 3% had electoral cards and participated in elections before the revolution (UNDP project document, 2011). Electoral cards were replaced by the ID cards after the revolution.

After the revolution, the number of women who has the right to vote reached 23,815,341 in the first parliamentary elections in 2011 and 26,160,903 in the presidential elections in 2014 (Data collected from the Ministry of State for Administrative Development on 9 February 2015) and 27,235,487 in the parliamentary elections of 2015 (Osman, 2015) compared to only 3% (UNDP project document, 2011) of women who had electoral cards before the revolution. The High Elections Committee and the Presidential
Committee announced that women voters turnout has drastically increased in all the elections that took place after the revolution. 44% of the voters were women and 56% were men in the last presidential elections (Osman, 2014) which shows that around 10,000,000 women actually voted and that therefore around 38% of the women who had a right to vote actually voted. In addition, in the referendum on the constitution in 2014 the percentage of women was 55% and the percentage of men was 45%. (ECWR Report and Interview).

As mentioned in my interview with Ms. Annetta Flanigan, Former Elections Officer in the UNDP “Strengthening of the Democratic Process in Egypt” Project, “After the events of 25 January 2011 there was widespread general feeling that votes would matter and there was a new found hope in political participation that casting votes would contribute to a change, unlike in previous elections. The increase in voters turnout since 2011 in Egypt is a general phenomenon and applies to men and women”. Ms. Flanigan mentioned that the following are some of the main reasons that contributed to the increase of women voter turnout after the revolution “ Voters do not have to go to issue voter cards to vote they can currently vote with their ID cards; Media plays a role in encouraging citizens women and men to go and vote in which the UN had contributed to some of the awareness campaigns and voter education material; Sense of security given by the authorities; in the 2014 Referendum government media targeted women and political parties and a media campaign was developed highlighting the role of women in building the future and in the 2014 presidential elections also targeted women very directly.”

Despite women’s participation as active partners in the Revolution, and their strong presence as voters in the referendum and in the parliamentary and presidential elections, yet, they neither included in decision-making positions nor were adequately present on the political scene, despite the emphasis laid on the importance of women’s involvement in politics.

In this research study, I am addressing participation in elections as voters which is participation in the formal arena. In my research I focus on elections, since following uprisings and regime change, people might be more apt to participate in elections once the
old corrupt regime collapsed. That is there is a sense that change is possible. Measuring participation in this formal venues is thus worth analytical and empirical investigation. In Egypt, the level of women participation in the elections as voters increased compared to the level of women participation as voters in the former regime. This is evident from media coverage of elections and studies documenting women’s participation in this critical juncture in Egypt’s history.
In this chapter the first part discuss the UN Role in Enhancing Women’s Political Participation in Elections in Egypt after through presenting different UN inititaves, activities and resolutions and the second part present the Women’s Citizenship Inititave.

6.1. UN Role in Enhancing Women’s Political Participation in Elections in Egypt after the Revolution

The UN have different initiaives, activities and resolution on enhancing women’s political participation in Egypt. As mentioned in my interview with Ms. Anita Nirody, former UN Resident Coordinator and former UNDP Resident Representative in Egypt, “The UN in Egypt look in the women empowerment in broader context to be able to exercise their right and cast their vote and participation politically and socio economic.”

The UN work on promoting women’s rights since it became a priority and one of the stated priorities of the former UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon’s second mandate is supporting democratic transitions in the Arab region and supporting women participation in all levels in democratic transitions (Interview, Valenzuela, 2015). As mentioned in my interview with Dr. Carlos Valenzuela, UN Chief Technical Advisor on Elections, “In Egypt, the UN is looking on women’s participation as voters and candidates.”

The UN has been traditionally working on strengthening of the democratic process but now the case is that any programme should be gender-sensitive in all areas of electoral administration. Mainstreaming gender and sensitizing and ensure women have access to all level of participation in electoral authorities and also ensure that every decision made by the electoral authorities is in support of enhancing women participation in every single
aspect of electoral administration and has to think this decision how will affect voters and candidates (Interview, Valenzuela, 2015)

The UN General Assembly (UNGA) adopted the Resolution 66/1304 in March 2012 which calls for “eliminating discriminatory laws, systems and practices that prevent or restrict women’s participation in the political process.” (Report on the Sub-Regional Forum on Women’s Participation in Post-Revolution Parliamentary Elections. Comparative Experiences from Egypt, Libya and Tunisia, 2012, P.70).

The UN finds women’s issues important as indicated in series of reports produced by the UNDP, including the Human Development Reports analyzing the social, economic and demographic challenges. UNDP reports predicted that without social and economic reform being accelerated there will be political violence and uprisings. Therefore, The UN exerted some efforts in Egypt with the purpose of ensuring gender equality, social justice and equal participation in the current political transition.

In Egypt, the UN provided platforms for exchanging views and experiences on gender equality in elections after the revolution and for learning from other different experiences. The UN provided the electoral administration officials the opportunity to network with academics, election administrators, experts working in the field of elections in other countries and in Egypt, and representatives of civil society organizations (Report on the Sub-Regional Forum on Women’s Participation in Post-Revolution Parliamentary Elections. Comparative Experiences from Egypt, Libya and Tunisia, 2012).

There are several initiatives done by the UN, including initiatives by the UNDP and UN Women in response to the political transition in the region. UN Women developed the ‘Standard Operating Principles for Women’s Participation in Democratic Transitions’ to ensure free and fair elections for women, encourage political parties to address gender equality, support women’s civil society organizations to advance women’s interests, build accountability for women’s rights in public institutions, enhance the capacity of women in policy-making and oversight in public office and promote gender justice. UN Women’s
raison d’être is to deliver results that advance gender equality and improve women’s lives by supporting countries to enhance legal frameworks and national capacities to build strong institutional accountability for gender equality, through solid partnerships, coordination, sharing of information, knowledge, best practices and lessons learned (Report on the Sub-Regional Forum on Women’s Participation in Post-Revolution Parliamentary Elections. Comparative Experiences from Egypt, Libya and Tunisia, 2012).

In Egypt, the UN main efforts in supporting women’s participation in elections as voters “active electoral rights” are: 1) the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) -- previously named United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) – initiative/project titled the "Women’s Citizenship Initiative", national initiative/programme partnering with UN Women, which aims at raising awareness of women about their citizenship rights, issue Identification Cards (ID) for women in order to practice their rights and be able to participate as voters in the elections, organize media campaigns to raise awareness of women on their citizenship rights; and 2) UNDP “Strengthening of the Democratic Process in Egypt” project in which they have dedicated one of its activities on women participation in elections and also collaborate with UN Women in their Women’s Citizenship Initiative.

As mentioned in the UNDP Project Document titled “Strengthening of the Democratic Process in Egypt”, “An important element in the success of a transition, and of a transitional election, is the inclusiveness of the process and the degree of participation. While voter enthusiasm and administrative measures have increased the expected voter turnout, there are still significant parts of the population that have traditionally been marginalized from political and electoral life, and which could still be left out.” (UNDP Project Document, 2011, P.8).

Public information and voter education efforts of the UN are gender-sensitive; some of the outreach activities and materials are especially designed to target women and aims at
enhancing women’s political participation as voters in the elections (UNDP Project Document, 2011).

The UN “Strengthening of the Democratic Process in Egypt” Project worked on increasing Women’s Visibility in Campaigns and Public Debate on Women’s Engagement and Participation through assisting the High Elections Committee (HEC) in 2011-2012 to have a voter information campaign that targeted women. Basically this means showing women in the video clips, women from different sectors of the community. That is increasing the visibility of women in campaigns and public debates (Interview, Flanigan, 2015).

As mentioned in an interview with Ms. Annetta Flanigan, former Elections Officer in the UNDP “Strengthening of the Democratic Process in Egypt” Project, “the UN recommended to the HEC that they should have at least one woman on the staff of every polling station and this suggestion was accepted and implemented.”

The UN advised that the manuals on polling procedures would show women in the illustrations working in the polling station and playing an active role. These manuals were widely distributed among judges who supervise the polling stations, and among observers (Interview, Flanigan, 2015).

The UN supported the electoral authorities in the Voter registration campaign as mentioned by Ms. Flanigan “the UN advised that the video clips should include women especially from rural and from modest background. One was specifically for women and the soundtrack of all the 4 clips address women and men”. Ms. Flanigan added that “In the presidential election 2012 the UN again showed women in active role in the manual, as observer, agents and polling staff”. There was a training for the media, State Information Services, trainers were trained and they trained a big number of journalists. One of the themes of these trainings was how to portray women in a positive way and how to avoid gender stereotyping.
The UN through its “Strengthening of the Democratic Process in Egypt” Project worked on **Educating Officials** through the training of electoral officials on gender sensitizing the electoral process that is increasing the gender awareness among officials. The project invited electoral authorities to various visits to raise gender awareness and introduce them to the experience of other countries who had succeeded in promoting women’s participation in elections as voters, candidates and in electoral authorities themselves. For example, South Africa to see a gender sensitive commission and a conference in Romania under the theme of “women in political life”, also in Round Tables in which one of them was specifically on transitional special measures for women that could be incorporated in the electoral law (UNDP Progress Report, 2014).

The UN through its “Strengthening of the Democratic Process in Egypt” Project worked on **Knowledge Dissemination** in which it held two international conferences on the themes of “Women in post-revolutionary parliamentary elections” in December 2012 and on gender mainstreaming in electoral administration in December 2014 in partnership with the National Council for Women (NCW) and UN Women (UNDP Progress Report, 2014).

The UN faced challenges in its “Strengthening of the Democratic Process in Egypt” Project one of the main challenges is that the UN is not the authority or the administration so do not have the authority of decisions or implementation and more often authorities are not gender sensitive (Interview, Valenzuela, 2015). As mentioned by Dr. Valenzuela, “the UN can only advise and recommend but cannot implement”. As Ms. Flanigan mentioned “In general the UN electoral policy had a policy of being “low key”... balancing between being low key...and trying to achieve things can be difficult. We have very little scope to have anything like “impact”. Our “impact”... …what we did is simply to raise awareness among some sectors and to facilitate. The real difference in my opinion is in the acceptance of procedural manuals and in the acceptance of the idea of training for judges.” Among other challenges are the patriarchal society. (Interview, Flanigan, 2015)

In this research, I will try to examine whether the UN played a role in enhancing women’s participation in elections as voters in Egypt during political transitions and see if
the UN initiatives in Egypt contributed to increasing the number of women registered voters and women voter turnout “active electoral rights”.

In this research, I will evaluate the UN initiatives in advancing women's political participation by looking at/ measuring the increase in number of women registration and level of women voter turnout in Egypt.

6.2. Case Study: The Women’s Citizenship Initiative

The Rationale Behind the Women’s Citizenship Initiative/ Contextual Analysis

Women's low political participation as voters and low visibility in the public sphere is usually due to the absence of official documents, such as the National Identity Cards (ID cards). A large number of Egyptian women are unable to access government services such as public health facilities, financial services and employment positions, literacy programmes and are unable to apply for a job in the formal sector or obtain property titles. For poor women living in Egypt, to exercise their rights as full citizens without IDs and birth
certificates is impossible (UN Women Joint Programme Document, 2011). As per the figures in 2012, the number of Egyptian women without ID cards is high approximately 5 million according to the Civil Registry Office (CRO) of the Ministry of Interior (MoI) 80% of which are in rural areas where social traditions, lacking awareness, and logistical obstacles have combined to undervalue the participation of women in the public sphere therefore depriving them from exercising their citizenship rights (UN Women Joint Programme Document, 2011). The desire of men to control women’s mobility is one of the main reasons that a large number of women in Egypt do not have ID cards and another reason is the cost of issuing an ID card. Women are often only encouraged to issue ID cards if their men relatives get a financial benefit from them having ID cards. In addition, there are claims that some political parties used to issue ID cards for women in rural and poor areas in exchange for their vote in the elections (UNDP and UN Women Publication, 2013). All of these factors were taken into consideration in the design of the Women’s Citizenship Initiative and its implementation.

Therefore the issuance of ID cards through the Women’s Citizenship Initiative is a core priority to ensure women citizenship rights. The inclusiveness of the process and the level of participation in elections is an important element in the period of political transition. The Women’s Citizenship Initiative supports the design and production of Public Service Announcements (PSA) on the importance of having an ID card. Registration will enable women in the short run to access polls, vote and seek membership in political parties as well as access government services including property title, medical care, literacy programs, working positions, banking services and can get loans from the Social Fund for Development.

**Background on the Women’s Citizenship Initiative**

The Women’s Citizenship Initiative is a national initiative partnering with UN Women and it responds to the political transition in Egypt after the 25 of January 2011 revolution and it was an integral part of the UNDP project “Strengthening of the Democratic Processes in Egypt” in which UN Women is a main partner. This initiative was launched in 2012. It was being implemented by the Ministry of Planning (MOP); formerly known and
referred to as the Ministry of State for Administrative Development (MSAD), the Ministry of Interior (MoI) and its Civil Registry Office (CRO), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) and the Social Fund for Development (SFD) in partnership with UN Women and UNDP with the purpose of facilitating the registration process for the issuance of 2 million national Identity cards (ID) for women. Starting September 2015 the main implementing partner became The National Council for Women (NCW). The main objective of the initiative is to ensure that women in Egypt enjoy their basic citizenship rights during the political transition in Egypt. The initiative’s specific objectives are “Increasing Women’s Political Participation and Enhancing Women’s Economic Participation.” (UN Women Joint Programme Document, 2011)

This initiative supports the design and production of Public Service Announcements (PSA) to raise awareness and show the importance of the ID Cards for women to practice their citizenship rights such as their right to vote during elections. On the short run, registration enables women in the short run to have access to polls, vote and also seek membership in political parties and on the long run, enable women to access government services such as medical care in a public hospital, literacy programs, processing for a property title or deed, banking services and working positions (UN Women Joint Programme Document, 2011).

Five Public Service Announcements (PSAs) were developed featuring a mother, a daughter and a wife, explaining the impact of the ID card on determining the present and future of the women and their families. Prior testing of the PSAs was carried out in the rural governorate of Beni Suef to ensure that the messages address real concerns. Men and women were placed in different groups in order to allow women to express their views freely. Women without national ID cards were selected and men with wives or daughters without national IDs were chosen to participate in the sessions. In addition, women who already had national IDs were also invited so as to stimulate the discussions. A second testing method took place via the Twitter social media platform. Many of the characters in the PSAs were women and girls from the local community. Based on their feedback, the PSAs were revised and broadcast for 30 days during prime time on four of the most watched
State channels. This agreement with Egyptian national television was unprecedented, indicating strong political will on the part of the government, as well as testifying to the trustful relationship between the government and the UN. In addition to being broadcast on national TV, three of the PSAs were aired on the public buses covering most of the Cairo area. The reason for targeting Cairo was to inform the public about the Initiative and to attract volunteers (Link to the Youtube: www.Youtube.com/MillionID). It is noteworthy that as of December 2012, the social media campaign attracted 620 fans on twitter and 7,600 fans on Facebook, and about 530 stories about the campaign (UN Women and UNDP Progress report, 2013).

Music in the form of jingles and songs were used as part of the campaign for awareness raising. The Jingles sung by an Egyptian female singer featured rural characters (mother, daughter, and wife) going about their daily life in the village. For example, one of the jingles “Oh Wise Man” was shot in a village of Qalyoubiya. The lyrics follow a woman speaking to the “Umdah” (chieftain and wise man of the village) asking him for advice on how to be strong and prepare for her children’s future. The man responds stressing the importance of the ID in enabling her to claim rights and secure her family’s wellbeing (Link to the Youtube: www.Youtube.com/MillionID). A total of 9,000 copies of PSA posters were disseminated through UN Women’s network to a large number of local NGOs (UN Women Progress report, 2014).

A tool kit was developed to engage illiterate women. The theme of the kit is that of “invisible women” referring to women who do not possess an ID card and are called to register in order to become visible. The several rights are displayed on a set of cards, with the purpose of informing women about their rights. The illustrations help as a visual aid for the illiterate women who are considered a majority in the villages especially among the old generation (UNDP and UN Women Publication, 2013).

To complement the efforts at communicating with women and their communities in rural areas, UN Women launched on March 5th 2012 a generation campaign via the social media in partnership with the youth-led organization Kijami. The target audience is that of
residents in urban areas, in particular Cairo, Giza and Alexandria, the educated; and individuals aged 16 years and older. The campaign elements include a Facebook ID application, where a person can lend their profile picture in support of the campaign; social media ambassadors who are influential Twitter and Facebook users; real life case studies via viral videos where online users are encouraged to upload videos of success stories related to women’s use of national ID; an online social Kit with information on how to support the campaign; as well as a platform for exchanging inspirational quotes and sharing photos of female role models. Additional applications include a ‘volunteers tab’ where individuals can register to support the Initiative and a “progress map” that tracks the progress achieved in each governorates and the number of volunteers mobilized and deployed (UNDP and UN Women Publication, 2013).

This is a nationally-led Initiative in which it is led by the government. This initiative is based on an approach based on combining raising awareness on the importance of the ID cards, providing information about the process of registration and the documents required for the registration of the ID cards, in addition to facilitating the registration process and the issuance of the ID Cards (UN Women and UNDP Publication, 2013).

The Women’s Citizenship Initiative is funded through the UN Women Global Programme “Gender and Democratic Governance: Delivering Services for Women” which is a joint initiative of the United Nations Development Fund for Women and the United Nations Development Fund Democratic Governance Group, Bureau for Development Policy. The purpose of this fund is to strengthen women’s participation in the governance of the service delivery. The focus of this programme is on building a frame of knowledge about the challenges faced and solutions to the gender sensitive governance of public services. This Programme received support from Australia, Austria, Belgium, Ireland, Japan, Norway, Spain, Sweden, the European Union (EU) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) (UN Women and UNDP Publication, 2013).

This initiative was piloted in the Governorate of Qalyoubiya, an agricultural governorate on the borders of Cairo. Qalyoubiya was chosen due to her proximity since it
is considered to be part of the Greater Cairo region and was also selected based on a statistical mapping of all governorates undertaken by the government with the support of the UNDP-UN Women Women’s Citizenship Initiative to identify the number of women without national ID cards in which it is one of the governorates with the biggest number of women without national ID cards. (Annex I)

According to the mapping study conducted, there are 175,370 women in the governorate who do not possess national ID cards¹. Moreover, 20% of women in the governorate are sole breadwinners in their household (UNDP and UN Women Publication, 2013).

**Scope and Methodology of Implementation of the Women’s Citizenship Initiative**

The work of the UN Women is determined by the Development Result Goal (DRG): “Women’s increased leadership and participation in the decisions that affect their lives.” (UN Women Joint Programme Document, 2011, P.7) It is therefore mandated to assist the Government in achieving its international commitments with regards to the realization of equality between men and women. Therefore, the Women’s Citizenship Initiative is a first step towards achieving this Development Result Goal. Its expected outcome is to be achieved through a double pronged strategy aiming at strengthening the capacities of the governmental bodies and civil society to ensure that citizenship as a basic right is fulfilled during the democratic transition; and strengthening the capacities of women to engage in the political and the economic processes during the political transition. (UNDP and UN Women Publication, 2013)

This programme is regarded as one of the most politically recognized development programmes in Egypt, nationally owned, and is perceived by the Government and partners as one of the most important and key contributions to women’s advancement on both the political and socio-economic levels, besides being of great importance from a national security perspective, as many citizens are not registered or formally existent on government records. The initial baseline, based on which the joint programme was signed in 2011, has
also been updated by the government to reflect a total of 5 million women in Egypt who do not have national ID cards, and hence the dire need for finalizing the initial target of 2 million and expanding in the near future to close the remaining gap to the 5 million women.

A number of factors were taken into consideration in designing the Women’s Citizenship Initiative, such as the political transition phase and its impact on the capacity of government to effectively formulate and implement sound policies and plans; the impact of the decelerating economy on government allocations to the development of municipalities and governorates; and ultimately the risks posed by these factors on the human security and agency of vulnerable populations and especially women. The Initiative is aligned with UN Women’s response strategy which is designed to ensure women’s engagement in all spheres of the democratic transition, the social, economic and political (UNDP and UN Women Publication, 2013).

The joint program between UN WOMEN, UNDP, SFD, MSAD, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) was signed on the 15th of November 2011. The process of implementation began with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between MSAD and MoI on the 3rd of January 2012. By virtue of this MOU, the two parties commit to collaborate in the implementation of the Initiative. This includes the identification of the target group of women in the poorer isolated villages, and providing the mobile units that will photograph the women, and availing the locations-usually the local unit-where the women will gather to register and receive for the ID cards. Another MOU was signed between MSAD and the SFD on the 12th of March 2012 by virtue of which the SFD commit to assisting the Initiative through its network of NGOs, grass roots organizations and regional offices (ROs) which will provide logistical support, and promote the Initiative within the concerned communities (Annex II). The UN Women and UNDP country offices acted as discrete facilitators until the MOUs between the various parties were signed.

A coordination Unit (CU) was established within MSAD in 2012. This CU is responsible for communicating and coordinating the input of relevant government
stakeholders, including governor offices. In that context local authorities are proving to be invaluable allies providing access to the villages and local units as well as providing logistical support as needed (Op. cit., Joint UN Programme Document 2011). In addition a dashboard portal is being developed MSAD to include information on the women who have registered as well as basic information on their economic and social status. This dashboard is used as a tool for managing the project, and for outreach and monitoring purposes (UNDP and UN Women Publication, 2013).

The communication campaign and awareness raising strategy was formulated to include Public Services Announcements (PSAs), jingles, songs, documentaries, printed materials (banners, sticker posters and t-shirts) as well as a social media campaign on Facebook and Twitter, and a documentary showing testimonials from women who obtained their IDs through the Initiative (UNDP and UN Women Publication, 2013).

The Initiative was launched in March of 2012 in a big event hosted by MSAD with over 50 people attending including media personnel. During the period from March 15 to March 21, 2012, 42 news items were published about the Initiative. Moreover, it received significant TV coverage nationally; and, also on CNN where the UN Women Country Coordinator, and his Excellency, Mr. Ashraf Abdel Wahab the former Minister of State for Administrative Development, were interviewed in April 2012, about its importance to women as well as to the Government’s efforts to target and deliver public services and protection to poor and marginalized populations. Championing the initiative, the Minister emphasized the added value of the partnership between the GOE and the UNDP in fulfillment of national development objectives.

The assessment of the implementation was carried out by MSAD/MOP till 2015 and UN Women, and is feeding back into mid-course adjustments to the pilot and informing the replication of the Initiative nationwide. Lead coordination role of MSAD/MOP started November 2011 and ended in 2015 and was then assumed by the National Council for Women (NCW). Given these new developments the Ministry of Planning, Monitoring and Administrative Reform and stakeholders acknowledged the wider rate that the NCW should
play to achieve the objectives of the Women’s Citizenship Initiative and as for the way forward, the UN agreed to establish a Coordination Unit in the NCW to do same role of the Coordination Unit that the UN established in MSAD taking into consideration all the lessons learned. The NCW is currently taking the lead in this initiative and has proposed alternative models that are more efficient and responsive to women on the ground as mentioned by Ms. Korayem. NCW has “a door knock Initiative which is an eye opening for who need IDs” (Interview with Ms. Heba El Sharkawi, Women’s Citizenship Initiative Focal Point in the NCW, 3 April 2017). The new Cooperation protocol between NCW and Civil Status Organization (CSO) of the MOI guarantees smooth flow and confidential handling of data collected to encourage more poor women and girls’ applicants to register in the initiative (UN Women Progress Report, 2016). The NCW finalized a shortened implementation methodology (figure 1 below) (Rana Korayem, UN Women, 2017)

Figure 2 - Shortened implementation methodology by the NCW for the Women’s Citizenship Initiative

Source: Rana Korayem, UN Women
Chapter 7: ANALYSIS/FINDINGS AND ASSESSMENT

The Women’s Citizenship initiative is an example of the UN approach to Gender Mainstreaming. As highlighted under the section of the conceptual framework, Gender mainstreaming is “the process of assessing the implication for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels” (Report of the Economic and Social Council for 1997, 1997). The approach is a strategy for making women’s, as well as men’s, concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres. The significance of gender mainstreaming is that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal of gender mainstreaming in theory is thus to achieve greater gender equality (Report of the Economic and Social Council for 1997, 1997). This is also reinforced by Sylvia Walby that Gender Mainstreaming as a practice is intended as a way of improving the effectivity of mainline policies by making visible the gendered nature of assumptions, processes and outcomes (Walby, 2005).

This approach is important, Melissa Innes contends, since it is: a) an important characteristic of good governance which seeks to ensure that policies, institutions and programmes make women’s and men’s experiences and concerns are an integral part of their design and distribute benefits equally between men and women; b) leads to more fairness, justice and equity for men and women and therefore strengthen the accountability of governments to achieve equal results for all citizens; c) ensures gender equality in the implementation, monitoring & evaluation of any policies and any programs in all sectors of the society; d) involves changing the policies and the institutions to actively promote gender equality. In a nutshell, gender mainstreaming is a long-term, transformative process that contribute to economic, social and cultural progress (Ines, n.d.).
This research uses the gender mainstreaming approach and apply the UN norm of gender mainstreaming which was viewed by the UN as partner strategies for gender equality. The theory suggests that gender equality cannot be attained without two things: Women to be included as policy makers, and taking into account the gendered implications of all public policies (Krook and True, 2010).

In line with gender mainstreaming, the UN carried out several attempts after the 2011 revolution to support women's political participation as well as their empowerment to practice their political, economic and social rights.

To measure Gender Mainstreaming with more precision used 1) the procedures to mainstream gender across the policy process; (2) the operational outputs in terms of programs, policies and projects; and (3) the outcomes of policy "on the ground".

**Comprehensive Approach**

In line with the prism of gender mainstreaming, the UN took a comprehensive approach in the Women’s Citizenship Initiative not only to elections but also women’s economic and social rights. It included raising awareness on voter education and the issuance of ID cards. The Initiative included Ministry of Interior, Ministry of State for Administrative Development/Ministry of Planning, and National Council for Women, Social Fund for Development and Civil Society.

The focus on the cultural and socio-political aspect of empowerment stood out during my interview with Dr. Maya Morsy in 2015 in her capacity at that time as UNDP Regional Gender Team Leader, she is currently the President of the National Council for Women (NCW) and she is one of the main founders of the Women’s Citizenship Initiative, “The UN role is a paradigm shift from issuance of ID cards to Citizenship which should be escalated to national priority”. She added that “It is a developmental packages which includes issuance of ID cards, capacity building, and awareness raising.” (Interview, Morsy, 2015)
The emphasis on equitable access put forward by the approach of gender mainstreaming can also be seen in the initiatives raison d'etre. The initiative’s raison d'etre can be elucidated from Dr. Raafat Abbas, Head of the Non Financial Services in the Social Fund for Development comments during our interview. Dr Abbas asserted that, “the SFD’s purpose from partnering in the Women’s Citizenship Initiative is socio-economic empowerment of women to give women access to economic and social services.”

This rational was echoed in my interview with Dr. Magued Osman, Chairman of the Egyptian Center for Public Opinion Research ‘Baseera’ and Former Minister of Communication and Information Technology as well. Dr Osman asserted “ID cards are an essential requirement for participating and voting in the elections. Before the revolution voters used to use the voting card to vote but after the revolution the ID cards are used in which the UN provides support in this area to issue ID cards for women with various purposes such as for economic and social purposes but also contributed politically in having women participate politically as voters.”

Most Politically Recognized Development Programme in Egypt

This programme is regarded as one of the most politically recognized development programmes in Egypt, nationally owned, and is perceived by the Government and partners as one of the most important and key contributions to women’s advancement on both the political and socio-economic levels, besides being of great importance from a national security perspective, as many citizens are not registered or formally existent on government records. The initial baseline, based on which the joint programme was signed in 2011, has also been updated by the government to reflect a total of 5 million women in Egypt who do not have national ID cards, and hence the dire need for finalizing the initial target of 2 million and expanding in the near future to close the remaining gap to the 5 million women (UN Women Progress Report, 2016).

Political endorsement of the President of Egypt

Through a wide array of activities, interventions, and strengthened partnerships, the action increased public awareness about the importance of women’s citizenship rights,
resulting in the political endorsement of the President of Egypt, Abdel Fattah Ell Sisi. The ‘Women’s Citizenship Initiative’ programme, and increased government commitment to issue five – instead of three - million national identification (ID) cards over a period of three years (2016-2019). This is considered a breakthrough and the highest political backing the initiative has ever received (UN Women Progress Report, 2016).

**Awareness Raising**

One of the main achievements of the Women’s Citizenship Initiative is awareness raising which was highlighted by Ms. Heba Rizk, Head of the Technical Office of the Minister of Planning, Monitoring and Administrative Reform and Former Women Sector Projects Manager in MSAD, “the most important component of the Women’s Citizenship Initiative is raising the awareness. Awareness is an important factor for increasing the number of women voters but issuing ID cards was not enough a woman can have an ID card but does not go to vote. The UN role in awareness raising and training is important because awareness needs skills not necessarily available within the government same for training so the government needs the UN international experience.”

The awareness raising and communication strategy that was formulated is an important component of the Women’s Citizenship Initiative, educating and informing the society about the benefits and importance of issuing an ID card and helping to promote public trust in the policy development process. The campaign was designed as a social marketing tool that was inclusive in terms of the audiences targeted, the messages disseminated, the visuals and language of dissemination, as well as the social media tools that were used to promote the Initiative. Moreover, the visual identity of the campaign and its emphasis on enabling the access to rights were effective branding tools and were maintained in all communication materials. The slogan “Your ID - Your Rights” in Arabic was accompanied by an illustrative national ID card portraying a woman who gained access to public entitlements as a result of having obtained her ID, hence becoming a role model for the campaign. The visual identity was sensitive to the culture and social context of the women (primary target audience) and their communities (secondary target audience) so as to ensure they could identify with the campaign and relate to its message (UN Women Progress report, 2013).
Outreach to Women

The outreach to women relied on door-to-door and face-to-face interaction with the women. During the registration phase, the SFD hired 240 Field Pioneers to communicate with the women and explain to them the importance and benefits of applying for ID cards. The field pioneers assisted women with filling out and sending the registration applications to the Egyptian Red Crescent Society, and are responsible for ensuring that the women are present during the hand-over of IDs, in the agreed upon venue which is usually the closest health unit or any local unit. To complement the outreach efforts of the field pioneers, women staff members from the local units have also been engaged to communicate with the women and to assist them in registering for the ID as mentioned by Mr. Emad one of the staff of the SFD office in Qena. During the field visit conducted, it was clear that the employees of the information department of the local unit, often neighbors and relatives of the target women, had been assigned the responsibility of communicating with them, and helping each woman through the process until they receive their IDs. “We go to each and every house twice at least but sometimes more often” explained one of the staff members of the Center in Qalyoubia, saying that older women required more time and effort because they are not mobile and it is not easy to convince them that the service is for free. A number of the women interviewed said that the local unit employee had spent time with them explaining that the service was for free and had even delivered their IDs to them at home. “It is precious, I have waited for years to have one” said by a woman beneficiary proudly displaying her ID.

The majority of women interviewed mentioned that they heard about the ID card initiative thanks to a public announcement made by the mosque in the village and others confirmed the role played by the field pioneers and employees in the local unit in informing them about the Women’s Citizenship Initiative.

Conducted a Mapping Study and database

The UN exerted efforts with the government in conducting a mapping study and a data base of women with and without ID cards which identified baseline of 2 million women with no ID cards then found that 5 million have no ID cards. The UN is working with the
government on the first baseline of 2 million with a target of issuing ID cards for these 2 million women who do not have ID cards (Joint Programme Document, 2011). As mentioned in an interview with Ms. Rana Korayem, Programme Analyst and Lead Coordinator of the Women’s Citizenship Initiative in the UN Women Office in Egypt, “The UN has helped in the knowledge building which result in responsive decision making.” This reinforce the argument that Gender Mainstreaming leads to better government since it leads to better informed policy-making and thus better government. It will also lead to more transparency and openness in the policy process to ensure equality between women and men. (Gender mainstreaming: Conceptual framework, methodology and presentation of good practices, 2004).

Mobilizing Resources

The UN helped in mobilizing core resources including resources from the donor’s community to support the Egyptian government to issue ID cards for women. “Majority of the women do not issue ID cards because they have no money to issue it and they do not know where to go to issue and do not know what the required documents to issue ID cards are.” (Joint Programme Document, 2011, P.7). This issue was raised in my interview with Ms. Mozn Hassan, Executive Director of Nazra for Feminist Studies, “the UN plays a role in securing funds for its Egyptian implementing partners to support women to issue their ID Cards. In addition, the UN play a role in policy advice.”

Similarly, Mr. Mohamed Mansour, Former Project Manager in the Government Service Development Program at the MSAD and currently the MENA Business Development Manager at Smartmatic contended in our interview that, “The UN launched a project in 2012 aiming to empower women by reaching out to those in rural remote areas and issuing ID cards for them free of charge. As much as 5 million Egyptian women are of age of having an ID card, but were not issued one. For some the barrier is financial, and for others logistical. This prevents them from participating in elections, obtaining public services, etc...”
As expressed by one of the women beneficiaries “I could not bear the financial cost of issuing the ID card and I do not know what are the required documents for the issuance of an ID card but this initiative issued to me the ID card free of charge and saved me from the hassle of compiling the required documents. I used my ID card to vote in the latest presidential elections. I now feel that my vote count.”

Coordinación

The UN helped in designing the models that the government must adopt, as well as coordinate those efforts while supporting government institutions and CSOs to reach out to those women locally. The UN has tailored a culture of coordination sharing. Ms. Korayem mentioned that Government work with grassroots and reach to women who need its services, allowing for UN activities to have a “potential for scale”.

Economic Empowerment

As part of the initiative, the UN made economic empowerment programmes targeted at women recognizing the fact that women who do not have access to economic and social services are more likely to vote for who will pay for them and it will not be on their priority list. As mentioned by Ms. Korayem, “women with no access to economic and social services and have the right and tool to vote is like a hungry child at school who have access to education but he will learn nothing from school because he is hungry and has malnutrition.”

Monitoring and Evaluation

The UN, through this Initiative, have looked to help other projects done by the concerned ministries and national machineries that require Monitoring and Evaluation to extend technical capacities to institutionalize such progress inside the Ministries and national machineries so there will be a place for updated and monitored database because it will support decision making that work directly on enhancing services for other ministries such as the Ministry of Social Solidarity (UN Women Progress Report, 2015).
**Culturally Sensitive Approach**

The UN claims that it used a Culturally Sensitive Approach to the design and the implementation of the Women’s Citizenship Initiative which have been informed by the rural context of the targeted governorates and the economic and social conditions of women.

Accordingly, an awareness raising and communication strategy was developed using a wide variety of tools to reach out to women audiences in rural and urban areas. In addition, a culturally accepted and safe environment was established for the women in order not to travel long distances to register for ID cards and in order not to deal with complicated bureaucratic procedures. The ID issuance process was simplified and arrangements were made to make sure that women remained within their comfort zone (UNDP and UN Women Publication, 2013).

**Women’s Citizenship Initiative Paves the Way for Broader Reforms and is Adaptable to Other Countries**

The Women’s Citizenship Initiative paves the way for broader reforms and is adaptable to other countries. The Initiative is an example of gender sensitive and pro-poor delivery of public services. It complements the government’s efforts to mainstream gender in its national plans and processes which were started prior to the revolution as well as its current efforts at achieving social justice through better targeting of resources including public services and subsidies to regions and groups that are the most deserving of attention. It also paves the way for the decentralization of public services and the strengthening of local governance; the effective engagement of civil society organizations in the delivery of services and a closer relationship with citizens. This also reinforce the argument that Gender mainstreaming presents to politicians and public opinion, “a learning process of paying attention to the broad effects of policies” on the lives of both women and men. Gender Mainstreaming leads to better government since it leads to better informed policy-making and thus better government. It will also lead to more transparency and openness in the policy process (Gender mainstreaming: Conceptual framework, methodology and presentation of good practices, 2004).
Gender sensitization of public officials and of society at large requires time and well-crafted programmes. The Initiative is a step in that direction as testified by the statement of the Governor of Qalyoubiya “Women represent half of the society and all state institutions should support women's political, economic and social empowerment, especially after the January 25th revolution.” (Governor Statement published in Al Ahram Newspaper, December 31, 2012)

**Tangible Benefits for Women and their Families**

The Women’s Citizenship Initiative achieved Tangible Benefits for the Women and their Families. As mentioned in interview with Ms. Ghada Waly, Minister of Social Solidarity and former Managing Director of the Social Fund for Development in Egypt “lacking an ID card is equal to lacking rights. It is a small piece of paper but it means a lot to Egyptian women.” (The Women Citizenship Initiative will ensure citizenship rights to two million women in Egypt, 2012)

The joy of the women is expressed in the documentary “Your ID your rights” (Link on Youtube: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_detailpage&v=J_hrgcSjtp0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_detailpage&v=J_hrgcSjtp0)) which was developed on the occasion of delivering the first batch of IDs, as well as in a focus group meeting and interviews I conducted with the women beneficiaries. The women mentioned that they felt empowered by the fact they could vote, access education and health care services that were previously inaccessible to them “I wanted to vote in the 2012 presidential elections but I was unable to because I did not have an ID card, but now that I do, I voted in the 2014 Presidential Elections because the state recognizes me as a citizen” said a beneficiary. In line with the literature on gender mainstreaming empowerment is thus a complex and multidimensional concept that extends beyond the political to include economic and social rights. This expansive and complex nature of what is and what it means to feel empowered became apparent through the course of this research and during my interviews with participants. This finding challenges narrow interpretation of empowerment and emphasize. In line with gender mainstreaming, the need for a contextual understanding and conceptualization of women's empowerment. In line with the Women’s Empowerment framework, I observed in this research how access to voting is a mean of increasing women’s
empowerment. As my study shows, access to ID cards resulted in economic and social empowerment.

ID cards encourage women to go and vote “if I do not have a ready ID I would not have bothered myself to go to issue an ID card to vote” mentioned by a beneficiary and another woman beneficiary mentioned that she did not think before of going to issue an ID card but the initiative motivated her and facilitated the issuance of ID card to her “this initiative facilitated to me the issuance of the ID card and it motivated me to go to vote, otherwise I would not have thought of issuing an ID to go to vote”. The Initiative guarantee women their legal rights as confirmed by one of the women beneficiaries “I used my ID card to register my marriage and I got married legally instead of the “urfi” marriage that is not recognized by the state and because of which many women especially in poorer communities, are deprived of their legal rights”. Another beneficiary said that “Now I can have my children registered in school and I can buy a plot of land”. “I used my ID card to apply for the University” said a girl student. Another important dimension of the Initiative is the added sense of security that women, both younger and older, feel as a result of having an ID. “If I die while walking on the street, the people who find me will know who I am and will be able to contact my family” said an old woman, and “if the old man dies before me, I can receive his pension and take care of my son”, she explained, referring to her husband and son. 80 % of the women I interviewed used the ID for voting in the elections and 20 % used the ID for other purposes but they are happy that the initiative facilitated the issuance of ID cards, which of course now will allow them access to other economic and social services such as health care and education.

The above point reinforce the added value of gender mainstreaming that it positions people at the heart of policy-making which makes it a win-win strategy. Since it takes the gender equality perspective into account, which makes policies better defined in terms of the needs of men and women which will lead to the improvement of the practice of designing and evaluating general policies (Gender Mainstreaming: Conceptual Framework, Methodology and Presentation of Good Practices, 2004).
In an interview conducted with Dr. Maya Morsy in 2015, she mentioned that so many women in rural and slum areas are not visible to the state, and hence have little if any activity. The Women’s Citizenship Initiative aims at reversing the condition of these women by placing them on the map of the state. The quotes of the women beneficiaries/ID recipients show that they do not feel invisible any more.

The story of Sedika, an 80 years old woman, demonstrates how women are shortchanged when they do not possess an ID and how they perform when they are given the chance to change their condition. For years, Sedika was unable to prove her right to her inheritance or apply for subsidies and health services. She was informed that a mobile unit will come to the village so that the women could register for ID card. She went to the photo shooting by a “toktok” which is the common means of transportation in rural and low-income areas. At the local unit they informed her that she will receive her ID card within two weeks, and she did. Since is now encouraging women to go and register for their ID cards so that they can access their complete rights (UNDP and UN Women Publication, 2013).

**Issuance of ID Cards**

As a first attempt the Women’s Citizenship Initiative resulted in the issuance of 343,337 ID Cards for women since the beginning of the initiative till March 2017 (UN Women Progress Report, 2017).

**Challenges Facing the UN in the Implementation of the Women’s Citizenship Initiative**

The Initiative suffered several challenges and did not achieve its objective/target of issuing 2 million ID cards for women within the specified timeframe and issued only 343,337 ID Cards for women since the beginning of the initiative till March 2017. Some of the challenges were beyond the control of the management team/Coordination Unit and there were other challenges that are considered as a learning for the UN and the government. These challenges revealed the significance of contextualizing attempts for gender
mainstreaming. It reveals the gap between theory and reality and the constraints that arise in practice. In strengthening the applicability of the approach, there need to be a continuous conversation between theory and practice.

As mentioned by Ms. Anita Nirody, Former UN Resident Coordinator and Resident Representative of the UNDP in Egypt, “We are particularly proud of the Women’s Citizenship Initiative because it is an initiative that focus on women not only to participate politically but to participate economically and socially and the fact that it did not achieve its target is not of great concern it is the first time to have such a project for the UN in Egypt it is an experiment we learn from our mistakes and challenges to see how to reach  a wider number of women in the future.”

I will be discussing the main challenges that faced the Women’s Citizenship Initiative in the following paragraphs. These challenges highlight the significance of gender mainstreaming as it draws attention to the importance of context and complexity involved in gendering political participation.
Figure (3) Challenges

1. The Revolution and the Security Vacuum
2. Frequent Ministerial Changes
3. Lengthy and very Long Process for issuing ID
4. Conflict and Struggle Among Different Entities & Absence of Leadership
5. Resource Mobilization
6. Unrealistic Target
7. Reaching Women and Change of the Mindset of Women
8. Limited Capacities and Poor Performance
9. Absence of Birth Certificates
1. The Revolution and the Security Vacuum

The first and one of the main challenges that faced the Women’s Citizenship Initiative is the repercussions of the 25 January 2011 revolution being crystallized allowing for an unstable security situation on the ground and the 30 June 2013 revolution in which the MSAD got a clear order in 2013 from the Ministry of Interior to stop conducting any photo shooting for issuance of ID cards due to some governmental centers being attacked and burned.

As mentioned by Ms. Korayem, “Due to the political unrest and unstable security situation in the country at that time the Women’s Citizenship Initiative was frozen for the first 6 months of 2014. November 2011 till June 2013 is the period were most ID cards were issued”. This was beyond the government control and the Civil Registry which is part of the initiative. Starting mid-2014 to date the UN and the government convened the activities of the Women’s Citizenship Initiative and tried to restore the same spirit that was present at the beginning of the project. The unstable security situation in the country at that time caused several delays in the implementation of the Women’s Citizenship Initiative.

2. Frequent Ministerial Changes:

Second, as mentioned by Ms. Korayem, “Constant ministerial changes and cabinet reshuffle since 2011. Change in leadership affect initiatives like the Women’s Citizenship Initiative that depend mainly on high level political will. So in order to make sure that this is on the top of the agenda and a priority to the Minister takes time.”

The former implementing Ministry, which is MSAD, faced several changes, including that it is then merged with the Ministry of Planning. The Ministry is currently titled, the Ministry of Planning, Monitoring and Administrative Reform, which was expanded to include monitoring and evaluation. With changes of an internal mandate and structure, this resulted in an internal delay, which unfortunately limited the implementation.

The Initiative is currently implemented by the NCW which solved this challenge since it is the national machinery and has large contribution of the number of ID cards
issued and the NCW has a leading role because this is their natural mandate to coordinate with ministries. The UN after the revolution was in dire need to move and no time to wait for the national machinery, the NCW, the UN went to MSAD at that time to implement the project.

3. Lengthy and Very Long Process for Issuing ID Cards

Third challenge to the Women’s Citizenship initiative is the very long process to issue the ID cards. As mentioned by Ms. Heba El Sharkawi, The Women’s Citizenship Initiative Focal Point in the NCW, “Despite the good relation with the Civil Registry, one of the main challenges facing the Women’s Citizenship Initiative is the prolonged period processing the ID cards because the Civil Registry still does not have the capacity for the production of this big number of ID cards”. She added that engagement of Civil Registry national and governorate level officials with the implementation of nationwide “Takaful and Karama Program” during the months of December 2016 and January 2017 led to a lengthy process by the Civil Registry in the verification process and the photo shoot missions.

As mentioned in an interview with Ms. Korayem, “The process of the issuance of the ID cards is very lengthy and the implementation process is a very complicated process.”

As mentioned by Mr. Mansour, “The UN launched a project in 2012 aiming to empower women by reaching out to those in rural remote areas and issuing ID cards for them free of charge. As much as 5 million Egyptian women are of age of having an ID card, but were not issued one. For some the barrier is financial, and for others logistical. This prevents them from participating in elections, obtaining public services, etc… I believe this was a worthy ambitious program, which has failed to meet its objectives; mainly due to government bureaucracy.”

4. Conflict and Struggle Among Different Entities and Absence of Leadership

Fourth, There was a conflict and struggle among different entities of the Initiative on who to take the lead, MSAD/MOP or NCW or SFD as highkughted by Ms. Heba Rizk.
New national players back to the scene such as the NCW. At the time that the Women’s Citizenship initiative was signed in November 2011 the NCW at that time faced severe pushback because it was led by Suzanne Mubarak, Egypt First lady before the revolution, and it became challenged for this reason and other internal reasons until February 2012 where Mervat Tallawy became the president of the NCW lead to an overall NCW reshuffle for 2012 -2013. The role of the national machineries such as the NCW was very important because of the constraints on women Rights during the era of the MBs in which the constitution was gender blind and wanted to push women’s achievements backwards. The NCW fought hard during this time for a presence of women in the government and the political life because there was a serious threat in women’s rights during this time as mentioned by Ms. Korayem.

As mentioned by Ms. Korayem, “The NCW regained its power given the active role of the NCW, the MOP approached the NCW in 2015 to sign a protocol with NCW to help them to reach out to women to enhance the activities of the CI. NCW issued 60 % or 70 % of the ID cards to reach the number 162,148 of ID cards issued till March 2015 by the initiative, Since, the NCW saw that they are the ones largely contributed to the Women’s Citizenship Initiative because of its role NCW wanted to have the leading role.” As mentioned in my interview with Dr. Naglaa Al Adly, Director of the External Relations and International Cooperation Department in the NCW, “We have access to villages and have a simpler and shorter process for the issuance of ID cards.” The NCW had a successful experience before the revolution in which they issued 3 million ID cards in 2010 before the revolution (National Report on Beijing +20 National Council for Women). Given that the NCW is the national machinery and has large contribution of the number of ID cards issued they needed to have a leading role because this is their natural mandate to coordinate with ministries. The UN after the revolution was in dire need to move and no time to wait for the national machinery, the NCW, the UN went to MSAD to implement the project.

This Challenge has been resolved since the NCW took the lead in this Initiative starting September 2015.
5. Resource Mobilization

The fifth challenge to be discussed is the economy and the post revolution deceleration constitutes serious limits to the scaling up of the Initiative nationally and to the adjustments that will have to be continuously effectuated to maintain the efficiency of the process and its continued relevance. Being fully cognizant of this considerable obstacle, UN Women and UNDP have followed a number of measures designed to make the process cost effective. To start with, the implementation of activities relies to a significant degree on existing resources of government and civil society partners. Second, the initiative has encouraged volunteer participation promotion and ground implementation of activities. Third, UN Women continue fund raising efforts, encouraging donors to contribute to the scaling up of the initiative (UNDP and UN Women Publication, 2013).

As mentioned by Ms. El Sharkawi, “Sustainability of funding of the CI is a main challenge to the Initiative”.

6. Unrealistic Target

Sixth challenge, the target set by the government and the UN to issue 2 million within the timeframe of the initiative was not realistic. The number of ID cards to be issued by the Initiative was set by the government was not realistic and the fund allocated by the UN was also unrealistic as mentioned by Ms. Heba Rizk.

7. Reaching Women and Change of the Mindset of Women

Seventh challenge, one of the main challenges is reaching Women and change of the mindset of Women. As mentioned in my interview with Ms. Nora Rafea, Women Activist, “Changing the mindset of women and reaching out to them is an important challenge.”

As argued by Emilie Hafner Burton and Mark A. Pollack, there should be dramatic changes in the mentalities in order to fully implement gender mainstreaming (Hafner-Burton and Pollack, 2001). Gender mainstreaming gives a clear idea of the impact and consequences of political initiatives on both men and women and maintains a balance between men and women in the area concerned. Gender equality issues become visible and
integrated into the mainstream of the society in which to date they are always on the sidelines. It should demonstrate that gender equality is an essential societal issue with consequences and repercussions for the development of the society and that it is not only a “cost” or a “luxury” (Gender mainstreaming: Conceptual framework, methodology and presentation of good practices, 2004).

8. Limited Capacities and Poor Performance

Eighth Challenge is limited capacities and poor performance. Ms. Sharkawi mentioned in an interview that “Some branches of the NCW have skilled staff but others have staff with Limited capacities”. She added that restructuring of the rapporteurs in all the branches led to the result that some of them still need to get oriented and familiarize themselves with the project and its importance. In addition, “Some governorates are cooperative and active in the implementation of the Initiative but some other governorates are not very cooperative”.

In October 2016, nine new rapporteurs were assigned in Cairo, Giza, Alexandria, Ismailia, South Sinai, Minia, Assiut, Sohag and Qena governorates. With the exception of Alexandria, Minia and Qena governorates, still, the change in leadership highly reflected on the poor implementation of activities in these governorates. Despite the continuous efforts and facilitation exerted by the coordination unit, poor performance is also relevant in Port Said, Suez and North Sinai governorates (UN Women Progress Report, 2016).

9. Absence of Birth Certificates:

Finally, The absence of birth certificates of women is a major problem in many governorates because without birth certificates women will not be able to issue ID cards. NCW reverts those cases to Women's Ombudsman Office to assist in the issuance of the missing birth certificate documents before registering in the initiative. (UN Women Progress report December, 2016 - February 2017)
Lessons Learned and the Way Forward

Through a wide array of activities, interventions, and strengthened partnerships, the action increased public awareness about the importance of women’s citizenship rights, resulting in the political endorsement of the President of Egypt, Abdel Fattah El Sisi. The ‘Women’s Citizenship Initiative’ programme, and increased government commitment to issue five – instead of three - million national identification (ID) cards over a period of three years (2016-2019). This is considered a breakthrough and the highest political backing the initiative has ever received (UN Women Progress report, 2016).

The NCW is currently taking the lead in this Initiative and has proposed alternative models that are more efficient and responsive to women on the ground as mentioned by Ms. Rana Korayem. NCW has “a door knock Initiative which is an eye opening for who need IDs” as highlighted by Ms. Heba El Sharkawy. The new Cooperation protocol between NCW and Civil Status Organization (CSO) of the MOI guarantees smooth flow and confidential handling of data collected to encourage more poor women and girls’ applicants to register in the initiative (UN Women Progress Report, 2016). The NCW finalized a shortened implementation methodology (figure 1 below) (Rana Korayem, UN Women, 2017).
NCW explored new partnerships with the Ministry of Social Solidarity (MOSS) to link it to the nationally owned Takaful and Karama programme, also targeting women beneficiaries, who will also need national ID cards to benefit from that programme. A Cooperation Protocol was co-signed on January 31st 2017 by Minister Ghada Waly, MOSS and Dr. Maya Morsy, President, NCW to support women’s development, protection and their economic and social empowerment. Detailing the specifics of the cooperation (roles and responsibilities) in the protocol of cooperation guarantees a successful partnership. Under this protocol, NCW will link with the Takaful and Karama “Dignity and Solidarity” Program of MOSS to target poor women who need ID cards as an entry point to all citizenship rights, including voting, as well as social, economic and administrative services (UN Women Progress Report, 2017).
As mentioned by Ms. El Sharkawi, “NCW President sent to all Governors to have the Citizenship Initiative to empower women and requested to have it under their auspices”. Owing to the fact that the ID cards project is a national initiative and the awareness raising is an important component in development interventions that require community participation, the NCW President has sent out letters addressing the 27 governors to invite them to put the initiative under their kind auspices each in his own governorate. The engagement of men in interventions targeting women is important because it helps generate change in attitudes and behaviours of men, and promotes a more equal environment and more sustainable impact. The initiative of the NCW’s President was well received by the governors and most of them collaborated with NCW head office and branches to deliver the message to as many as possible needy women (UN Women Progress Report, 2017).

The below table shows a SWOT analysis I carried out to assess the current situation of the Citizenship Initiative to assess its Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.
**Strengths**

- **Strong political will.** Politically supported and backed by President Abdel Fattah El Sisi, President of Egypt. National target of 5 million women were announced to become registered for national ID cards by 2019.

- **Identification and registration.** Provides women with identification and registration in various citizenship related services and activities (e.g. access to social protection services, financial and non-financial services, health services, and practicing voting rights). This also provides women with a sense of security as per the responses of a sample of the interviewed beneficiaries.

- **Safeguarding rights.** The national ID card enables the women to have safeguarded rights, like the documentation of their marriage, which subsequently leads to guaranteeing their rights as well as their children’s before society and the law.

- **Enhanced decision making.** Contributes/feeds into the national efforts of building and updating the national data base of civilians. This feeds into current and future policy and programme formulation (e.g. decision makers need to know actual numbers; geographical distribution, etc.).

- **Increased national security.** Contributes to increased national security by ensuring that citizens are listed in national databases; this enhances state information intelligence with regards to data, and hence enhanced security and location services.

- **Enhanced Coordination.** Contributes to the coordination among the different line-ministries and national bodies involved to ensure that women are effectively served and reached out to.

- **Increased awareness.** Increased awareness of citizenship rights among both women, men, and young people through the initiative.

- **The national ID is provided free of charge.** The fact that the national ID card is provided free of charge allows more marginalized women to benefit from the service that the programme provides.
**Weaknesses**

- **Relatively slow issuance process.** Despite the efforts made to shorten the issuance process of the national ID cards, the process is still relatively low as it takes a minimum of 3 weeks. Innovative solutions are needed, possibly the use of information technology to overcome this weakness.

- **Limited capacity of some of the involved actors.** Some of the involved actors do not have the proper capacity in place to respond to the level of demand on the national ID cards, and hence this becomes one of the factors that contribute to the slow process of issuing the ID.

- **Lack of sufficient Monitoring of the programme.** The programme requires more rigorous monitoring to allow for availing information about the demography of the women beneficiaries, in addition to financial monitoring to avail/track information about the contribution of each donor per national ID card issued.

**Opportunities**

- **Fulfillment of constitutional rights.** The Egyptian constitution of 2014 has more than 20 provisions for women’s rights. The national ID card provides with the opportunity of realizing and befitting from these rights outlined by the constitution.

- **Economic and Employment opportunities.** Provides women with the opportunity to engage in the formal and informal economies, resulting in financial gains for women and their families.

- **Voice and participation.** Provides women with the opportunity to express their preferences and their opinions through voting. In addition, women can run for elections, for either parliament, local councils, trade unions, or other decision making bodies.

- **Prevention of early marriage and trafficking in persons.** When girls reach the age of 16, especially those enrolled in schools, it is vital to have them register for the national ID card because it prevents early marriage, since the girl’s age will
be officially documented and hence any attempt for early marriage by the family will be considered a violation of the law.

- **Prevention from violence against women.** When women have the national ID card, they have the opportunity of reporting incidents of violence through the recently established state mechanisms and the ombudsperson offices of the National Council for Women (NCW).

- **Claiming Legal Rights.** The national ID card enables women to claim their legal rights, such as inheritance, pensions, and alimony.

### Threats

- **Sustainability.** Lack of donor funding to support the sustainability of the programme for the coming years, especially with the increase of the initial target from 2 million ID cards to 5 million ID cards.

- **Change in political leadership.** Since the initiative has previously suffered from a major slowdown in processes prior to the current leadership in the executive authority, its survival in the future might be also similarly affected, leading to leaving women behind without national ID cards, if it is not institutionalized.

- **Closing the gap.** Inability to issue national ID cards for girls aged 16 or those approaching the age of 16, which will eventually lead to an increased gap above the identified target in the future, in response to the annual increase in the overall population; hence, more women will be deprived from their citizenship rights.

- **Disinterest of Women as a result of lengthy processes.** Some women may not issue the national ID card due to the fact that the process is not speedy or timely in relation to specific time-bound events, like the month of Ramadan, or the registration period of university or any other travel like pilgrimage, which will push women away and make them seek different channels.
Recommendations

To measure Gender Mainstreaming with more precision used 1) the procedures to mainstream gender across the policy process; (2) the operational outputs in terms of programs, policies and projects; and (3) the outcomes of policy "on the ground".

Training

A main lesson learned during implementation is that further attention is required in the training of field officers so that they can contribute to effectively raising the awareness of the community about the importance of the ID as a tool to exercise their citizenship and access their rights. During the implementation the initiative it is noted that in those villages where employees of the Local Unit were used as part of the initiative, they were not sufficiently trained to convey the full range of entitlements that having an ID card could give women access to, nor did they provide information about where to go if the ID card was damaged or lost. Moreover, some of women interviewed were not aware that the ID would have to be renewed after 10 years (UNDP and UN Women Publication, 2013). Ms. Sharkawi mentiond that “Some branches of the NCW have skilled staff but others have staff with Limited capacities”. She added that restructuring of the rapporteurs in all the branches led to the result that some of them still need to get oriented and familiarize themselves with the project and its importance”.

Raising Awareness

More attention should be given to the component of raising awareness. As mentioned in an interview with Dr. Al Adly “the UN plays a key role in raising awareness of women on political participation especially as voters”. Also, as mentioned by Ms. Rizk, “the most important component of the Women’s Citizenship Initiative is raising the awareness which the initiative did not work on it extensively although it achieved good results ...Awareness is behind increasing the number of women voters but issuing ID cards was not enough a woman can have an ID card but does not go to vote...There must be awareness raising and training because awareness needs skills not necessarily available within the government same for training so the government may need the UN international
experience ....Awareness could have contributed more for increasing the number of women voters.”

As mentioned during an interview with Dr. Magued Osman, “The Women’s Citizenship Initiative had an effect on raising awareness but in the coming period the focus should not be on TV only because viewers of the TV decreased so therefore other means should be used such as community campaigns and the social media to reach a bigger number”. Continuous raising awareness on women’s basic citizenship rights by all NCW rapporteurs / rural women leaders in the 27 governorates need to be done through campaigns such as “Door to door campaign” conducted by the Training and Awareness Department, of the NCW during the month of November 2016. Among the messages delivered, NCW agents spread the word about the importance of the national ID card as an entry point to all citizenship rights, including voting, as well as social, economic and administrative services (UN Women Progress Report, 2016).

According to the Women’s Empowerment Framework the Agency is dimension 2 of Legal and Rights Awareness as her own aspirations and capabilities and the structure is the environment that surrounds and conditions her choices and the relation is the power relations through which she negotiates her path. When women have awareness they will participate for example women participate when they are aware that they do have rights as a citizen, when they are aware that there are tools to ensure gender equality. The relation between participation and awareness is relational. Women participate when they are aware and through participation their awareness increase.

**Monitoring**

There is a shortcoming in the culture of monitoring within government, especially if interventions are not implemented at the central or city level. This is mainly due to the fact that the value of monitoring is not sufficiently recognized by the government and accordingly, resources are not directed to developing the skills and systems required to monitor and benchmark. The UN should detect bottlenecks or problems in implementation that need to be addressed so as not to lose the quality that gives the Initiative its importance.
The recommendation for donors here is that in planning for and developing the budget for such interventions, there should be sufficient provision for establishing the proper systems and protocols for monitoring within the owning government organization, as well as constituting an activity of the project or intervention. As mentioned by Ms. Rizk, “there should be a well-established monitoring system and an institutional memory to avoid loss of information due to several managerial changes …there should be a sustainable management.”

In order to achieve effective gender mainstreaming, a good and effective monitoring and evaluation systems should be established, process documentation of programs results to support learning from other experiences. To achieve successful gender mainstreaming, sufficient funds and resources should be availed and development agencies should work together more collaboratively and should share knowledge and resources (Hafner -Burton and Pollack, 2001) In addition to capacity building of partners.

**Coordination**

Coordination is a definite challenge that the implementation of such an intervention faced, especially when multiple government organizations and partners are involved. Any failure in delivering on commitments proffered or even delinquency in the process would entail loss of interest in the Initiative and worse, loss of trust in the governments’ willingness and ability to deliver citizen centered responsive services. Establishing the CU as a backstopping mechanism was therefore critical to the management of the process, ensuring that each of the partners is performing its role and that the implementation of sequential activities, is proceeding according to plan.

The clear identification of roles at the onset of planning for the Initiative ensured that there would be no duplication but rather synergetic cooperation between the partners. As mentioned in an interview with Ms. Ramona Canaan, Former Communication Officer in the UNDP “Strengthening of the Democratic Process in Egypt” Project, “First, the process of the workflow was not well developed and the link between the UN Women and the UNDP was not clear. The Women’s Citizenship Initiative could have achieved more if
there is a good system for ongoing reporting and ongoing meetings; Second, on the level of the counterparts. Ministers must have been totally aware about it. There was no strategic coordination which led to confusion; Third, technically the methodology has been changed several times to date it did not reach successful pilot”. Also, as mentioned by Ms. Rizk, “the roles and responsibilities of the Women’s Citizenship Initiative is not clear in the project document.”

Further Recommendations

As mentioned by Dr. Magued Osman, “there is a need to focus on the gender gap; there is a need to have an exit poll to measure whether the number of women voters increased or not; a need for database and road map for CI informed by a database. In addition, HEC and PEC has to continue their role in publicizing data”.

The following are a set of recommendations that needs to be taken into consideration to ensure the sustainability and success of the Initiative:

- Given the Political endorsement of the President of Egypt, Abdel Fattah El Sisi, to the initiative and increasing government commitment to issue five million national identification ID cards instead of two million over a period of three years (2016-2019) there must be an allocated state budget for this initiative and the issuance of ID cards should be free of charge - there is a need for gender budgeting - to be able to continue this initiative and meet the target;
- Investing in the National Women Machinery to strengthen their capacity to absorb the demand for Women to issue their ID Cards in a timely and responsive manner;
- The UN is only a catalyst so if the government is serious about gender mainstreaming there should be allocated resources and budget to the NCW for this purpose;
- Mainstreaming the Women’s Citizenship Initiative in other national programmes, meaning that it is to be added as an item of any government or development cooperation programme/Project that no national programmes without ID cards. It should be linked to all national programmes such as Takaful and Karama “Dignity and Solidarity” and other programmes that are attractive to women;
• Link ID cards to other functions such as the issuance of birth certificates by adding the mother’s ID number to the birth certificate of her child;
• Expanding partnerships between NCW and other national institutions that support women as well as local NGOs;
• Stronger Monitoring and Evaluation mechanisms in the national implementing entity to be able to track the progress, follow up, document and report on activities;
• Establishing National database that will inform future policy formulation through empowering women;
• Ensure that the preexisting gap of women with no IDs is not only closed but also complemented by the issuance of birth certificates and a systematic way to receive their ID cards when at the age of 16;
• Consider the use of ICT with the upscaling of the Citizenship Initiative so that women can use it to get services from government.

**Conclusion**

Although the initiative succeeded in several aspects such as in awareness raising which could lead to increasing the number of women voters and in capacity building such as conducting a mapping study and a database for registered voters which result in responsive decision making of the government the initiative did not achieve the expected result in achieving its target of issuing 2 million ID cards since it only resulted in the issuance of 343,337 ID cards for women since the beginning of the initiative till March 2017 (UN Women Progress Report, 2017) due to the above mentioned challenges mentioned in this chapter.

The main role of the UN in the Women’s Citizenship Initiative is resource mobilization but still the WCI could have been successful without the UN if the government allocates budget for it and good coordination. There were already a number of NGOs at the same time of the beginning of the WCI helping Women to issue ID cards. The UN is only a catalyst so if the government is serious about gender mainstreaming there should be allocated resources and budget to the NCW for this purpose.
Despite the challenges that the Women’s Citizenship Initiative faced that it did not contribute largely in increasing the number of women voters but still it is an example of the UN approach to Gender Mainstreaming and has become an awareness raising tool and also played a role in capacity building leading to responsive decision making of the government this argument has been reinforced during my interview with Dr. Carlos Valenzuela, UN Chief Technical Advisor on Elections, “the Women’s Citizenship Initiative is a very good initiative and had an impact although it did not achieve an increase in the numbers of women IDs but it is has created awareness in different ministries of having women become an integral part of the Citizenship and it has become an awareness raising tool.” Ms. Naglaa Arafa, Assistant Resident Representative and Democratic Governance Team Leader in the UNDP Egypt, asserted “The UN played a role in the capacity building of the electoral administration to improving the electoral practice of the administration. The UN supported the High Elections Committee to design a well-developed voter information and a well informative electoral campaign for voters before the elections.”
Chapter 8: CONCLUSION

This research investigated to what extent the UN contributed to effective gender mainstreaming in Egypt with a special focus on political participation as voters post 2011. This study assesses the “Women’s Citizenship Initiative” through presenting achievements, challenges, the way forward and recommendations.

The first chapter presented an introduction of the thesis and provided an overview of the thesis, its research problem, research question, and its structure. In the second chapter, the methodology and the conceptual framework was presented. Chapter three included the literature review.

In the fourth chapter, I provided an overview of political participation in general and women political participation in particular. More specifically, I offered an overview of the status of women’s political participation in Egypt before the 25 January 2011 revolution. I argued that women are still negotiating gendered and societal constrains that administered their participation. Women’s marginalization from political processes and structures is the result of various functional structural and personal factors that differ in different social settings. The common array of women’s political marginalization stem from political and social discourses; political institutions and structures; and the functional and socio-cultural challenges that limits women’s collective and individual activity. Examining women’s political participation is important because women’s political influence is not only large number of women being represented in decision-making processes and positions but it is also about their ability to influence policy debates, their capacity and their power relationships. Unfortunately, after the revolution women’s demands and expectations are not met yet.
A small number of women participated in the elections during Mubarak’s era, both as candidates and voters. Elections often lacked security, credibility and proper monitoring. Some women voters and some women candidates were faced with several challenges such as violence against them that they were forced to leave voting stations because of the candidates that they supported.

Chapter five provided an overview on women’s political participation after the 25 January 2011 revolution in general and their participation as voters in particular. In Egypt, the level of women participation in the elections as voters increased compared to the level of women participation as voters in the former regime. This is evident from media coverage of elections and studies documenting women’s participation in this critical juncture in Egypt’s history. However, their representation in the Constituent Assembly, the parliament and decision making bodies was low during all the stages of the transition. Their representation in parliament did not exceed 2%. Women representation increased in the 2015 Parliament and reached 15%. However, women are perceived not to be sufficiently empowered. Despite all the efforts by different international development organizations, gender mainstreaming is still perceived to be ineffective. We still have five million women without ID cards and women face difficulties to issue ID cards and even after the issuance of ID cards for some of the women the percentage is still not much in addition political participation is not about voting only but we need women to be more aware of this voting decision.

In Chapter Six, the focus is on the UN Initiatives on Enhancing Women’s Political Participation in Elections in Egypt after the Revolution. Specifically, the chapter analyses the case study of The Women’s Citizenship Initiative. This chapter provides an overview on the UN efforts in Egypt in the area of Women’s participation in elections as voters.

I chose to focus on the “Women’s Citizenship Initiative” specifically as it is presented as one of the UN main efforts in supporting women’s participation in elections as voters. It also an exemplar of the opportunities and challenges involved in applying gender
mainstreaming approach. Notwithstanding the initiative success in increasing the number of voters, the initiative faced several challenges—laid out in Chapter 7. The organization also claims that through the initiative it aims to emphasize women's “active electoral rights”, raise women’s awareness about their citizenship rights. This is done through issuing Identification Cards (ID) for women in order to practice their rights and be able to participate as voters in the elections, and organizing media campaigns to raise awareness of women on their citizenship rights.

The Seventh Chapter of this thesis lays down the analysis/findings and assessment of the Women’s Citizenship Initiative. In it, I highlight the many attempts carried out by the UN post 2011 to support women citizenship not only politically such as voters in elections but also to have access to their economic and social rights. The UN took a comprehensive approach not only to elections but also women’s economic and social rights. This is in line with gender mainstreaming perspective that pushes for the promotion of equal opportunities for women and men in institutions, organizations and politics. This approach squarely focuses on the sociopolitical issues of power and decision-making. This is significant as societies become more democratic, only when women and men in their diversity equally shape, develop and participate in the political process.

Political participation is part of women’s rights package. Women participation in elections is an outcome of the Initiative. In line with the Women’s Empowerment framework, I observed in this research how access to voting is a mean of increasing women's empowerment. As my study shows, access to ID cards resulted in economic and social empowerment.

A closer analysis of the initiative using the Gender mainstreaming approach reveals several shortcomings. The Initiative suffered several challenges and did not achieve its objective/target of issuing 2 million ID cards for women within the specified timeframe and issued only 343,337 ID cards for women since the beginning of the initiative till March 2017. These challenges revealed the significance of contextualizing attempts for gender
mainstreaming. It reveals the gap between theory and reality and the constraints that arise in practice. In strengthening the applicability of the approach, there need to be a continuous conversation between theory and practice.

The following main challenges that faced the Women’s Citizenship Initiative were discussed in details in this chapter: the revolution and the security Vacuum; frequent ministerial changes; lengthy process for issuing ID cards; conflict and struggle among different entities and absence of leadership; resource mobilization; unrealistic target; difficulty in reaching women and changing the mindset of women; limited capacities and poor performance; and absence of birth certificates. In this chapter I have presented lessons learned and the way forward as well as recommendations.

A set of recommendations were presented such as: given the political endorsement of the President of Egypt, Abdel Fattah El Sisi, to the initiative and increasing government commitment to issue five million national identification ID cards instead of two million over a period of three years (2016-2019) there must be an allocated state budget for this initiative and the issuance of ID cards should be free of charge - there is a need for gender budgeting - to be able to continue this initiative and meet the target; investing in the National Women Machinery to strengthen their capacity to absorb the demand for Women to issue their ID Cards in a timely and responsive manner; the UN is only a catalyst so if the government is serious about gender mainstreaming there should be allocated resources and budget to the NCW for this purpose; mainstreaming the Women’s Citizenship Initiative in other national programmes, meaning that it is to be added as an item of any government or development cooperation programme/Project that no national programmes without ID cards it should be linked to all national programmes such as Takaful and Karama “Dignity and Solidarity” and other programmes that are attractive to women; link ID cards to other functions such as the issuance of birth certificates by adding the mother’s ID number to the birth certificate of her child; expanding partnerships between NCW and other national institutions that support women as well as local NGOs; stronger Monitoring and Evaluation mechanisms in the national implementing entity to be able to track the progress, follow up, document and report on activities; establishing National database that will inform future
policy formulation through empowering women; ensure that the preexisting gap of women with no IDs is not only closed but also complemented by the issuance of birth certificates and a systematic way to receive their ID cards when at the age of 16; and consider the use of ICT with the upscaling of the Citizenship Initiative so that women can use it to get services from government.

Due to the above mentioned challenges the Women’s Citizenship Initiative did not contribute largely in increasing the number of women voters but still it is an example of the UN approach to Gender Mainstreaming and succeeded in raising the awareness and also played a role in capacity building which leads to a responsive decision making of the government.

Need of further research

I chose to focus on Egypt given the current political transition and due to the availability of material however this research can be conducted as a comparative study with similar initiative in other countries to measure the success, challenges and the lessons learned in other countries. It will be imperative to validate this research with new quantitative and qualitative studies by focusing future investigation on other countries. With the political transition is still in progress and with upcoming elections, many new developments did not find space in this thesis. Thus, it would be of utmost interest to examine the future of this initiative, and to see how this initiative may contribute to the increase of women’s voter turnout.

In addition, there is a need to study other aspects of women political participation besides voting in elections such as studies analyzing the women's participation in the current parliament and the future ones.
### ANNEX I

#### Figure (4)

**Number of Women without ID Cards per Governorate as per the year 2013**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Governorate</th>
<th>Number of Females Did not Extracted an ID Card</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cairo</td>
<td>223,150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexandria</td>
<td>129,828</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Said</td>
<td>8,065</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suez</td>
<td>12,911</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dumyat</td>
<td>74,271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daqahleya</td>
<td>233,101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharqeya</td>
<td>340,937</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qalyoubeya</td>
<td>175,370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kafr el-Sheikh</td>
<td>164,079</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gharbeya</td>
<td>193,139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monofeya</td>
<td>200,655</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahareya</td>
<td>402,871</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ismaileya</td>
<td>31,893</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giza</td>
<td>347,892</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beni Suef</td>
<td>291,787</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governorate</td>
<td>Population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fayoum</td>
<td>242,013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Menya</td>
<td>573,333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assuit</td>
<td>372,993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sohag</td>
<td>494,338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qena</td>
<td>327,606</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aswan</td>
<td>80,013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Sea</td>
<td>6,299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Valley</td>
<td>3,659</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matrouh</td>
<td>57,038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Sinai</td>
<td>26,275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Sinai</td>
<td>1,813</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>5,015,329</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (UNDP and UN Women Publication, 2013)
Number of Women with No ID Cards as of 2013

Source: (UNDP and UN Women Publication, 2013)
The Number of Women Breadwinners across the Governorates in Egypt as of 2013

Source: (UNDP and UN Women Publication, 2013)
ANNEX II

Figure (5)

The Process of the issuance of the ID cards till 2015

Source: (UNDP and UN Women Publication, 2013)
ANNEX III

List of Interviewees

1. Ms. Anita Nirody, Former UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative, Egypt, 6 August 2015.


4. Mr. Emad Maged, SFD Regional Office Qaliyoubia, 9 August 2015.


6. Minister Ghada Waly, Minister of Social Solidarity, 30 April 2017.


10. Dr. Maya Morsy, President of the National Council for Women, 26 July 2015.


12. Ms. Mozn Hassan, Women Activist and Executive Director of Nazra for Feminist Studies, 13 August 2015.
13. Ms. Naglaa Arafa, Assistant Resident Representative and Democratic Governance Team Leader, UNDP, Egypt, 11 August 2015.

14. Dr. Naglaa El Adly, Director of External Relations and International Cooperation Department, The National Council for Women – 11 August 2015

15. Ms. Nehad Aboul Komsan, Chairman, Egyptian Center for Women’s Rights (ECWR), 10 August 2015.


17. Dr. Raafat Abbas, Head of the Non Financial Services Sector in the Social Fund for Development, 13 August 2015

18. Ms. Ramona Canaan, Former Communication Officer, UNDP Electoral Assistance Project in Egypt, 9 August 2015.

19. Ms. Rana Korayem, Programme Analyst and Lead Coordinator of the Women’s Citizenship Initiative, UN Women, Egypt, 8 August 2015 and 3 April 2017

Women Beneficiaries:

1. Asmaa Abd Rabouh Mohamed
2. Dalia Abdel Aziz Ibrahim
3. Ghada Mohamed Ahmed El Ghanam
4. Layla Mansour Khair El Din
5. Rawda Mohamed Adnan
6. Riham Hamdy El Sayed
7. Sarah El Sayed Ahmed
8. Samira El Sayed Ahmed
9. Zeinab Mohamed Fathy
1 According to the mapping study, 600,000 women in Giza do not have the ID cards, in Sohag 700,000, in Minya 500,000, in Assiut 400,000 and 3,000 in the New Valley (El Wadi el Gedid). The plan is to target 100,000 women in each of these governorates by June 2013.
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