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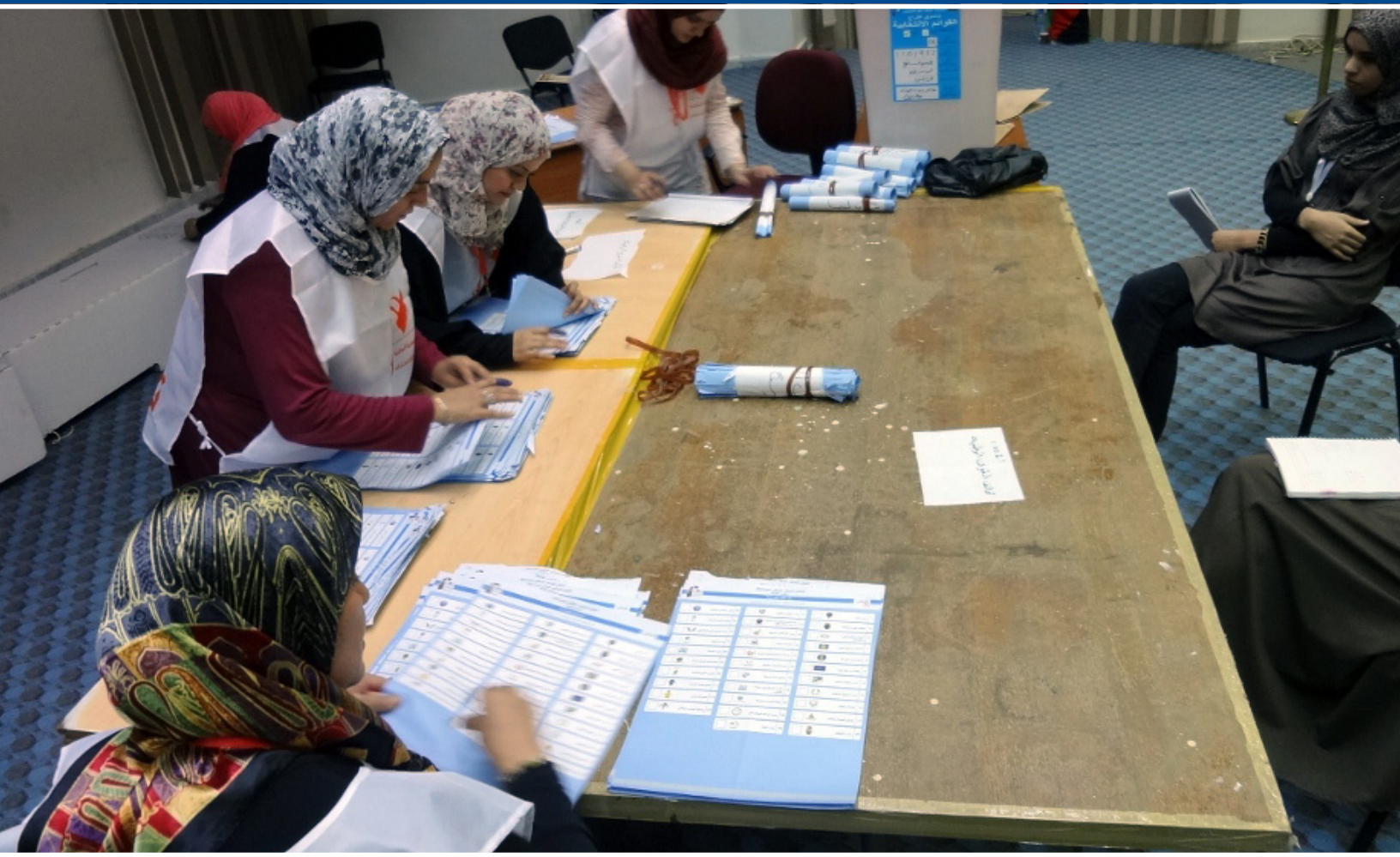
VOTERS' OPINIONS OF THE ELECTION PROCESS IN LIBYA



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Voters' Opinions of the Election Process in Libya

An Assessment of Voter Information and Opinions of the General National Congress (GNC) Elections and Views Regarding the Participation of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities

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March 2013

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About IFES

The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) supports citizens' right to participate in free and fair elections. Our independent expertise strengthens electoral systems and builds local capacity to deliver sustainable solutions.

As the global leader in democracy promotion, we advance good governance and democratic rights by:

- Providing technical assistance to election officials
- Empowering the underrepresented to participate in the political process
- Applying field-based research to improve the electoral cycle

Since 1987, IFES has worked in over 135 countries – from developing democracies, to mature democracies. For more information, visit www.IFES.org.

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I. Research Overview and Methodology

Overview

On July 7, 2012, Libyans went to the polls and elected the General National Congress (GNC) in a major step that helped put their country on the path toward democracy. Despite dealing with a short timeframe, inexperience with elections and a challenging security environment, international observers applauded election authorities for conducting what was considered an orderly election and a notable achievement.

In order to examine the perspective of voters and their opinions of the election process, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) designed and implemented eight focus group discussions in November 2012 with Libyan citizens who voted in the GNC elections.

Objectives

The main objectives of these focus groups were:

- To examine the impact of the voter information campaign and identify information sources/platforms most used and deemed most effective for voters
- To elicit opinions on ways to improve future voter education and motivation initiatives and the electoral process in general
- To examine voters' opinions and perceptions of GNC elections in Libya and their motivations for participating
- To assess voters' experience on Election Day and how voters perceived the organization of the elections, while gaining special insight into the experience of voters with disabilities on Election Day and recommendations for improving access
- To examine voters' knowledge of and trust in the High National Election Commission (HNEC)
- To elicit participants' views of youth and women's involvement in politics and ways to enhance their engagement
- To assess participants' knowledge of the constitutional process and their views of the current political situation and expectations for the future

Implementation

IFES contracted the Tripoli-based research firm Diwan through a competitive bidding process to implement focus group discussions. The IFES Applied Research Center (ARC) developed a tailored focus group discussion guide covering all listed objectives, including follow-ups and probes, which Diwan moderators used to lead discussions over the course of a few hours. ARC supervised the implementation of the focus groups and attended the pilot focus group session that was held in Tripoli.

Participant Selection

The eight focus groups were designed to reflect a variety of opinions from key demographic segments of the Libyan population and the principal West, East and South regions of Libya. The focus groups were thus conducted in Tripoli, Benghazi and Sēbha and were split into women-only and men-only discussions. Two of the focus groups were conducted with persons with disabilities to allow a detailed discussion of their experiences on Election Day and the specific difficulties they may have encountered.

Diwan selected focus group participants through a random door-to-door recruitment process using a screening questionnaire that specified participant criteria. Below is a snapshot of focus group locations and participant numbers. More detailed demographic information on each participant can be found in the appendix.

Date	Location	Type of Participant	Number of Participants
November 26, 2012	Benghazi	Women	14
November 26, 2012	Benghazi	Men	10
December 12, 2012	Benghazi	Male participants with disability	8
December 10, 2012	Benghazi	Female participants with disability	12
November 25, 2012	Sēbha	Men	10
November 25, 2012	Sēbha	Women	9
December 12, 2012	Tripoli	Women	12
December 13, 2012	Tripoli	Men	9

II. Summary of Key Findings

Voter Information

Libyan voters depended heavily on word of mouth to learn about electoral procedures and candidates in the countdown to the GNC election. While participants also used mass media sources, such as TV and radio, and social media, such as Facebook, voter information was deemed insufficient. This was especially the case for information on candidates and political party platforms. Most candidates' campaigns were believed to be unsuccessful in reaching voters and most candidates remained unknown to voters with the exception of a few who had the financial resources to run campaigns on TV. Information on electoral procedures was more available. However, many voters did not know voting procedures until Election Day.

Focus group participants recommended that in future elections there should be adequate information on candidates' qualifications and platforms, and that it should be disseminated further in advance of elections so voters can make informed choices. Participants also hoped that future voter education campaigns will have a wider reach and are able to target various segments of the Libyan electorate according to their preferred information sources.

Opinions About the Election

Participants had a generally positive sentiment about Election Day and expressed a sense of pride about the election process and the ability of the Libyan people to turn a new page. Despite security incidents on Election Day and organizational problems, Libyan voters believed the GNC election was free and fair, and were tolerant of mistakes in election organization since it was the country's first electoral experience. Many participants were motivated to vote by a sense of civic duty to support a new Libya and out of a sense of loyalty to those who lost their lives in fighting to rid the country of the old regime. There was no mention from voters of pressure or intimidation that influenced voting choices; participants were supportive of having local and foreign election observers.

Overall, participants called for specific improvements in future elections, mainly regarding information dissemination, election security, media coverage and transparency in the vote counting process. Meanwhile, women voters found the separation of polling stations between male and female voters consistent with the country's social norms. They deemed it helpful in encouraging more women to vote. Some participants noted that senior citizens faced difficulties due to high illiteracy rates and their need for more guidance. Participants also stressed the importance of a clear timetable set by the HNEC and shared with all election stakeholders.

Knowledge and Trust of the HNEC and GNC

Public perceptions of the HNEC were mostly favorable, but participants were confused about the HNEC's role and structure. Participants also believed that the HNEC's limited experience was the reason why there were organizational problems in the elections. Some participants did not trust the HNEC fully and thought it may be subject to influence by different political parties. Participants thus called for more transparency in the HNEC's work.

As for the GNC, participants were clearly disappointed with its performance and expressed very low levels of trust in GNC members. Many participants blamed the GNC for focusing on its members' personal and party interests rather than the interests of the Libyan people. Many also pointed out the GNC's inability to deal with the problem of unregulated spread of weapons. Participants agreed the GNC and the government should make addressing weak security their priority.

Views of Constitutional Process and Preferred Form of Governance

Participants' opinions were mixed on their preferred system of governance for Libya – a unitary system versus a federalist system – with most participants in Tripoli and Sebha rejecting federalism due to the tribal nature of Libyan society, yet Benghazi participants favoring it. Benghazi participants believed there was a problem with how federalism is currently being presented. Meanwhile, even those who reject federalism called for provisions in the new constitution that can ensure decentralization. Participants seemed to have weak knowledge of different types of systems and their respective implications. Consequently, there were calls to educate people on various systems of governance and conduct polls to understand what Libyan citizens want.

Participants agreed that Sharia law should play a key role in the new constitution and serve as the main source of legislation, but not the only source. Participants also emphasized the need to customize the adoption of Sharia according to Libyan cultural norms and lifestyle.

Opinions on Women and Youth Involvement in Politics

Participants believed the status of women has improved since the February 17, 2011 revolution due to women's wider participation and active engagement in various civic and political activities. Despite women's increased civic participation, women were not seen as playing an effective role in decision making, nor were they taking leadership roles in politics. Women's civic and political engagement is believed to be somewhat exclusive to the same group of women who show up to most events while there has not been a real effort to attract a wider spectrum of women into civic and political activism.

Participants warned that discrimination against women continues to exist systematically in various social, political and economic domains. Women's rights are believed to be violated particularly in employment. Female participants also discussed instances of discrimination that are faced by civically active women who lack support and confront obstacles that limit their ability to freely express their views.

While most participants expressed support for women's political engagement, female participants were more encouraging for women in political leadership positions, whereas men's support was conditional at best. Indeed, many male participants indicated that women's roles are naturally very different from men, and that they would favor a "supportive role" for women in certain ministries. However, they would not favor a leadership role such serving as president. Participants also believed that this critical period in the country's history requires men leaders because they have more experience and political muscle.

Participants discussed the problem of the lack of trust in women's abilities and the prevailing culture that discourages voting women into political leadership positions. Interestingly, female participants did not exclusively blame men for this problem. They noted that these practices exist among both men and women, as women also do not usually vote for a woman candidate, holding women equally – if not even more responsible – for this inequality. Both female and male participants called for raising women's awareness about their civic and political rights and to build their capacity to play a more effective political role. Participants also called for enhancing cooperation between women and women's groups.

A few female participants expressed concerns about the dominance of certain Islamic movements on the constitutional process and the impact new laws inspired by Sharia may have on women's rights. However, other participants did not seem to worry about adopting Sharia as a main source of legislation due to their belief that Sharia does not contradict women's rights.

In regard to youth participation, everyone agreed that youth played the most important role in the revolution, but they are currently marginalized in political representation. Participants expressed support for stronger youth involvement and thought they should be playing a leading role. Others thought they need to build their experience first to be able to serve effectively in leadership positions. Participants called for building youth capacity and experience to help them get more organized and serve in higher positions.

Experience of Persons with Disabilities during Elections

Despite positive experiences for most voters on Election Day, voters with disabilities experienced challenges when voting in the GNC election, as attested by focus group participants with disabilities in Benghazi. Women with disabilities discussed problems they faced in finding and accessing polling centers, and in casting a ballot due to the lack of preparedness of polling centers and polling center officials. Polling centers were mostly inaccessible and there were no ramps to allow voters with wheelchairs to access the centers. Participants also mentioned the general lack of respect for voters with disabilities.

Both women and men with disabilities called for respecting their right to vote, equipping polling centers to facilitate their access and treating persons with disabilities as respectfully as any other voter. Participants called for sensitizing people and polling workers to the rights and needs of voters with disabilities and to have more accessible polling centers and timely information on these centers' locations and readiness.

Opinions on the Future Direction of the Country

Most participants were optimistic about the country's future and were confident that things will continue improving despite pending concerns about security and the spread of arms between civilians. Participants are also concerned about rising problems between the East and West of the country, yet there is general hope for the future, given that the removal of Gaddafi is still perceived as a great success. Participants called for the consolidation of the revolutions' achievements through raising civic awareness, ensuring citizens' rights and a balanced development process that treats different regions of the country equally.

III. Voter Information and Most Effective Information Sources

Word of mouth appears to have been the dominant source of information for Libyan voters in the countdown to the GNC election. Focus group participants indicated they depended heavily on information from family and friends in learning about electoral procedures and candidates. While participants also used a variety of information sources – including mass media sources such as TV and radio – and social media such as Facebook, they believed information they received from the media was mostly insufficient and many only learned about procedures on Election Day while casting their votes.

> *"I didn't know anything at all about the elections. There should've been campaigns to raise the knowledge first. I was taking my info from my father because he's a politician. Then came the TV channels."*
>
> – Female, Tripoli, 55-64, Bachelor's Degree

> *"I heard it from my friends and people involved in elections, too. Also, the radio was very effective. I used to listen to Benghazi FM and sound of youth AM."*
>
> – Male, Benghazi, 35-44, University Graduate

> *"Facebook reached a certain class of people. We have a class that isn't educated."*
>
> – Male, Benghazi, 45-54, Some University

> *"I saw the ads on TV and social media, especially Facebook. However, the ads weren't so good; the media didn't work well to inform the people. Also, the people didn't make much effort to inform themselves. People who weren't well informed went anyway to election centers and kept their questions till the last moment before they vote."*
>
> – Female, Benghazi, 18-24, Secondary Education

> *"I didn't have enough information about the voting process, and TV channels didn't show it to us. Although I had so little information about how will I vote, I went and voted to go through this new experience, and I learned how to vote on the day I voted."*
>
> – Female, Benghazi, 25-34, Diploma[1]

A few participants believed they received useful information on the elections from TV, citing a cartoon program that helped clarify the process.

> *"Television helped me a lot, especially [a] caricature program about the election's process. The TV channels did an amazing job. Some of it also gave attention to old people and motivated them to vote such as Libya Alhurra and Libya Alahrar channels."*
>
> – Female, Sēbha, 25-34, Bachelor's Degree

> *"There were many ways, first TV channels. I like what Libya Alahrar did with the cartoons, which clarify the electing process."*
>
> – Male with disability, Benghazi, 25-34, Intermediate Education

[1] "Diploma" notes any post-secondary education, but less than a full bachelor's degree.

Some participants, who considered that electoral information on different media platforms was insufficient, resorted to awareness workshops to learn about the electoral process.

> *"To be honest, I didn't watch any program about the elections in television; I got the information from the awareness courses which were organized by teachers in schools. They even acted the whole election process and it was very useful for me on Election Day."*
>
> – Female, Sēbha, 25-34, Bachelor's Degree

> *"The only organization I think that was really affective is Shahed of course it did a lot of workshops and awareness lectures about the stages of the whole election's process and it worked with other civil institutions too."*
>
> – Female, Sēbha, 25-34, Diploma

Participants identified civil society organizations as the main sponsors of voter education messages in the form of awareness workshops. They also recognized the HNEC as another sponsor of these messages, especially those that citizens saw on billboards and posters. Participants seemed grateful of what the HNEC has done to spread awareness, as they recognized it had limited experience. However, they also thought the information was insufficient and came too late to allow voters to be well prepared.

> *"NGOs were the best in advertising and educating about the elections, like Ayadena organization and Libya's Youth. They did workshops."*
>
> – Male, Benghazi, 35-44, University Graduate

> *"The NGOs and the national organizations helped in spreading awareness."*
>
> – Female, Tripoli, 45-54, Bachelor's Degree

> *"The [Election] Commission did a good job with the advertisement and the campaigns concerned with raising awareness."*
>
> – Male, Benghazi, 45-54, Secondary Education

> *"[…] Second were the Internet and the posters in the streets. The [Election] Commission did a great job since it was the first experience and the security status wasn't that good."*
>
> – Male with disability, Benghazi, 25-34, Intermediate Education

> *"The media coverage of the event was good compared to other countries such as Egypt and Tunisia...but I agree with the others participants that awareness of the election stages came too late and there was a weakness in HNEC cadres because most of them do not have a background of the elections but we accept it because it was new experience for them."*
>
> – Male, Sēbha, 18-24, Secondary Education

Participants believed there was more information circulated on procedural aspects of the election process, but thought information was lacking on candidates and political parties. In fact, participants complained that candidates' campaigns were not effective in reaching enough people and informing

them about candidates' qualifications, political experience and platforms. With the exception of a few famous politicians who had enough financial resources to put ads on TV, most candidates remained unknown to voters.

> *"The candidates' campaigns didn't reach the people, and none of them reached me, so I didn't know whom I should vote for. They should've come out more in public through TV channels, conferences and seminars to educate the people and to let them know who to vote for. People who used to appear a lot on TV like Mahmoud Jebril got the most votes."*
>
> – Male, Benghazi, 35-44, Diploma

> *"We faced the same problem during the elections of Benghazi's local council which is the weakness of the campaigns, whether it was for the candidates or for raising awareness about elections among people. The candidates were counting on their reputation mostly, so many people who had great capabilities didn't win, and on the other hand people who didn't have any real capabilities won, just because they are famous."*
>
> – Female, Benghazi, 25-34, Bachelor's Degree

> *"There wasn't enough information about the candidates, and that was the problem that faced all Libyans. Only the people who had funds were able to afford adverts and appearing on TV. And people who were known during the revolution had the upper hand too. Some people had the capabilities and are good people, but didn't get the chance to let people know them."*
>
> – Male with disability, Benghazi, 35-44, Diploma

As such, participants' recommendations centered on the need to get more information on candidates' qualifications and platforms and ensure this information is disseminated for a longer period of time before the elections. Participants also hoped that in future elections, the reach of voter education messages will be wider and take into account the needs of different types of audiences, such as voters who cannot read, or those who rely on specific types of media sources.

> *"Based on my own experience as a former candidate for the GNC, the time for the campaign should be three months, knocking on every door to reach the people. In the GNC elections only people who were already known won. For instance, Mr. Suleiman Zuby only won because of the fame he got while he was in charge of the commission of elections of Benghazi's local council, while other people didn't win because they weren't famous, although they are patriots and had capabilities and potentials."*
>
> – Female, Benghazi, 35-44, Some University

> *"In the future we should know both the CV and the future plan of each candidate."*
>
> – Male, Benghazi, 18-24, Secondary Education

> *"The HNEC did a good job advertising the elections, but the time was short to give the candidates enough time for their campaigns."*
>
> – Female, Tripoli, 45-54, Bachelor's Degree

> *"It should be done two months before Election Day to show people the positive and the negative sides of it."*

– Male, Sēbha, 25-34, Bachelor's Degree

"What I saw as a person responsible for organizing a polling center, was that the media role was very weak. No one asked us about the problems we were facing. On the other hand, the programs about how to vote started two weeks after the registration began so we had to add two more weeks. I hope that in the next elections, the media would expand its role especially with radio programs and try to reach people in the south because they are not educated enough to read the newspapers or watch TV."

– Female, Sēbha, 25-34, Diploma

"Awareness about the elections process needs early campaigns in school, media and workshops so everyone knows his role, why he should vote and how to elect the best candidate."

– Female, Sēbha, 25-34, Diploma

"I think the best way for awareness is to distribute small books explaining how the election's process is done in a simple language."

– Female, Sēbha, 25-34, Bachelor's Degree

"There should be lectures for each class of society. Each class needs to be addressed in a way they understand. Not everyone can read and understand a leaflet or a poster. Because we need to reach as many people as we can. It should be studied well so it succeeds. And people know who to vote for."

– Male with disability, Benghazi, 35-44, Diploma

IV. Opinions on the GNC Elections and Motivations for Participating

Participants were generally positive about Election Day, expressing a sense of pride about the election process and the ability of the Libyan people to turn a new page. Despite few mentions of security incidents, organizational problems and illegal practices, Libyan voters were sympathetic to any organizational lapses, recognizing that this was the first election experience Libya has had in decades.

> *"It's the most beautiful day we had in 26 years. I felt it was like a big wedding and an entitlement for all of us."*
>
> – Male, Tripoli, 25-34, Bachelor's Degree

> *"For the first time, I felt that it's my country, not Gaddafi's."*
>
> – Female, Tripoli, 45-54, Diploma

> *"I can't explain what I felt. I was very proud. I was even showing the ink on my finger when I was greeting people because it was the first time to be free to choose."*
>
> – Male, Sēbha, 25-34, Bachelor's Degree

> *"I stood for hours to vote, but I wasn't bothered. There were old people, too. It was easy and I knew who I was going to vote for."*
>
> – Female, Tripoli, 45-54, Bachelor's Degree

> *"It was a great feeling and we were waiting for it so eagerly, although there were some negative experiences by old people and I think next elections will be perfect."*
>
> – Male, Sēbha, 18-24, Secondary Education

Despite mentions of security incidents; organizational problems cited by Benghazi and Sēbha participants; and a few mentions of poll workers trying to influence voters and convince candidates to continue their campaigning on Election Day, most participants considered the event to be an organizational success.

> *"There were some illegal acts during Election Day, for instance, some workers suggested to voters whom they should vote for."*
>
> – Female, Tripoli, 45-54, Bachelor's Degree

> *"There were some mistakes during the elections, for instance, Friday speeches in mosques were supporting certain candidates. Also some people came to one voting station and started handing out posters for their candidates. That was illegal to do."*
>
> – Male, Benghazi, 25-34, Bachelor's Degree

> *"Four centers were late. It's a mistake, but when you know the reason maybe we will excuse them. Since the day of the attack on the commission, they have worked for long hours reaching 24/24 and the workers' numbers were little."*
>
> – Male, Benghazi, 35-44, University Graduate

> *"Some candidates came to vote, and at the same time they were encouraging people to vote for them."*
>
> – Male, Benghazi, 18-24, Diploma

"In some places the organization was very bad, like Eltwairi neighborhood. But on the other hand, there were some other places which were very well organized, and we excused them because it was the first time."

– Male, Sēbha, 25-34, Diploma

"The election materials were late in some voting stations, the lines got longer and people who came early got bored. Some of them went home and didn't vote."

– Male, Benghazi, 18-24, Secondary Education

A few participants noted the government was unable to provide security in polling centers in their neighborhoods. They indicated that the youth from their neighborhoods were the ones protecting the streets on Election Day.

"The security was maintained by the youth of the neighborhood who wanted this process to succeed, and not by government forces."

– Female, Benghazi, 45-54, Secondary Education

"The security was good, but the official security agencies were not present. The residents protected the streets."

– Male, Tripoli, 25-34, Master's Degree

–

When discussing the principal motivation for voting in the GNC elections, many participants explained they were driven by a sense of civic duty at this critical juncture of Libya's political transition. A few participants mentioned they voted out of a sense of responsibility and respect toward those who sacrificed their lives for the future of Libya.

"It's my duty as a citizen."

– Male, Sēbha, 18-24, Secondary Education

"It was a national duty."

– Female with disability, Benghazi, 25-34, Secondary Education

"My motivation [for voting] was based on the good of the nation."

– Male, Tripoli, 45-54, University Education

"I voted to make our country better, even if some people disagree. I respect their opinion, but I went."

– Male, Benghazi, 35-44, University Education

"[I voted] for the blood of martyrs that have been shed so we can do elections."

– Male, Benghazi, 25-34, Bachelor's Degree

"I voted because I was hoping the state will be built quickly."

– Female, Benghazi, 45-54, Bachelor's Degree

"[I voted] to improve Libya, choose responsible leaders and to ensure a perfect constitution."

– Female, Sēbha, 25-34, Bachelor's Degree

Participants agreed the election was free and fair. Participants did not witness any intimidation of voters in any form and stressed that all citizens were able to vote freely. Participants were also supportive of the involvement of international and local election observers in this election and in future ones.

When discussing the Libyan elections in comparison with the Egyptian and Tunisian general elections, most participants thought the Libyan election was a success and had perhaps more integrity, despite the fact that Libyan authorities have less electoral experience than their Egyptian and Tunisian counterparts. A few participants, however, talked about "invisible hands" trying to influence voters' choices, while maintaining that the elections were credible.

"There was integrity and the process went on smoothly, freely and the security was present. We were very happy with the blue finger."

– -Male, Tripoli, 35-44, Diploma

"I cast my voice freely and there wasn't any kind of intimidation. Some political parties tried to invite people for dinners or let old people memorize certain names."

– Female, Sēbha, 25-34, Bachelor's Degree

"The presence of national observers made us feel comfortable, because they observe and do not interfere."

– Male, Benghazi, 45-54, Secondary Education

"When you put non-Libyan observers it's more comfortable, because they are neutral and don't have interests with any candidate."

– Male, Benghazi, 18-24, Secondary Education

"I saw observers from Jordan, UK and from other countries. Their presence was necessary to evaluate the process."

– Female, Benghazi, 45-54, Secondary Education

"There is no problem with us having foreigner observers, because it is our first experience as long as they don't have agendas or other interests. Since we are member of the UN, it's ok to have observers from the UN, or from other organizations like the Carter Center. The important thing is that they don't interfere with the process."

– Female with disability, Benghazi, 25-35, Intermediary Education

"Compared to Tunisia and Egypt we did a great job. They had more experience than us, and I witnessed their elections."

– Male, Benghazi, 35-44, Diploma

"In Egypt and Tunisia some judges manipulated the results. Some people paid people to vote for someone, but here such things didn't happen."

– Male, Benghazi, 25-34, Bachelor's Degree

"[Elections in] Tunisia and Egypt were more organized because they are used to doing it and it was the first time for Libya, although I think our elections were fairer."

– Male, Sēbha, 25-34, Bachelor's Degree

"Yes, our elections' fairness was better [than Tunisia and Egypt], but the performance of their media and press was better. They had so many illustrations on TV about the elections and the candidates CVs."

– Male with disability, Benghazi, 35-44, Diploma

"There was integrity to a certain extent. The process was free and had integrity, but some movements had invisible hands working behind the scenes."

– Male, Tripoli, 35-44, Master's Degree

While most participants had positive experiences on Election Day, voters with disabilities – especially women with disabilities – experienced difficulties finding and accessing polling stations and casting their ballots.[2] Senior citizens were also at a disadvantage, according to participants, as they needed guidance, especially since the incidence of illiteracy is highest among this demographic.

"Old non-educated people couldn't know who their candidate is."

– Female, Tripoli, 35-44, Bachelor's Degree

"Some people forced old people to vote for a specific candidate."

– Female, Sēbha, 24-34, Bachelor's Degree

Female participants noted they were able to vote freely without any pressure or influence from family members or others even when faced with differences of opinions with family members.

"In my family everyone chose a different candidate and no one forced me to choose a particular one."

– Female, Sēbha, 25-34, Bachelor's Degree

"There could be some pressure, but women can vote for whoever they want when they go into the chamber alone."

– Female, Tripoli, 55-64, Bachelor's Degree

When discussing their opinions of the separation of polling stations between women and men voters, female participants were in favor of separate polling stations. They believed it respected the conservative traditions of the Libyan society and led to more peace of mind knowing that women are not mixing with men on Election Day. Indeed, women participants felt that this allowed them to move freely in the polling stations and avoid dealing with their fathers or husbands preventing them from going to the polls. At the same time, while some women mentioned they are not against mixing of the sexes *per se* (and some even considered that separation is a "backward" practice), they maintained that in this case, separation encouraged women to turn out and vote in higher numbers.

[2] The experience of voters with disabilities is analyzed in detail in Section VIII of this report.

"As Libyans, we are a traditional society. I am for the separation of polling stations for women alone and men alone. Libyan women are conservative and mixing with men is not suitable for them. Many women would not have voted if polling stations were mixed for men and women."

– Female, Sēbha, 25-34, Diploma

"I'm for the separation. As an observer in the elections, working hours were long and sometimes we wanted to rest, eat and pray and it would be more comfortable if the polling station is separated. Note that the polling stations which were run by men were more efficient because they are stricter with the rules, and there were some mistakes in the women's stations."

– Female, Benghazi, 45-54, Secondary Education

"If they weren't separated, some men wouldn't have let their wives vote."

– Female, Tripoli, 45-54, Diploma

"I'm not for the separation, because in the revolution we worked and travelled together.We should not do that as any other developed society."

– Female, Benghazi, 55-64, Bachelor's Degree

In sum, while recognizing that the organization of the election could have been better, participants still believed it went well. Participants hoped for specific improvements in future elections in Libya, mainly regarding information dissemination, as discussed in Section III, but also regarding improvements to security around the elections, better media coverage and a more transparent counting process. Participants also voiced a desire to have a clear timetable set by the HNEC shared with voters so all stakeholders have a better understanding of the process.

"The first thing they should focus on in the future is the security, then the preparations of the stations. The [Election] Commission should set the time table for every stage. It should be well-organized."

– Male with disability, Benghazi, 35-44, Diploma

"The organization was perfect. The only thing that I really disliked was some disorder and very crowded polling centers and we asked the organizers to fix that next time."

– Male, Sēbha, 25-34, Bachelor's Degree

"First TV channels have to give the same chance to all candidates. Also the internet should be used better. There should be also debates between the candidates. The state should provide the funds for all of them to get on TV and pay for their campaigns."

– Male with disability, Benghazi, 35-44, Diploma

"The media should cover the events in many stations, not just one. The [Election] Commission should make it clear that during the last two days it's illegal to advertise to a candidate."

– Male, Benghazi, 25-34, University

"There should've been observers during the counting process, and it should've been done in an open place to insure its fairness. We didn't witness the process of counting unlike the local elections."

– Male, Benghazi, 45-54, Secondary Education

"The High National Election Commission should have started the campaigns four to five months before the elections and introduced all the candidates' CVs to make all people understand the elections process and take their time in choosing the right candidate for them."

– Female, Sēbha, 25-34, Diploma

V. Knowledge and Trust in the HNEC and the GNC

Although participants seemed ambiguous about the HNEC's role and its structure, public perceptions of the HNEC were mostly favorable. However, participants recognized there were mistakes in the organization of the elections due to the HNEC's limited experience.

> *"Personally, I knew all the members of the local election commission, and they were good people, but they didn't have a clear strategy or plan and they didn't organize the work well. They used to work all on the same thing together. And no one could do anything without the permission of the head of the commission. In the future, they should put capable people in charge, for instance, the head of the press department. His duty is to handle press and media and advertisements, but he has no clue how to do that."*
>
> – Male, Benghazi, 35-44, University

> *"Everyone who worked in the commission was great. They weren't thieves. They only lacked the experience."*
>
> – Male, Benghazi, 35-44, University Graduate

> *"The High National Election Commission worked during the election not before it started, so a lot of people didn't know about the HNEC's role. Overall, it was good but late."*
>
> – Female, Sēbha, 25-34, Bachelor's Degree

> *"There were some mistakes but we all know that's because it is the first experience."*
>
> – Female, Sēbha, 25-34, Bachelor's Degree

> *"Considering it was our first experience, they [HNEC] did a good job. Next time they should provide reports to the interior and defense ministries to tell them what they need to do. They are responsible for the whole process from A to Z."*
>
> – Male with disability, Benghazi, 35-44, Diploma

> *"Before elections had started, people didn't know what the HNEC means but thanks to civil society groups and media they become more aware about its role."*
>
> – Male, Sēbha, 25-34, Bachelor's Degree

> *"As a voter, I didn't know anything about HNEC, and as society, we are lazy to look for information."*
>
> – Male, Sēbha, 18-24, Secondary Education

> *"HNEC's role was very weak especially when it comes to media."*
>
> – Male, Sēbha, 25-34, Bachelor's Degree

> *"The [Election] Commission did its job well, but they didn't educate the citizens well."*
>
> – Male, Benghazi, 35-44, Diploma

Some participants, particularly those in Tripoli, said they do not trust the HNEC fully because it may be subject to influence by different political groups. They called for the HNEC to be more transparent.

Participants also indicated that they would have liked to know more about the HNEC structure and the composition of its members.

> *"We did not know the subordination of the HNEC and how it was formed. Political parties played a role in overshadowing and excluding certain people from its ranks."*
> – Male, Tripoli, 35-44, Bachelor's Degree

> *"It didn't work freely. It was under pressure from different groups."*
> – Female, Tripoli, 45-54, Bachelor's Degree

> *"It should be more transparent."*
> – Female, Tripoli, 45-54, Diploma

> *"I have a question. Who formed the commission and what were the standards?"*
> – Female, Benghazi, 45-54, Master's Degree

> *"I think the HNEC employees should be independent people who don't belong to any political parties and have many branches."*
> – Male, Sēbha, 25-34, Bachelor's Degree

As for the GNC, participants considered its performance to be disappointing while expressing very low levels of trust in GNC members. Indeed, overall views of the GNC were largely negative and seemed to have been exacerbated by allegations that GNC members have been awarding themselves high salaries. This was seen as the tipping point, causing the loss of the constituents' trust. Moreover, many participants blame the GNC for its inability to deal with the problem of the spread of unregulated arms.

> *"I'm totally frustrated with their performance."*
> – Female, Benghazi, 45-54, Bachelor's Degree

> *"It's bad. Lots of issues haven't been solved. Most importantly the security issues, the killings and the weapons."*
> – Male with disability, Benghazi, 35-44, Diploma

> *"The GNC lacks trust because they have not served civilians. They have not offered security. They are working for their personal benefit and left the country unsettled. They did not take care of the Head of the Army or the Army itself. The freedom fighters are the ones securing the army!"*
> – Male, Tripoli, 35-44, Diploma

> *"Their lack of intelligence made them discuss their salaries in a public meeting. This shocked the people and disappointed them."*
> – Female, Tripoli, 45-54, Bachelor's Degree

> *"They should discuss the laws before their salaries."*
> – Female, Tripoli, 55-64, Bachelor's Degree

"I don't like the fights inside the GNC. That decreases my trust in them."
– Female, Tripoli, 25-34, Diploma

"The GNC is supposed to work on drafting the constitution and building the State, but they are busy with chasing pro-Gaddafi [people] out of Libya and they spent money on that, which would've been more useful to be spent in Libya. They have to activate the army and police, and secure the country from inside before chasing who are outside. Also the GNC gave Tunisia 200 million [LYD] and that wasn't its right to do."
– Male, Benghazi, 18-24, Secondary Education

"[…] The three main responsibilities of the GNC are: forming a government, writing the constitution and overseeing the elections for parliament. The members of the GNC should know what they are up against in this role and they should have known that they are here to serve the country, and not for their personal gains. When 23 [GNC] members go to Canada and many go to hajj, this makes people question their sense of responsibility. My trust in them is 50 percent."
– Male, Benghazi, 35-44, University

"I think we chose the wrong people and we have to replace them because they didn't even present our problems here in the southern cities, not only the electricity, but the security problem also."
– Female, Sēbha, 25-34, Bachelor's Degree

"We all know that the southern cities are suffering from the weapons problems the most and no one of the candidates talked about that, at least among the southern members."
– Female, Sēbha, 25-34, Bachelor's Degree

A few participants seemed more sympathetic and acknowledged that it may be too early to be able to fairly judge the GNC's performance. Meanwhile, participants agreed that the GNC and the government should focus on addressing the problem of weak security as their main priority.

"We should give them a chance because they inherited many problems."
– Female, Tripoli, 25-34, Diploma

"I think we should give them a chance, and we have to criticize about important things."
– Female, Tripoli, 45-54, Bachelor's Degree

"Security is the most important thing."
– Female, Tripoli, 45-54, Diploma

"They did not meet the Libyan people's expectations. They are yet to start any process of collecting arms. They must do it as soon as possible; they have refused to leave their headquarters in Rixos hotel."
– Male, Tripoli, 35-44, Diploma

VI. Views of Constitutional Process and Preferred Form of Governance

When discussing expectations of the constitutional process and their preferred system of governance for Libya – a unitary system versus a federalist system – opinions were mixed. Many participants rejected federalism due to the tribal nature of Libyan society, while participants in Benghazi appeared to favor federalism, yet acknowledged that it may not be the best option at this stage.

Benghazi participants talked about administrative federalism as their favored system of governance for the future. Overall, even those who reject federalism seemed wary of a fully centralized system and called for provisions in the new constitution that will ensure decentralization. A few participants mentioned they would like to go back to the 1963 constitution that existed under the monarchy. What is apparent in participants' statements is the low level of knowledge of different types of systems and their respective implications. Consequently, there were calls to educate people on the various systems of governance and conduct polls to understand what Libyan citizens want.

> *"A federalist system as it exists could be useful for other countries, but it would be impossible to succeed for a country like Libya due to the tribal system. No matter how much advancement we reach, tribalism will continue. If we adopt a federalist system within the existing tribalism, Libya will finish. Therefore, a unitary system in Libya with separate governorates is a better system."*
>
> – Female, Sēbha, 25-34, Diploma

> *"The important thing is not to have extreme laws. The federalist system is good, but it won't work with the Libyans because they are tribal."*
>
> – Male with disability, Benghazi, 25-34, Secondary Education

> *"We need a lot of awareness about the constitution because it's a new experience and we don't have any idea about it."*
>
> – Female, Sēbha, 25-34, Bachelor's Degree

> *"About the constitution, we are afraid that they might put something in that the people don't want. People have to participate in drafting it, so we don't have problems after passing it like Egypt. There has to be a poll or something."*
>
> – Female with disability, Benghazi, 25-34, Diploma

> *"People should be educated about the different governance systems and their positive and negative points, and then people can really decide, while avoiding turning the idea of federalism into a system that will divide the country. The idea of a federalist system wasn't wrong, but the media distorted it. Also in the mosques, for instance, the day of the pro-federalism protest, one speaker in a mosque was telling the people that those who want a federalist system are traitors."*
>
> – Female, Benghazi, 45-54, Master's Degree

"A poll should be done to know the people's opinions. I'm against federalist system as the way it was presented. I'm not against it totally, but a poll should be done first before doing it. If centralization continues as it is and all the decisions are made in the west, it will be a disaster."

– Female, Benghazi, 35-44, Bachelor's Degree

"I want a federalist system that preserves the rights of the citizens. It will not be a final solution because of the corruption in all the country that grew in the last 40 years, but this system will allow each state to elect its own governor from its own people , and if he didn't work well he will be replaced by them, without the interference of Tripoli or any other city."

– Female, Benghazi, 45-54, Master's Degree

"I'm with the federalist system, but not now. We have to educate the people first. The way it was presented was aiming to divide the country."

– Male, Benghazi, 45-54, Some University

"I want a federalist system, without dividing the country, and I want the constitution of 1963 along with a change to the royal system."

– Male, Benghazi, 45-54, Secondary Education

"The 1963 constitution is great, and many had participated in writing it including judges from Egypt and other Arab and Muslim countries."

– Male, Benghazi, 35-44, Secondary Education

Within the context of the system of governance, participants believe that Sharia law should play a key role and be adopted as the main source of legislation in the new constitution, while recognizing it should not be the sole source of legislation. Only a few participants believed Sharia should be the only source of legislation. In general, participants emphasized the need to customize the adoption of Sharia according to Libyan cultural norms and lifestyle. A few participants expressed concern about the negative impact conservative laws inspired by Sharia may have on Libyan women.

"It [Sharia] should be the main source, not the only source. I prefer a semi-presidential system. Sharia must be a main source, not the only one so that we don't have the same problems that happened in Egypt."

– Female, Tripoli, 35-44, Master's Degree

"It should be the main source, so we can add things from our culture and practices."

– Female with disability, Benghazi, 35-44, Intermediate Education

"Islamic Sharia is the source of the constitution. We take from it what is suitable with our modern age. We have to stay away from religious extremism and as Libyan citizens we should take the essence of Sharia."

– Male, Tripoli, 35-44, Diploma

"When we speak of Islamic laws, the first things that cross many people's minds are the punishments, but they are much deeper than this. Many people became afraid of Islamic laws because of the bad image that the extremists paint. There are many great things in Islamic laws; the Quran has the details about everything concerning people's lives. Also, there is the Sunna and the experiences of the ancestors that help us a lot."

– Male, Benghazi, 25-34, Bachelor's Degree

"I don't have enough knowledge about the systems. Let's see what most of people want. Islamic laws must be above all things and the main source of legislation."

– Male with disability, Benghazi, 35-44, Elementary Education

"The Islamic religion is valid in every time and place, and it should be the first, main and only source."

– Female, Benghazi, 45-54, Diploma

"I hope the drafting committee will be from the people not from the GNC, because most of them have an Islamic orientation, and I want it to be a democratic parliament. I'm not against Islamic laws, but the time is not right for them to be implemented. If we want to implement them we must implement them all well."

– Male with disability, Benghazi, 25-34, Diploma

VII. Opinions of Women and Youth Involvement in Politics

Both female and male participants believed the status of women has improved since the February 17, 2011 revolution due to women's wider participation and active engagement in civic and political activities. Participants also agreed that women played a key role during the revolution and favorably perceived women running in the elections as candidates just like men.

A few participants did not necessarily believe that women were marginalized during the previous regime. In addition, while most participants acknowledged women's higher participation after the revolution, they also expressed concerns about the quality of their participation, noting that it is social in essence, such as attending meetings and panels, with little evidence of effective political participation of women.

> *"Actually the February 17 revolution showed the Libyan women in a new face. We were all surprised by their creative ideas and they played a very effective role."*
>
> – Female, Sēbha, 25-34, Bachelor's Degree

> *"Libyan women played an important role during the revolution; many NGOs are led by women. They can even be more effective than men. Perhaps this stage requires men because of the security issues, but when there is a state, order, security and enforced laws, women can lead."*
>
> – Male with disability, Benghazi, 35-44, Diploma

> *"After the revolution, women enjoyed more freedom, and so their participation was further increased."*
>
> – Male, Tripoli, 45-54, University

> *"Women participated from the beginning of the revolution, and in all stages of the war, until now. Men have failed to lead some ministries, just like women failed in some executive positions."*
>
> – Male, Tripoli, 25-34, Bachelor's Degree

> *"Women broke many boundaries after the revolution, and men helped them do that, for instance I didn't use to go out on foot, but after the revolution my husband encouraged me to go out to the protests."*
>
> – Female, Benghazi, 45-54, Diploma

> *"Women's most notable engagement has so far been in their social participation in organizations, whereas their political participation is still in its beginnings and we are still forming our knowledge in politics. If we create room for awareness and political education, we could see Libyan women and girls creatively participating. However, for now, we are still at a developmental stage in politics."*
>
> – Female, Sēbha, 25-34, Diploma

> *"I have never felt that Libyan women are marginalized neither in the past nor now after the revolution. As a candidate, I saw that women were totally free to participate and I*

was very happy when I saw the candidates' lists with a huge number of women's names included."

– Female, Sēbha, 25-34, Bachelor's Degree

"As we've said, women status in society has improved after the revolution, and we hope this improvement will continue. This falls upon the shoulders of women. If they continue to work, they will reach their goals, but if they don't and stay non-active they won't achieve anything."

– Female, Benghazi, 45-54, Secondary Education

Several participants cautioned that women's civic and political engagement has been confined to a few familiar faces seen in most events, whereas little has been done to attract a wider spectrum of women from different walks of life into civic and political activism.

"The same women are participating in every political activity. For example, we see the same faces every time in the activities of the Women's Union."

– Female, Sēbha, 25-34, Diploma

"The problem is that a number of specific people want to participate in everything and they don't even invite others. For example, I never heard about the lectures of Suliman Diga before he came and a lot of other activities done by an organization from the USA. And another problem is that there are a lot of lectures done for certain neighborhoods and not everyone is invited."

– Female, Sēbha, 25-34, Bachelor's Degree

Participants also warned that despite women's seemingly higher civic participation levels after the revolution, discrimination against women continues to exist in social, political and economic domains. Female participants stressed the problem of the violation of women's rights, particularly in employment. Participants gave several examples of severe discrimination that Libyan women face in public sector employment where women are treated unjustly and where men are given privileges and benefits not given to women employees, which creates obstacles for women to build their capacity and get promoted to higher positions. Female participants also discussed other forms of discrimination, as civically active women lack support for their engagement and find themselves unable to freely express their views.

"There is a clear difference after the revolution concerning women's status in society, but women are still deprived of many of their rights in the work sphere. If there is a training course, a man will be sent to take it, and if there is an opening for an important position, a man will be nominated."

– Female, Benghazi, 35-44, Some University

"Women are still deprived of their rights. We are trying now by educating and raising awareness to get our rights, but till now we don't have them all."

– Female, Benghazi, 35-44, Master's Degree

"Men have better chances of getting employed than women."

– Female, Benghazi, 45-54, Bachelor's Degree

"My friends tell me that even the privileges of getting paid overtime at work, men get them, and women don't."

– Female, Benghazi, 35-44, Bachelor's Degree

"Since I always go out and speak my mind, I was threatened, and they tried to push me to stop by using our family and tribe. They can't confront me face-to-face, that's why they used those methods."

– Female, Benghazi, 35-44, Diploma

"There is discrimination at work. I'm an employee in the rehabilitation center. A lot of programs, overtime privileges courses and even going to the Hajj, are always done for men. So we face unusual discrimination at work, and that was one of the reasons to found our organization "We Are All Together," because of this type of injustice against women, especially disabled ones. Even when they did some repair work in the rehabilitation center, only women were forced to go out, but men stayed although we are all disabled."

– Female with disability, Benghazi, 45-54, Bachelor's Degree

While most men and women expressed support for women's political engagement in general, female participants were more encouraging for women in political leadership positions. Indeed, some participants indicated that if a female candidate and a male candidate had equal qualifications, they would vote for either one.

"A woman can even be president, and I will help with all my power, knowledge and soul."

– Female, Benghazi, 35-44, Some University

"If I had to choose between a man and a woman with the same qualifications, I would choose the woman."

– Female, Tripoli, 25-34, Diplomat

"If the capabilities and knowledge are equal between men and women, I will vote for a woman, because she will help me as a woman if I knock on her door."

– Female, Benghazi, 35-44, Ph.D.

"I think that women give more to society, so I will vote for a woman if she has the knowledge and capability."

– Female, Benghazi, 45-54, Bachelor's Degree

"I would vote for a woman if she has the capabilities."

– Male, Tripoli, 25-34, Bachelor's Degree

Meanwhile, other participants, especially male participants, indicated that women's roles are naturally very different from men. They would favor a "supportive role" for women in certain ministries but not a

leadership role like having a woman serve as president or having a woman head sovereign ministries. Further, several participants believed that it is difficult for women to play political leadership roles, especially at this critical time of Libya's political transition, which requires high levels of experience and political influence. In fact, both female and male participants cited women's limited experience as a main obstacle preventing women from playing an effective role in political life.

"I totally support women's participation, but with some exceptions. I mean I won't accept her as president."

– Male, Sēbha, 18-24, Secondary Education

"It's difficult for a woman to bear the responsibility of this phase. It needs a man."

– Male, Tripoli, 35-44, Master's Degree

"Women's participation is an integral part of the men's involvement during the revolution. I personally support women's participation in political life in the future. Still, I feel women should be excluded from ministries that contain a lot of problems."

– Male, Tripoli, 25-34, Bachelor's Degree

"It's difficult for a woman to be a leader, or even a minister in new Libya. It's reality just like what happened in the Health Ministry."

– Male, Tripoli, 25-34, Master's Degree

"I'm against women taking positions like ministers, because of our culture and traditions and women's health and reproductive issues. All these things keep women from taking leading positions. So the problem is not with women's capabilities."

– Male, Benghazi, 45-54, Secondary Education

"During this phase, I don't support women's participation in political roles, due to their limited experience. Politics is not just about attending meetings, but rather it has intricacies and difficult alliances that we don't know about. I support women's participation at a later stage, after gaining experience and building capacities."

– Female, Benghazi, 45-54, Master's Degree

"During this period without real security, we can't give women positions like ministers, because that will impose threats on them. So in order to protect women like our prophet has told us, we have to give them such positions in the next stage after we have good security."

– Male, Benghazi, 45-54, Some University

"Women can't be leaders, because some people might attack them, but men can handle such things."

– Male with disability, 35-44, Elementary Education

"[…] We can't put women in the same place as men. They can be assistants, but not in a leading position."

– Male, Benghazi, 18-24, Secondary Education

"They [women] tend to think with their hearts more than their minds."
– Male, Benghazi, 45-54, Secondary Education

Within the same context, several participants discussed the lack of trust in women's abilities and the prevailing culture that discourages voting for women in political leadership positions. Several female participants explained that Libyan society is not used to seeing women in leadership positions. Interestingly, female participants did not exclusively blame men for this problem, but rather noted that these prevailing traditional beliefs and practices exist among both men and women since women also do not usually vote for a woman candidate.

"Many women don't want to elect a woman, for example a female teacher in a school would like the manager of the school to be a man not a woman, and this is based on our mentalities as women. Personally I think women can work in the highest positions."
– Female, Benghazi, 55-64, Bachelor's Degree

"Women have rights, because the revolution wasn't only made by men, and I'm with the participation of women in any field. What made me sad is that many women were candidates, but didn't get any votes. I think only one woman from Bani-Walid won, but many women from Benghazi, although they were leaders, didn't get that chance."
– Female, Benghazi, 35-44, Ph.D

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"Women don't trust other women's capabilities, and don't vote for them."
– Female, Benghazi, 35-44, Secondary Education

Consequently, several participants believed that women should hold themselves responsible for their weak participation and added that women are not actively participating even when men do not prevent them from participating. Another problem discussed was the lack of confidence among women and weak trust between women, which leads to poor cooperation. As such, both female and male participants called for raising awareness among women about their rights to participate and run in elections and to build their capacity and expertise to play a more effective political role. Participants also called for enhancing cooperation between women and women's groups.

"During the local council elections I was an observer in a men polling station, and many men voted for Najla Albarasy. On the other hand, during the GNC elections I was an observer in a women polling station, and none of them voted for a woman. So the true enemy of women were women themselves."
– Female, Benghazi, 45-54, Secondary Education

"I think women are marginalizing themselves because I didn't hear about any man who prevents women from participating and being part of the elections."
– Female, Sēbha, 25-34, Bachelor's Degree

"Twenty-four of the women elected to the GNC are part of the National Alliance because there was no support for women on behalf of other women. We should raise women's awareness by conducting targeted programs and workshops."
– Female, Tripoli, 45-54, Bachelor's Degree

"Women should be given the trust and should participate."

– Female, Tripoli, 35-44, Master's Degree

"The people in the local council and in the GNC should help women. For instance, I founded an organization in the beginning of February 2011 called Libya's Free Women Organization. We didn't get any support from the state. We have many ideas, but we can't apply them by ourselves. Also I have been trying to contact the local council about providing a place for the organization. They said find a place which isn't owned by anyone and tell us about it, so they didn't really help, and as a result I stopped attending conferences and workshops."

– Female, Benghazi, 45-54, Diploma

"Media is not doing its part to support women even in the elections."

– Female, Benghazi, 35-44, Diploma

With regard to their views on the role of Sharia and its impact on women's rights, a few female participants expressed concerns about the dominance of certain Islamic movements on the constitutional process and were wary of new laws that discriminate against women. Meanwhile, other participants did not seem to worry about adopting Sharia as a main source of legislation due to their belief that Sharia does not contradict women's rights.

"We fear that they may draft laws that harm women."

– Female, Tripoli, 45-54, Bachelor's Degree

"I want a constitution that preserves women's rights. Libyan women who marry non-Libyan men should have their rights and their children's, because they are deprived of their rights, and I'm one of them."

– Female, Benghazi, 25-34, Bachelor's Degree

"Even if Islamic Sharia was the main and only source of legislation, this will not affect women's political, economic and social engagement. To the contrary, women at the time of the prophet used to participate as fighters in wars like Alkhansa. She was a powerful women and a poet, and her sons were martyrs."

– Male, Tripoli, 35-44, Secondary Education

Regarding the political participation of the Libyan youth, participants agreed that youth played the most important role in the revolution and were the most brave, sacrificing their lives for the liberation of their country. Participants were concerned that the youth are currently marginalized in the political process and are not represented in a way that reflects their sacrifices.

"The youth made the revolution, they are the ones who died, who fought and protested, and the old people were just sitting back. When the war ended the old people came to take positions."

– Male, Benghazi, 35-44, Diploma

"During the war they were pushing youth to the front, after that they told them to sit back."

– Male, Benghazi, 45-54, Some University

"The patriotic youth were casted out, and people from outside were brought in."

– Female, Tripoli, 45-54, Bachelor's Degree

"There are no youth in the GNC or the government."

– Female, Tripoli, 45-54, Bachelor's Degree

"As an activist and a member of two civil society groups that builds youth capabilities, I think as youth we didn't take our fair share in different positions. For example, even where there are job vacancies, you see the same people with their white moustaches and no one leaves and they say that we should have experience. How can I have experience if I don't get to participate? I think that the youth are the most important segment of society because we are the most numerous and we have enthusiasm and love for our country, and therefore we should get important attention."

– Female, Sēbha, 25-34, Diploma

In fact, most participants believed that the youth are almost completely out of the picture and expressed support for a stronger youth involvement and thought that they should be playing a leading role even at this critical stage of Libya's political process. Indeed, some participants rejected the notion that youth need more experience, as they already proved their leadership during the revolution, which makes them apt to take on leadership positions in government.

"Leadership is not about age. Some people despite their big age and their years of working aren't leaders. If a person is between 25 and 30 then he/she has their bachelor degree, and they can be leaders; the proof is that the ministries are run by young people from the inside."

– Female, Benghazi, 35-44, Ph.D.

"When a young person is educated and aware, they will serve their country well. Age has nothing to do with experience, some young people have it and some old people don't."

– Male with disability, Benghazi, 35-44, Elementary Education

Other participants, while saying that they would like more youth representation, still held that young people do not have enough experience and may not be suitable for taking up positions of responsibility. They saw parallels between the problem of low women and low youth representation citing the lack of trust in their capabilities, weak collaboration, as well as lack of resources. Participants overall expressed support for building the capacity and experience of young people to help them become more organized and serve in higher positions.

"The same problem faces youth and women, its lack of trust between women themselves and between youth themselves. Although they constitute the biggest portion of the society, they don't get votes, because women don't vote for women, and young people don't vote for young candidates."

– Male, Benghazi, 25-34, University

"Youth are not capable now to run for crucial jobs because they lack the experience, but they can be put in second line of command as an assistant for a minister so they can get the experience they need."

– Female, Benghazi, 45-54, Master's Degree

"The youth should have leadership characteristics and bear the responsibility. There is problem of representation and participation of youth in all of the countries of the Arab Spring. The youth have other priorities such as education and work, which can hinder their progress in politics."

– Male, Tripoli, 35-44, Diploma

"There were supposed to be courses to educate the youth. That was the National Transitional Council's mistake. People should've been sent to Europe or other countries to educate them and have them ready for the elections."

– Male, Benghazi, 45-54, Secondary Education

"Older people have funds to support their campaigns, unlike young people who don't have any. That's why older people have the upper hand."

– Male, Benghazi, 18-24, Secondary Education

"The youth have a lot of creative ideas and they only need to be supported."

– Male, Sēbha, 18-24, Secondary Education

"Their participation must not be random. In the revolution they did a great job, but now they need to be organized. And we have to use the youth in different fields. Not all of them can work in the same field."

– Female with disability, Benghazi, 55-64, Bachelor's Degree

VIII. Experience of Persons with Disabilities during Elections

Unlike the positive experience of most voters in the GNC elections, the experience of voters with disabilities was quite difficult, as attested by focus group participants with disabilities in Benghazi. While the experience of voters with disabilities varied from one person to another, it was still evident that polling center officials were generally not prepared to deal with voters with disabilities. Overall, voters with disabilities, and particularly women, faced numerous challenges in finding polling centers, accessing polling centers and casting a ballot. In addition to experiencing difficulties in accessing polling centers, it was also difficult to know where they could find polling centers that are equipped to be accessible and that would allow them to vote since no announcements were made about which centers are accessible and their locations. In fact, in most cases, participants mentioned that polling centers were not accessible, voting was most often taking place on higher floors and there were no ramps that voters with wheelchairs could use to access the center. Even when polling centers were equipped for voters with disabilities, most voters with special needs did not have sufficient information about these centers.

> *"I went to the station next to our house. I couldn't get in and there were stairs, so I went back home and didn't vote. I didn't look for other places."*
>
> – Female with disability, Benghazi, 25-34, Intermediate Education

> *"I faced the same problem, I had to look for four people to carry me to the second floor."*
>
> – Female with disability, Benghazi, 35-44, Intermediate Education

> *"Our center was prepared, but the announcement about it was late; the center's administration took too long to respond to the handicapped demands of opening a voting station in the center. Even the people living in the rehabilitation center couldn't all vote in it, because they had to vote in the same station that they registered in, and most of them had registered before they said there would be a voting station in the center."*
>
> – Female with disability, Benghazi, 45-54, Bachelor's Degree

> *"The same problems happened in the local council and the GNC elections. In the local elections they said that we can go to any school to vote, but they didn't have enough wheelchairs for us, also the chamber was too tight for the chair to fit in, and it was difficult to vote like that."*
>
> – Female with disability, Benghazi, 45-54, Bachelor's Degree

> *"The rehabilitation center was fully prepared. I had no problem, and it was the only place in Benghazi."*
>
> – Male with disability, 25-34, Benghazi, Secondary Education

But perhaps what was worse for women voters with disabilities was the lack of respect several of them faced and hurtful comments they heard from both election officials and ordinary citizens when they showed up at polling centers. Several female participants said they were asked why they troubled themselves with coming to the polling centers and that it would have been better if they just stayed home.

"The committee members where I registered weren't cooperative nor were respecting me. They said to me 'you didn't get anything before and you won't get anything in this stage, why bother?' I told them that I would try my luck."

– Female with disability, 25-34, Intermediate Education

"Those who helped me weren't members in the [polling] committee, they were ordinary people. The members were arguing whether they should come downstairs for me to vote or not. Some of them said that my vote wouldn't change anything and I should have stayed at home."

– Female with disability, 35-44, Intermediate Education

"There is another problem, I'm from Derna and they said that it's ok for me to vote here in Benghazi, but on the day of the elections I went from station to another until I found one that I can get into. When I got in they told me that I can't vote, and that I shouldn't have bothered coming. I can't describe how bad I felt when I got back home. They should make solutions to such problems. I live in Benghazi now. I can't go back to Derna just to vote. They have to make exceptions to cases like mine."

– Female with disability, 55-64, Bachelor's Degree

In sum, both women and men with disabilities called for respecting their right to vote, equipping polling centers to facilitate their access and treating all citizens with respect. Participants called for having at least 10 polling stations that are accessible for voters with disabilities in Benghazi and for announcing the locations of the stations that are equipped early enough to allow voters with disabilities to plan accordingly.

"At least 70 percent should be prepared. For instance, Benghazi should have 10 stations ready for us so people living in far places don't have to come all the way to the rehabilitation center. It's not that hard, by the way. We only need ramps in each station, until the state provides these things in all the facilities. In the future, we hope that all the stations will be prepared for disabled people. The next commission should know that there is a handicapped community of 86,000 before and about 105,000 after the revolution and it has to take measures to help us vote."

– Male with disability, Benghazi, 35-44, Diploma

"We want stations to provide ramps and other things so we can vote. Last one there was only one station as we said."

– Male with disability, Benghazi, 25-34, Secondary Education

"They were supposed to say which centers were prepared to have handicapped people. So we can avoid getting stuck in traffic and crowded places, so we can vote."

– Female with disability, Benghazi, 55-64, Bachelor's Degree

"We demand that the country provide all the helping facilities for us in all the places in the city, because we can't move around without them, just like you can't go out barefoot."

– Male with disability, Benghazi, 35-44, Diploma

"They should prepare ramps and other measures to help us everywhere. They don't cost much and you will help many people. We did a good job about that in the global day of the handicapped. We went to Jamal Street to show the people how to treat the handicapped. They have to prepare the places first, and then you can blame the handicapped if they didn't show up."

– Female with disability, Benghazi, 55-64, Bachelor's Degree

"They have to prepare the members too, so that they are able to handle the disabled people's needs. And they shouldn't come out in the press saying they are prepared unless they truly are."

– Female with disability, Benghazi, 25-34, Diploma

"Members should be trained to help a handicapped person, with courses and workshops. They should know how to treat us; I don't like when people look at me pathetically. I want kindness only. The Ministries of Culture and Social Affairs are responsible for this."

– Female with disability, Benghazi, 35-44, Intermediate Education

"That council [Supreme Council of the Handicapped] is not founded yet, but many activists are working on it now. We wish that Allah make it a successful work. It should be a united body for all Libya, and it has got to be under the supervision of the government, so each minister has to provide handicap helping facilities in his ministry. And each one should be questioned about any shortage in the efforts to help the handicapped people. So it will be a body that will make our voices heard."

– Male with disability, 35-44, Diploma

IX. Opinions on the Future Direction of the Country

Most participants were optimistic about the country's future and were confident that things will continue improving. At the same time, most participants agreed that the current stage in the transitional process is critical and could significantly change the future prospects of the country.

Participants cited security as their main concern and noted that it is the issue that is most crucial in determining the direction that Libya takes in the future, stressing the need to come up with a solution to the problem of the spread of arms outside the control of the government. Some participants are concerned about rising problems between East and West Libya.

> *"Very optimistic. We started from scratch. Now we are in a good position, and I trust that the people know the dangers of this stage. I'm 90 percent optimistic."*
>
> – Female, Tripoli, 35-44, Master's Degree

> *"I am optimistic. I'm also conservative regarding the issue of security and the spread of weapons, and the process of how to recollect the weapons. The problem is the availably of weapons to civilians has created a balance and a means of security to civilians."*
>
> – Male, Tripoli, 35-44, Master's Degree

> *"I'm 80 percent optimistic, although we are walking in a zigzag line, but I hope things will get better; 70 percent of the revolution's goals are still not achieved. We will see the change in Benghazi in two to three months. The problems are always in the western areas, but the eastern and southern areas are more peaceful and have more harmony between their people than the western area."*
>
> – Male, Benghazi, 35-44, University

> *"I'm very optimistic, because we have great youth who can affect how things are run in the country as they did before. We've overcome many obstacles, and I'm very optimistic because of that."*
>
> – Male, Benghazi, 45-54, Some University

> *"I'm optimistic that the blood of the martyrs won't go in vain. Because we went out in protest for Allah, and thanks to Allah the revolution succeeded. The real revolutionaries are still here. And like Allah made it work, Allah will protect the revolution and the country."*
>
> – Male with disability, Benghazi, 25-34, Diploma

> *"During the revolution we were one and the same, but after that, problems between East and West started to emerge, and that is caused by the fighting on positions and power. Also, some problems, like the one between Misrata and Bani Walid, were mishandled by the GNC. In short, during the revolution we were united with one purpose, but now we are scattered."*
>
> – Male, Benghazi, 18-24, Secondary Education

Overall, participants had mixed views on whether the revolution has achieved its goals. They believe that removing Gaddafi was a great success but they hope for more to be achieved at the level of state

and institution building and the consolidation of citizens' rights. Consequently, participants would like to see balanced development between different parts of the country and call for raising civic awareness to improve people's electoral choices in the future.

"The revolution has achieved part of its goals. The civilians still do not feel pride and dignity yet, even after the liberation from the Colonel. Civilians must feel pride and dignity inside their own country."

– Male, Tripoli, 35-44, Diploma

"No the revolution has not achieved its goals. All it achieved was killing the Tyrant. I wish I can ask a Libyan what are your ambitions and he doesn't answer me with "my rights, I want my rights as a civilian." There is another revolution coming soon."

– Male, Tripoli, 25-34, Bachelor's Degree

"Gaddafi was killed, that was the most important goal."

– Female, Tripoli, 45-54, Diploma

"After the revolution, there has to be another one especially because the GNC didn't pay attention to the country's problems and focused on their parties' interests. I'm only 30 percent optimistic. There has to be a new revolution."

– Male, Benghazi, 45-54, Secondary Education

"I'm optimistic, but the awareness should be raised. We shouldn't put the blame on the GNC only, because we elected them, this means that we didn't elect well. In conclusion, people should be educated better, the more they are educated the better their choices."

– Male, Benghazi, 25-34, University

"I'm very, very, very optimistic. The revolution accomplished its first goal by removing Gaddafi, and other goals will be reached one by one. Our first victory is that we are talking freely now."

– Female, Benghazi, 45-54, Secondary Education

"Many of the revolution's goals have been achieved but we need compromise between cities and forget about killing people who worked with Gaddafi."

– Female, Sēbha, 25-34, Bachelor's Degree

"We are desperate for awareness and rehabilitation."

– Female, Sēbha, 25-34, Bachelor's Degree

"I'm optimistic. We got rid of Gaddafi and everything will be ok, but I want the Libyan people to be patient. As they were one hand during the revolution they should continue that way. If you protested for the good of the country finish your work. Electing the GNC proves that we reached a high level of understanding, and the members of the GNC are good. Yes, there are problems between them, but we have to give them a chance."

– Female with disability, Benghazi, 25-34, Diploma

"We will be in the right direction if the government gives equal attention to all the Libyan cities, to make it safe, better communicate with people, and listen to their needs."

– Male, Sēbha, 25-34, Bachelor's Degree

Appendix: Demographic Information of Focus Groups Participants

Benghazi Female Focus Group Participants

Participant	Occupation	Education	Age
P1	Homemaker	Secondary Education	48
P2	Teacher	Diploma	48
P3	Civil society activist	Secondary Education	46
P4	Independent activist	Master's Degree	49
P5	Teacher	Bachelor's Degree	28
P6	Social worker	Diploma	40
P7	Women rights activist	Some University	40
P8	Homemaker	Secondary Education	43
P9	Civil society	Bachelor's Degree	38
P10	Homemaker	Bachelor's Degree	48
P11	Government employee	Bachelor's Degree	48
P12	Government employee	Master's Degree	39
P13	Head of section, Government employee	Ph.D.	37
P14	Teacher	Bachelor's Degree	56

Tripoli Female Focus Group Participants

Participant	Occupation	Education	Age
P1	Social worker	Diploma	53
P2	Home maker	Bachelor's Degree	47
P3	Businesswomen	Diploma	48
P4	Social worker	Bachelor's Degree	55
P5	Therapist	Diploma	34
P6	Management	Diploma	34
P7	Libraries	Bachelor's Degree	45
P8	Government employee	Bachelor's Degree	45
P9	Government employee	Master's Degree	38
P10	Lawyer	Bachelor's Degree	35
P11	Teacher	Diploma	46
P12	Teaching/Head of Women's Union	Diploma	50

Sebha Female Focus Group Participants

Participant	Occupation	Education	Age
P1	Teacher	Diploma	30
P2	Journalist	Diploma	30
P3	Teacher	Bachelor's Degree	31
P4	Teacher	Diploma	30
P5	Government employee	Bachelor's Degree	27
P6	Government employee	Bachelor's Degree	33
P7	Teacher	Bachelor's Degree	27
P8	Teacher	Bachelor's Degree	25
P9	Media professional	Bachelor's Degree	25

Benghazi Male Focus Group Participants

Participant	Occupation	Education	Age
P1	Custom Clearance Officer	Secondary Education	50
P2	Self-Employed	Bachelor's Degree	30
P3	Self-Employed	University graduate	39
P4	Engineer	University	27
P5	Self-Employed	Secondary Education	22
P6	Self-Employed	Secondary Education	37
P7	Electricity Engineer	Some University	45
P8	Ministry of Defense	Diploma	35
P9	Media professional	Diploma	20
P10	Accountant	Bachelor's Degree	42

Tripoli Male Focus Group Participants

Participant	Occupation	Education	Age
P1	Employee- Ministry of Justice	Secondary Education	54
P2	Self-Employed	University	54
P3	Education	Diploma	36
P4	Education	Bachelor's Degree	37
P5	Army	Diploma	40
P6	Engineer	Bachelor's Degree	26
P7	Engineer	Bachelor's Degree	26
P8	Management	Master's Degree	34
P9	University	Master's Degree	44

Sebha Male Focus Group Participants

Participant	Occupation	Education	Age
P1	Student	Secondary Education	20
P2	Student	Secondary Education	24
P3	Student	Secondary Education	22
P4	Teacher	Bachelor's Degree	40
P5	Government employee	Diploma	34
P6	Government employee	Bachelor's Degree	32
P7	Government employee	Bachelor's Degree	32
P8	Unemployed	Bachelor's Degree	26
P9	Government employee	Bachelor's Degree	26
P10	Government employee	Bachelor's Degree	31

Benghazi Women with a Disability Focus Group Participants

Participant	Occupation	Education	Age
P1	Engineer	Bachelor's Degree	55
P2	Accountant	Bachelor's Degree	47
P3	Management	Diploma	29
P4	Kolena Ma'a Member	Diploma	30
P5	Kolena Ma'a Member	Intermediary Education	25
P6	Kolena Ma'a Member	Intermediary Education	41
P7	Kolena Ma'a Member	Intermediary Education	40
P8	Kolena Ma'a Member	Intermediary Education	32
P9	Kolena Ma'a Member	Intermediary Education	40
P10	Kolena Ma'a Member	Secondary Education	34
P11	Kolena Ma'a Member	Elementary Education	31
P12	Kolena Ma'a Member	Intermediary Education	43

Benghazi Men with a Disability Focus Group Participants

Participant	Occupation	Education	Age
P1	Unemployed	Diploma	41
P2	Unemployed	Diploma	34
P3	Unemployed	Secondary Education	32
P4	Unemployed	Intermediary Education	48
P5	Unemployed	Diploma	36
P6	Unemployed	Elementary Education	41
P7	Unemployed	Elementary Education	38
P8	Unemployed	Elementary Education	46