



## **FINAL PROJECT EVALUATION**

# **Madam President TV series and related outreach initiatives in Lebanon and Tunisia**

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# 1. Executive Summary

The present report covers the findings from the evaluation of the Madam President TV series and related outreach activities in Lebanon and Tunisia, a project that Search for Common Ground (SFCG) implemented from October 2013 to September 2016 with the financial support of the US Agency for International Development (USAID).

Madam President is an episodic television drama that aims at influencing attitudes and perceptions towards women in leadership positions in the MENA region. The series was conceived in response to the challenges of promoting women's participation following the Arab Spring: while women have played a prominent role in the revolutions, they continue to face gender-based inequality and marginalization. The series thus wanted to tackle precisely this problem, by creating a model that could influence attitudes and behaviors across the whole region. This model was the series, which took place in a fictional country with problems similar to those affecting the MENA region today, featured two main female characters and focused on five key themes: gender equality, leadership, citizen participation, freedom of expression and security.

The project included two main components: the production and dissemination of 15 hour-long episodes and outreach campaigns in four countries, including Lebanon and Tunisia. The series, produced in Jordan, was broadcast between December 2015 and July 2016 through four different satellite TV channels: LANA TV (based in Iraq), The Ma'an Network (West Bank), NESSMA TV (Tunisia) and Al Aan TV (UAE). The series became available for a worldwide audience via Amazon Prime in the spring of 2016 and for US audiences it is available on Hulu Plus. SFCG also created a dedicated website, Facebook page, YouTube channel and Twitter account; and made full episodes available for streaming online. Outreach campaigns took place in Jordan, Lebanon, the Palestinian Territories and Tunisia between February and April 2016; they all included events where participants watched one or two episodes from the series and then took part in facilitated discussions.

Given the above, the evaluation was designed with two specific objectives: first, to measure the impact of Madam President in changing attitudes and behaviors of the general population and the outreach groups in Lebanon and Tunisia specifically; and, secondly, to develop recommendations that could lead to improvement in the execution of future activities and strategies. The evaluation focused on the criteria of effectiveness (intended as reach and resonance) and impact, using a mixed-method approach based on the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) evaluation framework: qualitative data was collected through key informant interviews, focus group discussions and a document review; quantitative data was collected through a survey on attitudes and behaviors. Data collection faced some challenges—for example, group discussions with viewers in Tunisia could not be organized—but these do not affect the reliability of findings.

## 1.1. Main Findings

### 1.2.1. Effectiveness: Reach

**The outreach campaigns were successful at reaching a lot of people in a short period of time.** In Lebanon specifically, where SFCG's office trained 15 facilitators and then empowered them to facilitate discussions, 15 events were organized and more than 850 people reached in around six weeks. In Jordan, Tunisia and the West Bank, numbers were also good, albeit fewer than Lebanon's. Notably, and as discussed below, most outreach participants watched only a few episodes and not the full series.

**SFCG engaged its intended target audience.** In both Tunisia and Lebanon, those who watched the series were for the most part young people between the ages of 18 and 25 (70% in Lebanon and 40% in Tunisia) and 26 and 36 (50% and 10%). In Lebanon, this finding is however of less relevance, as the series did not reach a mass audience. Of those who indicated that they watched the series—which also includes outreach participants—51% are young women and 48% young men.

**In terms of broadcast, SFCG was successful at reaching a mass audience in Tunisia but not in Lebanon.** Overall, four satellite TV broadcasters aired *Madam President*. Viewership rates were highest in the Palestinian territories, where research by the local partner suggests that as much as 21% of the audience in the West Bank and Gaza Strip saw the series. In Tunisia, viewership numbers were solid thanks to the fact that the series was aired by NESSMA TV, the third most popular broadcaster in the country: the series had an average audience share of just over 4% (for episode premieres). In Lebanon, however, where no national broadcaster has yet aired it and the other channels (NESSMA, LANA and Al-Aan) are not popular, viewership rates were not significant: none of the survey respondents from Lebanon, for instance, saw it on TV.

**Online dissemination was not successful, with some exceptions.** *Madam President*'s Facebook page was one of the most important of the four platforms that SFCG managed: it hosted full episodes for streaming and was the main tool used by SFCG to promote the series. Online engagement—as measured through re-posts, shares, comments and likes—was very low however. SFCG's own efforts produced little on this front: the series' Facebook page, for example, has just over 1,100 likes. SFCG's posts never reached more than a few thousands users, except in a few cases where the organization paid for advertising. On the other hand, promotion by other broadcasters was far more successful, with Facebook posts by Al Aan TV regularly reaching hundreds of thousands of users.

**Overall, audience exposure to the series was limited.** Most outreach participants and viewers only watched one or two episodes, and usually only the first ones. Numbers are better in Tunisia, where 34% watched 1 and 2 episodes, 26% watched between 3 and 5, 21% between 6 and 10, and 17% over 10; In Lebanon, however, the numbers are 91%, 4%, 3% and 0%.<sup>1</sup> The main challenge in this regard was how the intended broadcaster, MBC, decided not to pick up the series in spite of earlier indications. However, two other important challenges were, first, the lack of coordination around the series' promotion and online engagement—for example, LANA TV did not inform SFCG about the Facebook posts that they published, and SFCG did not share any of Al Aan's posts on the series' official page—and second, the short duration of outreach initiatives, which lasted around two months.

### *1.2.2. Effectiveness: Resonance*

***Madam President* was well liked by those who saw it.** In Lebanon, 50% of survey respondents indicated that they 'liked it somewhat' and 28% that they 'liked it a lot'; survey respondents from Tunisia who said that they either liked the series a lot or somewhat is 69%. In general, women viewers and outreach participants liked the series more than men, but age and nationality differences also played a role in determining resonance.

**Specific key themes and characters resonated with viewers.** Outreach participants expressed positive views for the series' themes in general, although most confirmed that discussions focused mainly on gender equality and leadership. Some groups in Lebanon engaged in constructive discussions also around refugees and security, as this theme was very pertinent to their context. Focus group discussions brought out several quotes from participants indicating that they thought the series provided interesting opportunities to discuss how women are perceived in society. In Tunisia, the character of President Noura

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted again that most viewers from Lebanon are outreach participants: they saw the series during outreach events and not on TV. The finding is not about resonance, but simply exposure to the series.

was effective to get participants to think differently about women and leadership. In both Lebanon and Tunisia, it was clear that facilitated events increased resonance.

**In Lebanon, youth facilitators were the most positively influenced by the series.** These facilitators were trained and worked actively with local partners and each other. Although they came from different regions and backgrounds, they expressed the most consistently positive views of the project and displayed the greatest attitudinal changes, in particular about each other. Overall, the qualitative evidence suggests that the project did improve their empathy and cohesion.

**Viewers shared information about the series with others, but in-depth engagement on key themes (outside of outreach events) appears to be low.** In both countries, viewers shared opinions about the series with other people: in Tunisia, for example, 50% of viewers talked about the series with someone (the number increases to 93% for outreach participants). However, focus groups confirm that sharing was mostly superficial—that is, it did not trigger dialogues or discussions on key themes, at least outside of outreach events.

**The series made people think differently, but the extent of attitudinal changes is ambiguous.** The series was effective in getting viewers to engage on key themes, at least during outreach events. However, participants in focus groups admitted only limited changes in how they thought about the issues in their daily lives. Some, in both Lebanon and Tunisia, thought that the theme of gender equality was overexposed, something that in some locations (i.e. Sidi Bouzid in Tunisia and Tripoli in Lebanon) led some participants to see the series as not particularly relevant.

**Aspects of the series limited its resonance.** Viewers in both Lebanon and Tunisia mentioned some challenges with the series itself, which negatively influenced how this resonated with them. The first is language: characters used different dialects of Arabic, which confused some viewers. Also, plot lines were not always seen as very credible, for example about how President Noura came into power or engaged protesters directly. These aspects influenced discussions (during outreach events and also evaluation focus groups): at the same time, it should be stressed that participants for the most part only saw a few episodes and not the whole series. Finally, while female characters were strong, male ones were not: they did not resonate with viewers and were generally seen as one-dimensional.

### *1.2.2. Impact*

**The overall impact of the series was limited.** The evaluation found little concrete and specific evidence of the project's impact—i.e. attitudinal or behavior changes. Some examples of individual changes were shared, in focus groups and the survey, but they did not be isolated from contextual factors. In Tunisia, for example, survey results suggest that people's attitudes towards citizen engagement seem to have grown negative during the project implementation period: the number of respondents who thought it very likely or likely that government officials would listen to opinions in a blog dropped from 61% at baseline to 29% at endline. However, comparisons between viewers and non-viewers show that the project did not appear to have contributed to this trend in either direction.

**The project might have, however, significant potential for impact.** A small number of inspiring individual stories demonstrates that the project could be having impact. In Lebanon, positive examples of questioning one's attitudes towards women leaders, individual actions such as starting a blog, and feeling inspired to support women candidates for municipal council show how the series can influence young people's views, if well targeted. Remarkably, there is evidence of a possible attitude change among outreach participants: baseline-endline comparisons suggest in fact that they have become more supportive of hosting refugees than non-viewers and viewers. This finding lends strength to the claim that outreach activities are crucial for impact. In Tunisia, a pre- and post-intervention comparison between target and control groups suggests that, while intended behavior towards women's political participation changed positively among all respondents, those of Madam President

viewers changed more than those of people who did not see it. This is a really interesting finding, which should be further explored in the future.

**Impact was limited by low exposure to the series and by time.** Most outreach participants and viewers only saw one or two episodes of Madam President. This was not SFCG's intention but it is what happened. In Lebanon, the evaluation gathered evidence confirming that, with this level of exposure, no significant impact was achieved on women's confidence and willingness for political and social engagement. In this case there is, in other words, evidence of absence of impact. Other evidence is lacking or weaker because too little time had passed between the completion of activities and the evaluation.

## 1.2. Lessons learned

The evaluation has identified the following lessons learned, which we hope can be useful for SFCG to design and implement future interventions.

**Rural vs. urban differences are by themselves not an effective way to understand resonance.** In designing the series' messages and thinking about its resonance, SFCG looked mainly at differences between rural and urban populations in target countries. The baseline studies, for instance, do not disaggregate results by nationality or education levels. What the evaluation found, however, is that this framework is not always useful. Particularly for Lebanon, findings show that people relate to key themes, and each other, mostly based on nationality and levels of education. In fact, differences between Lebanese, Palestinians and Syrians were often more remarkable and useful than those between women and men. For Tunisia, looking at rural and urban populations makes more sense, but even in this case important differences were remarked according to other criteria, such as age.

**An added value of online dissemination is analytics.** While, viewership statistics from broadcasters are notoriously difficult to get, one of the more interesting aspects about choosing to disseminate the series via social media is that it allows one to monitor and use online analytics. Facebook, for example, provides a wealth of real-time data about the reach and engagement of posts; it also has a complete record for any videos posted on the platform. In the context of the evaluation, analytics were not, unfortunately, always available; where they were, however, they allowed for a level of data analysis that would not be possible through any other mean. Analytics could be a sea change as more and more media programming migrates to online platforms.

**Greater attention should be paid to male characters.** The series focused most of its energy on its female characters, Noura and Maya chief among them. This makes sense given the series' overall objectives. On the other hand, none of the male characters managed to achieve anywhere close to the same level of enthusiasm and inspiration. This appears as a limitation worth exploring. Even if the evaluation did not capture any more detailed findings, innovative research on gender and peacebuilding suggests that a focus on male figures and masculine identities is critical in order to impact attitudes and cultural norms around gender equality and women empowerment.<sup>2</sup>

**Advertisement is crucial to maximize online reach.** This is a rather simple lesson learned, but crucial for future efforts on social media and Facebook in particular. Organically (i.e. without paying for advertisement) SFCG's Facebook posts reached several thousand users on average, some only a few hundreds. When the organization paid for advertising posts, the number of users reached skyrocketed to over 167,000.

**A theory of change is necessary to fully understand impact.** Madam President was not designed based on a theory of change. However, much of what the organization did was based on a logical design linking activities and outcomes. There were also several significant

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<sup>2</sup> This for example: Henri Myrtilinen et al. (2014) "Re-thinking Gender in Peacebuilding", International Alert (accessible at <http://www.international-alert.org/publications/re-thinking-gender-peacebuilding>)

assumptions about the project—i.e. the interaction of activities, outcomes and context—which were not fully articulated and had a profound effect on how much impact the series had: these include for example, the potential of social media to engage and produce attitudinal change in people, or the role of outreach partners and outreach participants in championing the series. A formal theory of change should provide more clarity about the project’s causal links, and help with future evaluation efforts.

## 1.4. Recommendations

For general and online dissemination:

- Ensure better coordination and integration across platforms, partners (including broadcasters) and activities. As discussed, coordination was fragmented, at least during some of the series’ runs on satellite TV. In the future, SFCG should develop stronger strategies for coordinating efforts across platforms.
- Related to the above, make sure that dedicated staff and systems are in place to manage online engagement through the series’ TV broadcasts.
- Adapt content and tactics to specific platforms. Different platforms require different formats. SFCG should develop a coherent and coordinated strategy to ensure that future projects take advantage of the flexibility and opportunities that multi-media platforms can give.
- Whenever web analytics are available, make sure that they are captured consistently, also requesting them from broadcasters. They should then be recorded and analyzed at regular intervals.

In Lebanon:

- Prioritize the use of Madame President in structured, facilitated activities, engage the same group of participants over time and combine with other activities on the topics of the show.
- Allocate time for the preparation of discussion sessions including the development of tailored approaches for engaging groups of different nationalities or backgrounds.
- Consider that specific sub-groups may have noticeably different attitudes towards key topics, and design outreach activities to respond to these differences.
- SFCG’s country office should develop interventions together with the local partners and tailor them to the needs and attitudes of youth in each location based on a jointly developed theory of change.

In Tunisia:

- SFCG’s country office should make sure to develop outreach activities together with the local partners and tailor them to local needs and attitudes in each location.
- SFCG’s country office should keep local partners involved in the different phases on the project and provide them with more support to ensure that the sessions are facilitated properly.
- Enhance local resonance, if not in the show, at least in the outreach activities, for example by using local examples of women leadership or citizen engagement.
- Invest more time and strategic analysis to plan the promotion of the show on social media and to synchronize it with other communication tools, and also consider having “local ambassadors” for the series.



## 2. Introduction

The present report covers the findings from the evaluation of the Madam President TV series and related outreach activities, a project that Search for Common Ground (SFCG) implemented from October 2013 to September 2016 with the financial support of the US Agency for International Development (USAID).

Madam President is a television episodic drama series that tells the story of the first woman president of Jabalein, a fictional country, who comes to power through unforeseen circumstances and has to lead her nation through difficult decisions and political opposition. The series was designed with the purpose of influencing attitudes and perceptions towards women in leadership positions; it was disseminated across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region through four satellite TV channels and various social media platforms; and it was accompanied by outreach events in four countries Jordan, Lebanon, the Palestinian Territories and Tunisia.

SFCG commissioned this evaluation with the overall objective of improving understanding of the role of episodic drama television in changing attitudes and behaviors towards in relation to five key themes: gender equality, leadership, citizen participation, freedom of expression and security. As such, the evaluation focused on assessing the project's effectiveness (in terms of reach and resonance) and its impact on viewers. A mixed-methods approach was developed and data collected from SFCG staff members, partners, project participants and the general population in two countries—Lebanon and Tunisia. Where possible, additional information was also gathered from broadcasters (i.e. audience statistics) and social media (i.e. analytics).

The evaluation faced some challenges, chief among them the fact that it occurred only a few months after the completion of activities—a very short time, given the project's stated objectives, to find any concrete evidence of impact. Still, the findings provide a picture of positive achievements balanced by several challenges and a few shortcomings. Hopefully, the evaluation findings can help SFCG to develop more effective program strategies in the future.

To begin with, the report provides an overview of the project and the evaluation methodology (sections 3 and 4 respectively). It then looks at the effectiveness of general dissemination activities, primarily those of broadcasters outside of Tunisia and Lebanon, and of social media platforms (section 5). The following sections look at the effectiveness and impact achieved by the project in Lebanon and Tunisia specifically, also providing a context overview for each country (sections 6 and 7). Finally, the report presents some recommendations for future programming (section 8).

## 3. Project Background

### 3.1. Overview

Madam President is an episodic television drama, produced by Search for Common Ground (SFCG) with the aim of influencing attitudes and perceptions towards women in leadership positions in the MENA region. The series was conceived in response to the challenges of promoting women's participation following the Arab Spring: while women have played a prominent role in the revolutions, they continue to face gender-based inequality and marginalization. The series aimed to tackle precisely this problem, by creating a model that could influence, through media, attitudes and behaviors across the whole region.

Madam President was funded by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and started in October 2013.<sup>3</sup> The initiative can be broken down into two components: the first and main one included the production of the TV series and its broadcast through traditional and new media; the second focused on outreach initiatives to promote engagement and discussions, among young people specifically, around the series' key themes. Overall, the intervention's specific goals were to:

- Communicate to a mass Middle Eastern audience messages and themes that make a major contribution to increased political participation by women;
- Promote democratization through gender equality;
- Demonstrate that it is not only possible but also highly desirable for women to assume leadership positions in Arab countries;
- Make a major contribution to creating a regional culture of women's empowerment and leadership.

Finally, it is worth noting how the project departed from other similar projects by SFCG. Most notably, as SFCG wanted the series to have a regional appeal, this was produced internationally and not as part of the activities of any given country office. Unlike with other series, with Madam President SFCG also did not have any pre-existing formal agreement in relation to the series' broadcast. Finally, SFCG's dissemination strategies had a particularly strong focus on social media.

### 3.2. Implementation

The evaluation confirms that all of the project's components have been effectively implemented. The format and scope of specific activities however changed in response to several challenges, which are discussed below. Implementation is best discussed by component, starting with production, followed by broadcast and then outreach.

#### *Production*

SFCG completed the production of Madam President between February 2014 and June 2016. A total of 15 hour-long episodes were produced by Jordan Pioneers, a media company based in Jordan, which was also oversaw script writing in close collaboration with SFCG's Chief of Party and Executive Producer. Several script writing sessions took place throughout 2014, bringing together a small but varied group of writers. Actual production started in October 2014; a rough cut of all episodes was completed in March 2015; post-production was then finished in June, with episodes ready for broadcast by July.

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<sup>3</sup> Information presented in this section comes from official project documents, including the contract agreement between SFCG and USAID and project quarterly reports.

The following features of the series are highlighted, as they were raised by several viewers, outreach participants and stakeholders interviewed during the evaluation:

- Madam President takes place in a fictional nation, called Jabalein ('between two mountains' in Arabic), whose political and social features were borrowed from existing countries like Lebanon. This was done to maximize the series' regional appeal and minimize the risk that viewers and broadcasters would read too strong of a political message in it.
- In line with the focus on women's empowerment, the two main characters are female: President Noura, a consummate but little known politician whom circumstances bring into the country's highest office; and Maya, a young graduate with journalistic ambitions who starts a blog with consequences for the story. Other characters are introduced, some with their own story arcs, but their presence is secondary and mainly functional to Noura and Maya.
- The series' actors came from different countries: for example, Carmen Lebbos, a very popular Lebanese actress, played Noura; Rakeen Sa'ad, from Jordan, played Maya; and Aqef Nijem, an Egyptian actor, played Bassem (Noura's main political rival). The multi-national nature of the cast strengthened the regional nature of the series; it also meant that characters used different Arabic dialects.
- Finally, the way that the scripts were developed ultimately emphasizes not one but five key themes: 1) active citizenship, 2) gender equality, 3) leadership, 4) security and 5) freedom of expression.

### **Broadcast**

Madam President was broadcast between December 2015 and July 2016 by a total of four different satellite TV channels: LANA TV in Iraq, the Ma'an Network in the Palestinian Territories, NESSMA TV in Tunisia; and Al Aan TV, a station in the UAE.<sup>4</sup> In parallel, SFCG also created an official Madam President website, Facebook page, YouTube channel and Twitter account in order to disseminate the series online. Full episodes were available for streaming on the series' YouTube channel first, then on its Facebook page. Jordan Pioneers was also responsible for designing these online tools, producing content—e.g. video promos and social media posts—and disseminating it. All broadcasters promoted the series directly on their respective online platforms, mainly Facebook.

### **Outreach**

Outreach campaigns were completed between February and April 2016 in Jordan, Lebanon, the Palestinian Territories and Tunisia. In all countries, outreach events included a screening of one or two episodes followed by a discussion on key themes; facilitation followed guidelines provided in a manual that SFCG developed specifically to accompany the series.

In Jordan, the Arab Media Women's Center and Daring Hub conducted outreach events. In Lebanon, SFCG's country office coordinated activities with three local partners: DPNA in Saida (South Lebanon), Sada el Bekaa in Joub Janin (West Bekaa) and Utopia in Tripoli (North Lebanon). SFCG's office first organized a training workshop on facilitation and conflict resolution for 15 youth facilitators in February 2016; with the support of local partners, each facilitator then organized discussions groups in each region, for a total of 75 sessions reaching 857 Lebanese, Syrian and Palestinian youth. In the Palestinian Territories, the Ma'an Network conducted a total of 5 events in five different municipalities in the West Bank, in March 2016. In Tunisia, SFCG's country office coordinated activities with local partners in two locations: the *Conseil des Jeunes Leaders* ('Young Leaders Council') in Beja and I-LEAD in Sidi Bouzid. Partners organized a total of 9 events reaching more than 136

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<sup>4</sup> Additional information about broadcast is presented in section 5.

young participants. SFCG's Tunisia office also organized a conference on key themes from the series in September 2016.

### 3.3. Challenges

The main challenge that SFCG encountered during implementation was political in nature, as the context in many countries worsened significantly even before the project officially started. This is most evident in the case of Yemen, which was originally supposed to be one of the target countries for the project; the decision by USAID to close the programs because of the civil war, however, meant that activities could not be conducted there. Worsening security situations in Lebanon and Tunisia also influenced how the series was broadcast and received by audiences.

Another important challenge related to broadcast. Since the beginning of the project, SFCG had been in discussions with MBC, one of the main satellite TV broadcasters in the whole MENA region, to air *Madam President*. However, once episodes were completed and ready to be aired, MBC declined to pick up the series without offering a clear explanation.<sup>5</sup> As a consequence, SFCG had to look for other broadcasters, which led to delays.

Delays also occurred during production, which required several re-writes and re-shoots. Sound problems delayed the finalizing of post-production. Other obstacles included bad weather, which stopped production, and the holiday periods. Overall it took more than 16 months to complete all episodes (February 2014 to July 2015) and an additional 5 to start broadcasting it. SFCG had to request two no-cost extensions in order to complete all activities, which it did in September 2016.

## 4. Methodology

### 4.1. Overview

SFCG commissioned the final project evaluation of *Madam President* and related outreach activities with the overall objective of improving understanding of the role of episodic drama television in changing attitudes and behaviors towards women's leadership in selected countries in the MENA region. The evaluation had two specific objectives: first, to measure the impact of the series in changing attitudes and behaviors of the population at large and the outreach groups; and, secondly, to develop recommendations that could lead to improvement in execution of future activities and strategies.

For the evaluation, SFCG chose to focus on two criteria: effectiveness and impact. As these came from the OECD Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) evaluation guidelines, the chosen methodology was based on this very framework: first, lines of inquiry for each criterion were developed and finalized together with SFCG staff; these were translated into key questions, which were then used to identify data sources, design data collection tools and guide analysis. The evaluation also looked at gender as a separate, crosscutting issue. The two countries chosen for the evaluation were Lebanon and Tunisia. Finalized lines of inquiry are presented below and the evaluation's terms of reference are included as Annex 4.

- 1) Under **effectiveness**, the evaluation looked at two broad outcome categories for the project: reach and resonance. Final lines of inquiry included:

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<sup>5</sup> On SFCG's request, the evaluation team did not reach out to MBC representatives to inquire about this decision or their intended role in the project.

- To what extent did the project reach its strategic target audience?
  - To what extent did the project contribute to changes in attitudes among its audience?
  - To what extent did the episodic drama lead to dialogue and engagement via social media?
- 2) Under **impact**, the evaluation focused on behavior and relational changes among participants and in their communities. Final lines of inquiry included:
- To what extent have messages been internalized by audience members?
  - What changes took place among secondary beneficiaries (i.e. male youth)?
  - How has the project contributed to participants' view of female leadership?
  - To what extent has the series improved empathy among outreach groups?
  - To what extent did the audience use what they learned from the episodic drama in their daily lives?
  - Has the drama series led to an increased sense of empowerment among target audience members?

## 4.2. Data collection and analysis

Qualitative and quantitative data, from both primary and secondary sources of information, was collected in Lebanon, Tunisia and online throughout August and September 2016.

Qualitative data included: a document review, which focused on project-related documents and relevant external reports; interviews with key informants, including SFCG staff members, partner representatives, outreach facilitators, and media and gender experts (19 interviews were held in total, reaching 29 informants); and focus group discussions with outreach participants and non-viewers (7 group discussions were held in each country, for a total of 14 events with 117 participants, including viewers and non-viewers).

Quantitative data included a survey on viewership, and attitudes and behaviors, which was conducted in Lebanon and Tunisia, and also disseminated online.<sup>6</sup> The survey sample was selected purposively and therefore it should not be treated as demographically representative of any of the target locations. This was done in agreement with SFCG, as the purpose of the survey was primarily to provide quantitative information to compare with the baseline survey that had been conducted in March and April 2015. The survey sample included outreach participants, randomly selected individuals in various locations (both targeted by the project and not) and viewers. For the purposes of the evaluation, the latter group had however to be 'created': test screenings were held in project locations with people who had not participated in the project; they were shown episodes from the series and then asked to fill in the survey. Quantitative data was also collected from social media platforms, including Facebook, YouTube and Twitter. Additional information on evaluation activities can be found in Annex 2, and for data collection tools in Annex 5.

In terms of analysis, qualitative findings were compared, contrasted and analyzed for response patterns. Quantitative data was collated, filtered and cross-referenced with both qualitative and other quantitative data. All sources were triangulated to the extent possible. Disaggregating collected data and conducting same-gender focus group discussions in Lebanon and Tunisia ensured the gender analysis. In terms of impact, evidence was generated by conducting pre- and post-intervention comparisons between target and control groups (using baseline and endline data). In Lebanon, an additional factor of comparison included time, as differences were recorded between people exposed to the series during activities (March and April) and others exposed during the evaluation (September).

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<sup>6</sup> A total of 422 respondents completed surveys, of which 256 in Lebanon, 143 in Tunisia and 23 online. The online survey remained accessible and open for approximately 5 weeks.

### 4.3. Limitations

The evaluation faced several challenges, methodological and practical. In relation to the former, the main one was the lack of time: given the short period between the completion of project activities and the evaluation, evidence of impact was often missing, weak or not specific enough. A theory-based approach could also have produced better insight about the project's specific contribution to some of the changes recorded. Such an approach can perhaps be used in future evaluation efforts.

Limitations should also be noted in regards to the evaluation survey, which in approach and focus was slightly different from that conducted for the baseline. This was due to a number of reasons, including the fact that project activities in Lebanon took place in locations different from those covered by the baseline survey. The overall number of respondents for the evaluation survey was also slightly less than those of the baseline. Overall, while these factors should be kept in mind when looking at survey data, they did not affect its reliability.

On the practical side, there were two challenges. The first was about identifying viewers for focus group discussions. Neither the consultant team, SFCG's country offices nor, in the case of Tunisia, the local broadcaster could assist with this task. In Lebanon, this challenge was partially resolved by organizing test screenings (as previously discussed). This stratagem worked well, but unfortunately it could not be replicated in Tunisia, for lack of time and logistical problems. The second challenge was related to the number of participants to focus group discussions, which was lower than anticipated. This was due to the timing of the evaluation, which took place at the start of the school year. Finally, although the survey was published and disseminated online, it only yielded 23 responses, a very low response rate.

## 5. Madam President: General and online dissemination

This section looks at how SFCG disseminated Madam President in general, and to what extent it succeeded in achieving its specific outcome of reaching a mass audience in the MENA region. Rather than looking at the series' reach in Lebanon and Tunisia specifically, which is done later in the report, this section focuses on the results across all platforms. In part this analysis is made necessary by the nature of the information collected: data from online platforms is not location-specific. In part, this approach is also relevant in order to better assess SFCG's dissemination strategy for Madam President, which was quite different than what the organization has done for other TV series produced. Finally, a discussion on platforms also allows us to use data from sources outside of the two focus countries, thus leading to a more accurate reflection of what Madam President has been as a project.

SFCG and its broadcasting partners distributed Madam President through two types of channels: traditional (satellite TV) and web-based (mainly Facebook and YouTube). SFCG also created a dedicated website for the series and a Twitter account, and made Madame President available on Amazon Prime, Hulu and Vimeo. Efforts and outcomes for all these

platforms will be now analyzed in turn before considering overall coordination, including successes and challenges.<sup>7</sup>

### 5.1. Satellite TV

SFCG broadcast *Madam President* on four satellite TV channels: on LANA TV (based in Iraq) between December 2015 and March 2016<sup>8</sup>; on the Ma'an Network (West Bank), twice during the spring of 2016;<sup>9</sup> on NESSMA TV (Tunisia) between April and June 2016<sup>10</sup>; and on Al Aan TV (UAE) between April and July 2016.<sup>11</sup> The fact that this many stations decided to broadcast the series is a very positive sign. However, this also makes it difficult to determine overall viewership numbers. This is due to the absence of evidence regarding general ratings, which is a known problem in the media sector across the MENA region. To an extent it is also dependent on the nature of satellite TV. Satellite TV channels can in fact be watched across the whole MENA region, well outside of the country where the network is based. This would make the platform ideal for distributing a series with a regional appeal.

The data collected on satellite broadcast indicates that *Madame President* reached a mass audience in Tunisia as it was aired through NESSMA TV, the country's third national broadcaster. In Lebanon, however, very few people have seen it, as none of the four satellite channels are very popular. The evidence collected through the endline survey supports both these claims, as will be discussed in the next two sections.

Specific data for satellite channels other than NESSMA is, unfortunately, largely unavailable. The Ma'an Network reported that as much as 21% of the audience in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip tuned in to see the series, but their data were not independently verified. LANA TV said that it did not have viewership data at all; and Al Aan could not share their statistics because of sensitivity issues, which is particularly unfortunate as proxy data (i.e. Facebook) suggests that this is the channel with the largest audience of all broadcasters.

### 5.2. Facebook

Facebook was one of the main platforms used to both create awareness about the series and disseminate it. A series of distinctions need to be made, however, in order to clarify findings. There were in fact several sub-channels on Facebook. The main one for SFCG was *Madam President's* official page, which it launched in December 2015 and populated with various content until May 2016. The page was originally intended to promote the series through messages and promos. Starting at the end of January 2016, however, it also served as a platform for broadcasting, as SFCG decided to transfer all full-length episodes there and close the dedicated YouTube channel, in March 2016. Other sub-channels on Facebook belonged to satellite broadcasters, chiefly LANA, NESSMA and Al Aan, which used their company pages to launch regular promos for the series. To assess the reach achieved by SFCG, the evaluation uses primarily the extensive analytics from the series' official Facebook page; data from broadcasters is unfortunately much more scant.

The following table presents the main analytics in relation to *Madam President's* full-length episodes uploaded to, and accessible on, its official Facebook page<sup>12</sup>:

Episode No.	Date uploaded	Reach			Views		Engagement		Average completion
		Total	Org.	Paid	Total	Unique	Reactions	Comments	

<sup>7</sup> Amazon Prime, Hulu and Vimeo have not been included in the analysis, as they are not particularly relevant for the MENA region (Hulu, for example, cannot be accessed outside of the US).

<sup>8</sup> The series continues to be available on LANA's website, but the station officially stopped all operations as of April 2016.

<sup>9</sup> The series continues to be available on Ma'an's YouTube channel.

<sup>10</sup> The series continues to be available on NESSMA's YouTube channel.

<sup>11</sup> The series continues to be available on Al Aan's website. However, it is unclear if broadcasting on their satellite channel is still ongoing. Requests for information were made to Al Aan representatives, but no responses were received in this regard.

<sup>12</sup> All Facebook analytics were collected and exported for analysis on 8 September 2016.

1	28 Jan	6,368	100%	0%	621	507	24	5	6%
2	06 Mar	326	100%	0%	69	56	1	0	13%
3	15 Mar	438	100%	0%	76	64	5	0	9%
4	15 Mar	409	100%	0%	53	44	2	0	8%
5	15 Mar	719	100%	0%	142	115	10	0	6%
6	31 Jan	167,285	1%	99%	62,300	54,050	132	7	1%
7	07 Feb	105,557	1%	99%	35,795	31,656	119	8	1%
8	14 Feb	509	100%	0%	193	130	30	2	11%
9	21 Feb	2,559	100%	0%	1,131	151	22	4	11%
10	28 Feb	5,351	100%	0%	440	343	68	4	8%
11	06 Mar	6,700	100%	0%	407	337	41	2	7%
12	13 Mar	4,452	100%	0%	465	347	76	7	6%
13	20 Mar	603	100%	0%	183	128	15	10	14%
14	27 Mar	4,694	100%	0%	470	342	38	8	4%
15	05 Apr	988	100%	0%	346	242	27	3	6%

The table shows that the most people reached by any given episode are over 167,200; on average, full episodes reached 20,464 users per episode; and the average number of unique views per episode was 5,901. Assuming that users reached are also unique, this would mean a total reach for the series of just less than 306,000 and a total viewership of 88,512. These numbers, however, must be taken very carefully: aside from the fact that they are not and cannot be perfectly accurate, they should be never considered separately from the average completion rate, which measures users who viewed an entire episode. This varies from 1% to 14%, with an average of 7.4%. This means, for example, that for episode 1, the total number of users who viewed the entire episode to the end is 30 (out of 507).

What is interesting about the table is what it says about strategies. Most episodes of the series were promoted organically, that is without SFCG paying for any publicity. The exceptions are episodes 6 and 7, the former reaching almost 25 times more users than episode 11, the third with the highest reach. The explanation for this difference is as clear as it is simple: SFCG paid for advertisement.

Looking at the ads published, another important factor becomes evident: the duration of videos. The evaluation looked at a sample of 15 video promos, which varied in length from just over 6 minutes to 33 seconds. Most of them showed clips of episodes to be broadcast or behind-the-scenes footage, and their average completion rate is 47%—significantly higher than that for full episodes. One conclusion is that Facebook might be more effective for shorter videos, a finding that also came out of the group discussions in the two countries.

To conclude the analysis, it is also worth looking at the success of satellite broadcasters. As mentioned already, LANA, NESSMA and Al Aan TV used their Facebook pages to publish promos for the series during the period in which they broadcast it. Little information is available about the reach of these efforts, but even what is available, coupled with proxy data such as number of 'likes' on Facebook, makes it clear that this is likely to be much higher than anything that SFCG has done. LANA's Facebook page has over 1.5 million likes and their video promos for Madam President reached on average 46,319 users per promo. Al Aan, which has over 6.7 million likes, published a promo that reached over 1.5 million users and had almost 475,000 viewers<sup>13</sup>; by comparison, Madam President's Facebook page has 1,148 likes.<sup>14</sup>

### 5.3. YouTube

Through the duration of the project, full episodes of Madam President were uploaded and made accessible on YouTube by SFCG, LANA TV, the Ma'an Network and NESSMA TV.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> See: <https://www.facebook.com/alaantv/videos/10154225089766948/> (accessed on 3 October 2016).

<sup>14</sup> See: <https://www.facebook.com/MadamPresidentTV/> (accessed on 20 October 2016).

<sup>15</sup> LANA TV uploaded episodes on Daily Motion.



Because SFCG closed the series' channel when it transferred all episodes to Facebook, this data was inaccessible at the time of the evaluation

Table 5.2 provides information about the views for all other broadcasters. Overall, the results are not very positive. LANA had very low views compared to its online presence, and this could be related to the fact that on the Madam President page on its website, if one clicks on any of the episode links it is always taken to episode 15.<sup>16</sup> For NESSMA it is also the case that views are very low given their large media profile. Numbers for Ma'an are the lowest and data shows that

Episode No.	LANA TV	Ma'an Network	NESSMA TV
1	1,008	85	3,701
2	312	45	2,275
3	439	26	1,597
4	219	15	1,618
5	322	14	1,263
6	190	11	1,318
7	145	8	104
8	360	8	1,156
9	320	7	901
10	369	5	1,024
11	349	4	656
12	325	8	813
13	347	4	714
14	458	6	767
15	N/A	16	2,283

they uploaded all of the series' episodes on March 30, 2016, two weeks after the end of the first run of the series on its satellite channel.<sup>17</sup>

#### 5.4. Madam President's website and Twitter account

Key decisions by SFCG included the creation of a dedicated website for Madam President, as well as a Twitter account. Jordan Pioneers, the same media company that had been commissioned for the series' production, was responsible for developing both platforms, and also for creating regular content. Analytics are not readily available, however. For the website, for example, the evaluation team could not determine the amount of visits or get other indicators of traffic. For the Twitter account, the number of followers stands at 250; SFCG published a total of 203 tweets, the last one on April 12, 2016.<sup>18</sup> The numbers are however less important than the role that both platforms had during the project, which was to coordinate the promotion of the series and stimulate online engagement. SFCG's strategy in this regard was different than efforts around previous TV initiatives: they wanted to create an online profile for the series that would allow online users to explore the fictional world described in Madam President and to even interact with the characters.<sup>19</sup> For this reason the website includes a 'Jabalein Wiki', a Wikipedia-style almanac of the fictional country's politics, history and society.<sup>20</sup> In terms of promotion, the website had links to all other platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and also Instagram.

*"We had some good engagement during the first run [i.e. when LANA TV started airing the series]; we had more likes, more views, more visits every week."* (Jordan Pioneers former Media Manager)

The success of this strategy is difficult to assess. According to the former Media Manager at Jordan Pioneers, "we had some good engagement during the first run [i.e. when LANA TV started airing the series]; we had more likes, more views, more visits every week."<sup>21</sup> However, online engagement was on the whole very low: for instance, a total of 60

<sup>16</sup> See: <http://www.lana-tv.com/en/videos/madam-president> (accessed 20 October 2016)

<sup>17</sup> See: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLG1tL-Yr4Tp0Llu293OXWR5j09UnltLuZ> (accessed 20 September 2016)

<sup>18</sup> See: <https://twitter.com/MadamPresTV> (accessed on 21 October 2016).

<sup>19</sup> Interview with former Media Manager at Jordan Pioneers (6 September 2016).

<sup>20</sup> See: <http://www.madampresidenttv.com/index.php/country/wiki> (accessed on 21 October 2016).

<sup>21</sup> Interview with former Media Manager at Jordan Pioneers (6 September 2016).

comments were made, to date, on full episodes available on the series' Facebook page, for an average of 4 comments per episode.

### *5.5. Success and challenges*

On the positive side, hundreds of thousands of people were indeed reached across the various platforms—and millions, most likely, in Tunisia thanks to NESSMA's broadcast. And thousands other people viewed episodes from the series online. Overall, it was certainly a success on the part of SFCG to be able to get all four broadcasters to air the series after MBC pulled out.

In regards to social media engagement, many important achievements were also made. Promos for the series on individual platforms (i.e. the broadcasters' Facebook pages) reached millions. The quality of the website is remarkable and indicative of an interesting and innovative experiment for the MENA region: a fully referenced TV series engaging viewers across multiple platforms. For online engagement in general, it remains however impossible to determine how many people watched full episodes specifically, let alone the entire series through either Facebook or YouTube.

One of the biggest challenges in relation to dissemination was coordination. This is most evident in the timeline of activities, which shows that broadcast on satellite TV was not coordinated with online efforts. This problem started already with the first run of *Madam President*, on LANA TV, as the former Media Manger confirmed: "Coordination with broadcasters was a major lost opportunity. When we got LANA TV I tried to work hard with them to coordinate, so that they could use the content that I had prepared [...] but they wouldn't do it."<sup>22</sup> The way in which episodes were made available online is puzzling: as Table 5.1 shows, SFCG uploaded episodes 1 and 6 to *Madam President's* Facebook page on January 28 and 31, 2016, respectively; episodes 7, 8, 9 and 10 were then uploaded in February; remaining episodes were put on the platform in March and the first week of April. The timeline suggests that SFCG was trying to make episodes available on Facebook to match LANA's broadcasting schedule.

There are also other examples. Al Aan TV, for example, broadcast *Madam President* from April to July 2016, publishing promos for each episode on their Facebook page; on the series' own official page, however, there was no single post about the Al Aan broadcast. This can be partially explained by staff time allocation: content production and dissemination fell under the responsibility of Jordan Pioneer's Media Manager from November 2015 until April 2016, when the series' broadcast on LANA TV ended; from April to June this job was done by a coordinator in SFCG's Lebanon office, who did not however work on it full-time; after June responsibility for online content fell onto SFCG's Chief of Party. Lastly, while there is a section with all of the series' episodes on *Madam President's* official website, the links are still to the YouTube channel, which was closed in March 2016.<sup>23</sup> Overall, all of this suggests that different strategies might have led to better outcomes, especially in terms of dissemination.

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<sup>22</sup> Interview with former Media Manager at Jordan Pioneers (6 September 2016).

<sup>23</sup> See: <http://www.madampresidenttv.com/index.php/series/episode#ch5> (accessed 21 October 2016).

## 6. Madam President in Lebanon

### 6.1. Country context

As a project, Madam President in Lebanon took place in a period of protracted political instability. A political deadlock is paralyzing institutions and the repeated extension of the mandate of the national parliament has severely questioned its legitimacy. The presidency had been void for two years by the time that outreach activities started, which may explain the skepticism and even sarcasm among some youth towards issues related to political leadership. The municipal elections, which took place in May 2016, had not been officially announced at the time of project activities, yet the anticipation for these might have influenced some of the discussions, especially among voters (youth over the age of 21).

Women's rights NGOs are active in Lebanon and women's representation is a main area of focus for them. With no women in the current government cabinet, and only four women Members of Parliament, political participation is clearly a critical gap. While economic participation is also low (21% of the female population is economically active, compared to 66% among men<sup>24</sup>) and women do not have the right to pass their nationality to their children and spouses, women are highly educated and visible in the social sphere. During the 2015 civil protests against the garbage crisis, for example, female activists took center stage and paved the way for increased participation of women at the 2016 municipal elections (6.9% of all candidates compared to 5.6% in 2010). In total, 663 women were elected in municipal councils, an increase of 24% compared to the 2010 elections.<sup>25</sup>

Politically, socially and economically, Lebanon continues to be very much affected by the Syrian crisis, which has entered its fifth year. Presently, over a million Syrian refugees are faced with stringent requirements for obtaining residency in Lebanon, which have made the majority of them illegal. Social tensions between Lebanese communities and the refugees persist due to security concerns associated with the presence of illegal Syrians in the country and competition over low-paid jobs. In this context, SFCG's project was implemented in three locations: the northern, predominantly Sunni city of Tripoli; the southern, predominantly Sunni city of Saida and the area of West Bekaa, with activities taking place in several locations, also majority Sunni.

These areas have varying degrees of intercommunity tensions: Tripoli hosts some of Lebanon's most marginalized urban areas, and a number of informal tented settlements (ITS) for Syrian refugees in its outskirts. Saida hosts the biggest Palestinian refugee camp, Ein Eh Helwe, which now also hosts Palestinian refugees from Syria (PRS), and Syrian refugees residing in collective shelters or private accommodation around the city. Joub Janine in West Bekaa is surrounded by several ITSs, and the neighboring Kamed el Louz hosts a large Syrian population in private accommodations around town. The three partner organizations that worked with SFCG on this project (DPNA, Sada al Bekaa and Utopia) are established actors in the peacebuilding field and focus most of their work on youth engagement and empowerment.

#### *Media and media for social change in Lebanon*

In the absence of reliable rating, LBC, Al Jadeed (a news channel) and MTV appear to be the most popular of Lebanon's nine broadcast channels.<sup>26</sup> TV dramas are popular, especially during Ramadan season. However, women rights activists claim that women in TV shows broadcast in the Arab world are typically beautiful and "either super conservative or super

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<sup>24</sup> The Labour Market in Lebanon, Central Administration of Statistics, October 2011 (accessed at: [http://www.cas.gov.lb/images/pdfs/sif/cas\\_labour\\_market\\_in\\_lebanon\\_sif1.pdf](http://www.cas.gov.lb/images/pdfs/sif/cas_labour_market_in_lebanon_sif1.pdf))

<sup>25</sup> Women in Municipal Elections 2016 (accessed at [www.lebanon-elections.org](http://www.lebanon-elections.org))

<sup>26</sup> Lebanese number of viewers per TV brand, 11 June 2012 (accessed at: [http://www.khazen.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&id=2469:lebanese-number-of-viewers-per-tv-brand-sa-lebanese-media-background-lbc-ntv-mtv-future-otv-nbn-tl&Itemid=213](http://www.khazen.org/index.php?option=com_content&id=2469:lebanese-number-of-viewers-per-tv-brand-sa-lebanese-media-background-lbc-ntv-mtv-future-otv-nbn-tl&Itemid=213))

liberal”, and “despite a presence of strong, independent women in Lebanon and the Arab world, these dramas make no effort to reflect society.”<sup>27</sup> In this context, the use of TV production for social change is very limited. A well-known drama named *Kafa* was broadcast on MTV in 2014, initiated by KAFA-Enough Violence and Exploitation, a Lebanese NGO, and based on real stories of violence against women. KAFA later produced a documentary on prostitution that was broadcast on LBC. Adyan, an inter-faith dialogue NGO has also produced a number of documentaries for social change. Recently, the format of web series was used by the Samir Kassir Foundation to mock censorship of cultural products in the country. Noteworthy are also two commercial web series that have recently gained popularity: the first Arabic web drama *Shankaboot*, which depicted social issues in Beirut including controversial topics such as the treatment of foreign domestic workers, and won the 2011 International Digital Emmy award; and *Beirut, I Love You*, which presented the lives of young Beirutis and aired on LBC in 2011-2012.

Overall, the traditional media landscape in Lebanon is well established, dynamic and quite liberal compared to most other countries in the MENA region. Access to the Internet is also commonplace; however, browsing speed remains low in the whole country, which prevents viewers from watching long videos online. Facebook is obviously omnipresent, but YouTube appears more popular among youth for video use, alongside other streaming platforms that are gaining popularity.<sup>28</sup>

## 6.2. Effectiveness

### 6.2.1. Reach

**Overall, Madam President’s reach in Lebanon was very limited and, as an outcome, this has to be rated poorly.**<sup>29</sup> In the country, the series was not easily accessible; evidence collected also suggests that audiences were not aware of its broadcast. This said, according to SFCG’s Chief of Party, contacts are still being pursued with LBC to air the series. LBC is one of the country’s most popular TV stations, so if this happens it would certainly improve dissemination in the future.

Madam President was broadcast on Al Aan and LANA TV, satellite channels based in Dubai and Iraq respectively with very limited audience reach in Lebanon. It is therefore fair to assume that the series was not generally watched, certainly not by a significant number of viewers. This is confirmed by data collected through both quantitative and qualitative means: none of the survey respondents from Lebanon saw the series on TV; only two focus group participants saw promos or parts of the show on Al Aan, but did not watch full episodes.

**The outreach campaign was strong.** Outreach activities were organized by SFCG’s three partner organizations in Tripoli (North Lebanon), Saida (South Lebanon) and Joub Janin (West Bekaa). The partners coordinated a group of 15 young facilitators, who held 75 outreach sessions reaching 857 Lebanese, Syrian and Palestinian youth. Participants attended one session each and saw one or two episodes followed by a facilitated discussion.

**Most viewers and outreach participants in Lebanon only saw one or two episodes.** In general, survey results show that 91% of respondents from Lebanon saw only one or two episodes, mostly during discussion sessions. Only 4% saw between 3 and 5 episodes, and 3% saw 6 to 10 episodes. No respondent indicated seeing more than 10 episodes. Among viewers 6% watched the show online; only two participants watched it on DVD.

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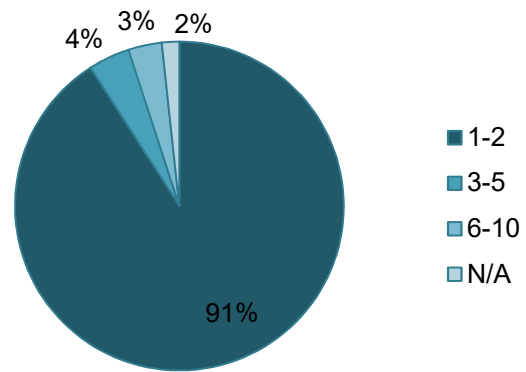
<sup>27</sup> Maya Gebeily, “TV no place for bold women”, Now Lebanon, 9 August 2013 (accessible at: <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/reports/features/tv-no-place-for-a-bold-woman>)

<sup>28</sup> “Streaming hits big in the Middle East”, The Executive, 27 June 2016 (accessible at: <http://www.executive-magazine.com/special-report/streaming-hits-big-middle-east>)

<sup>29</sup> According to the OECD-DAC, effectiveness is “a measure of the extent to which an aid activity attains its objectives.” For the purposes of this evaluation, effectiveness is defined as the reach of Madame President and its resonance in Lebanon.

**Facilitators are an exception to this trend, as they watched a much larger number of episodes.** Out of 10 facilitators interviewed, 5 saw the whole series (4 from Bekaa and 1 from Tripoli), two saw between 7 and 10 episodes, and the rest saw only a few. Viewership data confirms that facilitators have been primary beneficiaries of the project, and their selection based on interest in the topic of women’s leadership increased the likelihood of them watching the whole series and being receptive to key messages.

Chart 6.1: How many episodes did you watch? (Lebanese surveys respondents)



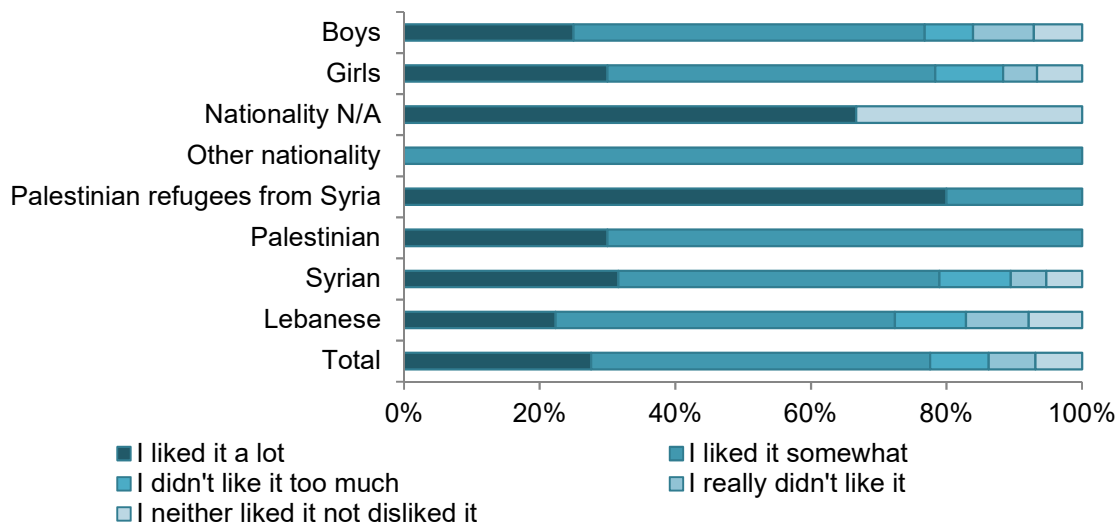
The overall reach of the series was limited by several other factors. One is that SFCG’s partners did not have DVDs until later in the project. DVD distribution was in fact done only after outreach activities were completed.<sup>30</sup> Another reason can be found in the limited use of social media: focus group participants were generally unaware that the show was available on Facebook. Those few who watched episodes online used YouTube before the show migrated to Facebook. In conclusion, while the audience reached was strategic (i.e. young men and women), the fact that numbers were low makes this finding moot.

### 6.2.2. Resonance

**The show was generally well received by those who saw it.** Of all survey respondents from Lebanon, 50% indicated that they ‘liked it somewhat’ and 28% that they ‘liked it a lot’. The appeal of the show was equal for girls and boys. Interestingly, Palestinian respondents appear to have liked the series visibly more than Lebanese—a dynamic that was also noticed in the focus groups. Syrian youth in comparison liked the show slightly more than their Lebanese peers but less than Palestinians. Despite the positive response, however, only 7% of survey respondents said that they continued to watch the series after the discussion sessions, and no one saw it to the end.

<sup>30</sup> Interview with representatives from SFCG Lebanon office, Beirut (26 August 2016).

Chart 6.2: What did you think of the series in general? (Lebanese respondents)



**The themes of the show were viewed very positively.** Viewers liked that a woman was a leader, that “her husband did not interfere” (Tripoli, male FGD participant), that “she balanced work and family life” (West Bekaa, FGD participant) and that “she was involving people in her decisions” (Tripoli, male FGD participant). Palestinian and Syrian refugee participants also liked that the President accepted the refugees. The discussion groups clearly increased the resonance of the show—as will be discussed under impact as well. The majority of FGD participants enjoyed the diversity of opinions in the groups, and said that the discussion “helped open up the issues of the series” (Saida, male FGD participant). All agreed that there was no gender divide during the discussions and participants’ opinions depended mostly on their family background and level of education instead.

Overall, themes that most resonated with participants were those that appeared in the first episode – the episode that most groups watched. The ability of women to be leaders, the “acceptable” levels of leadership and the balance between family and work life were the most common topics discussed. Notably, several groups reportedly talked about the acceptable levels for women’s leadership, and participants from several focus groups (in all locations) argued that women could be leaders, but not necessarily presidents.

*“There was a guy who was against the idea of women being leaders. I told them I was their leader in dabke<sup>1</sup> class. They were willing to accept me but not [as] the president.”*  
 (Saida, female FGD participant)

*“It is important to show women in other social positions, not necessarily the highest.”*  
 (Bekaa, male FGD participant)

**Positively, women’s ability to take rational decisions was a recurring topic in outreach events.** Highlighted by some of the President Noura’s behaviors in the first episode, the role of emotions and motherly feelings in decision-making was one of the topics to provoke heated debate. Even in some of the focus groups, participants engaged in discussion on this, arguing the positive and negative sides of showing one’s emotions (several participants discussed the emotional engagement of the President with the protesters). Other topics were raised by older participants, mostly university students, including the tension between personal and public interests, the right to protest, the likelihood of a leader to engage directly with protesters and the role of social media as a channel for youth to express their opinions.

**Viewers also highlighted several issues that limited the resonance of the series.** Many felt confused with the different dialects of Arabic that characters used, and also with individual characters changing their dialect. Several participants felt that the show was not as engaging as it could have been, and admitted to “fast-forwarding” some parts. The recurring criticism across focus groups was that the show was “far from reality”, with examples of situations perceived as “unrealistic” ranging from the fact that a woman becomes a president, to the fact that the president goes to meet protesters on the street, or that she reads a blog.

Several participants, mainly male and female university students, felt that the topic of gender equality was overexposed and there was a need to turn the discussion away from gender and towards capacities. Male FGD participants from Tripoli for example argued that participants to outreach events came from similar backgrounds, were already active (many of them volunteered with the Red Cross) and shared similar ideas on gender equality. At the same time, younger participants and participants from more traditional background found the topic new and exciting.

*“This topic [gender equality] is everywhere, it is not that much of a surprise. One does not need to be a feminist to agree with women.” (Tripoli, male FGD participant)*

*“We have proven ourselves, let’s talk about capacities, not gender.” (Saida, female FGD participant)*

**Outreach participants appreciated the opportunity to discuss the topics in the open, especially the question of gender equality, but examples of participants sharing that they changed their opinions as a result of a session were rare.** Two FGD participants from the West Bekaa said they were influenced, though in other groups participants focused on examples of how their arguments were received by more skeptical peers (i.e. they focused on what others thought). Whether and to what extent participants were really influenced by the show appears to depend strongly on age, but the format of FGDs was not ideal to explore this question further. The groups in Saida and Tripoli had in fact a mixture of younger and older participants, whereby the older and better-educated youth dominated the discussion, and the younger participants might have felt uneasy to share how the series and the discussion resonated with them.

*“I was convinced that women could make it. Carmen’s role [President Noura] expressed the strength of women.” (Bekaa, male FGD participant)*

*“The discussions gave me strength to argue for an idea.” (Bekaa, female FGD participant)*

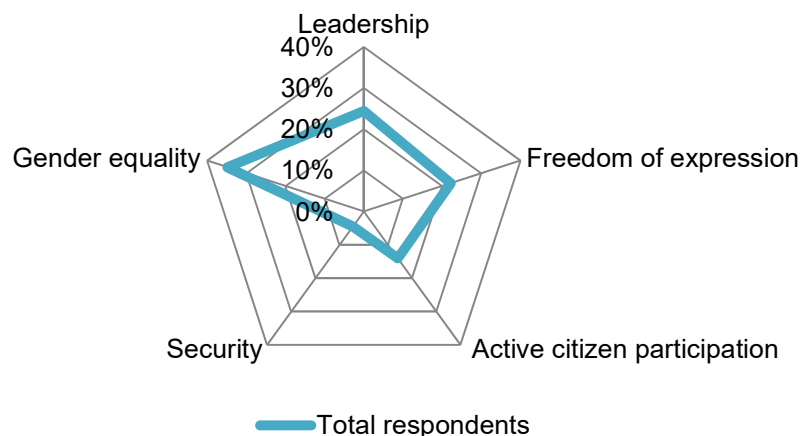
According to facilitators in Saida, girls were more receptive of the ideas but were skeptical about their application, while boys gave statements and did not listen to arguments against their position. At the same time, facilitators felt that participants were very skeptical in the beginning (they were for example laughing at President Noura) and became more receptive later in the discussions. An interesting case came from the West Bekaa, where one group attended four sessions and watched four episodes. This was the only case found where a group convened multiple times to watch the series. When this group watched the last episode, the discussion was very lively, with participants debating the future of the presidency. According to the facilitator, this group had a very different dynamic compared to others, and he attributed it to the regular exposure to the series and repeated discussions. This did not happen with other groups, however, as the strategy decided by SFCG Lebanon was to maximize number of participants, not exposure to the series.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Interview with representatives from SFCG Lebanon office, Beirut (26 August 2016)

**The series resonated the most with the youth facilitators.** They benefited from the project more directly and were able to highlight additional issues that resonated with them and that did not affect the outreach participants as much. A key issue highlighted by several facilitators, and only by one or two participants, was the acceptance of refugees in Madam President’s fictional country. Interestingly, youth who pointed to the theme were refugees themselves. A female facilitator, who is a Palestinian refugee from Syria, felt that the topic of refugees divided the group along nationality lines. In another region, the facilitator said even a group consisting of Syrian participants alone was divided on the topic. Another Syrian facilitator also selected the episode on the refugee crisis and in the discussion group asked participants to split according to nationality; he then instructed Lebanese participants to speak on behalf of Syrian refugees, and Syrians to argue from a Lebanese perspective. Another topic facilitators highlighted was women’s political participation in the context of the municipal elections, which took place shortly after the Madam President discussion sessions. In Tripoli, one facilitator reported that participants in his groups discussed the elections and women candidates.

**From discussions held during FGDs, of the series’ five key themes participants did not focus on security and freedom of expression.** This is likely due to the fact that these topics did not appear in the first episode, which was the most frequently shown episode in discussion sessions. The survey results for respondents from Lebanon are slightly different: they confirm that viewers saw the series as one primarily focused on gender equality and leadership, but they also gave attention to other issues depending primarily on their nationality, as the diagrams below show.<sup>32</sup>

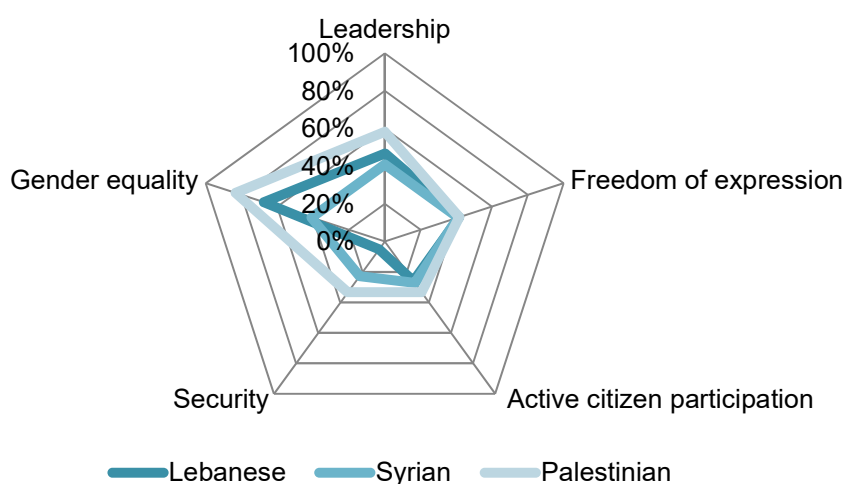
Chart 6.3: In your opinion, what was the main theme of the show?



<sup>32</sup> In the surveys, respondents were asked to choose themes from a fixed menu, with one of the choices being ‘other’. Obviously, this limited what people could select and there might be other themes that survey respondents would have chosen beyond these five.



Chart 6.4: In your opinion, what was the main theme of the show?



For example, in relation to security, Palestinian respondents recognized this topic the most (one in three respondents), while only 5% of the Lebanese respondents associated the series with it. Gender equality was also indicated as the main topic by more Palestinian respondents (83%) and fewer Lebanese (68%) and Syrians (41%). These differences, alongside other more general differences in attitudes, as discussed below, demonstrate that the topics of Madame President have varying degrees of resonance with different nationalities. Because of this, in the future outreach activities need to be planned with consideration of these differences.

Furthermore, the fact that certain themes resonate differently with youth from different backgrounds indicates that the impact would also be different by nationality group. While a key component of SFCG’s work is to bring people together across dividing lines, programs aimed at changing perceptions on a theme such as gender equality may need to have different change objectives for different groups. And because difference groups face different situations, dialogues alone may not be as effective as a combination of activities, for example including seminars with professionals and people who can be seen as ‘role models’, role plays and interactive trainings, which can help participants develop more nuanced outlooks of women’s roles and leadership.

### 6.2.3. Engagement

**Overall, engagement through social media in Lebanon was very low.** Outreach participants do not appear to have used social media to follow the show or discuss its key messages.<sup>33</sup> The facilitators did not use the Facebook page for exchanging insights on their discussions, though some uploaded photos from the outreach sessions. Focus group participants did not use social media to comment on or discuss the show. Survey results confirmed these findings: only one respondent said he posted on social media.

The challenges of social media engagement is not unique to Madam President or SFCG- according to other NGO professionals, online debate is rarely successful. Facebook and Twitter however can be useful for promoting events including the broadcast of video material or its availability online. Even successful TV shows, such as a TV series on violence against women initiated by the Lebanese NGO KAFA, used Facebook to promote TV broadcast, but admitted to low engagement of their followers in online discussions.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Please note that 22% of all viewers marked that they posted on social media. However, all of them except one were from the screen test group, so the answer obviously did not concern Madam President.

<sup>34</sup> Interview with KAFA representative, Beirut (29 September 2016).

## 6.3. Impact

### 6.3.1. *Sharing impressions*

Madam President's impact<sup>35</sup> can be measured by several variables: talking about the show with friends and family and posting about the show on social media, changing attitudes and inspiring democratic values, and feeling inspired to take action. It can also be measured by exposure and time: data in Lebanon was in fact collected from participants who watched the series during discussion groups some six months before the evaluation and who then reported on their actual behavior; and from youth who watched Madam President episodes as part of the evaluation itself and reported on intended behavior.

**In relation to sharing, some positive examples were identified where viewers initiated a broader discussion, usually involving older and more educated participants.** In Tripoli, one female participant organized a discussion session for her family and a young woman in Saida watched the show with her family and talked about the potential of blogging to reach leaders. In the West Bekaa, two female participants attended a training seminar on women's rights shortly after the outreach session and used President Noura as an example in their discussions. One of the two women, an older participant, further engaged in discussions on the reasons for voting for women candidates during the municipal elections. In Saida two male participants told their family and friends about the series, but did not discuss the content.

Factoring for exposure and time, out of 42 respondents who saw the show six months before the evaluation, 52% talked about the series with friends; 17% talked with family and classmates; and 19% did not talk to anyone. Boys and girls equally shared with friends (52%), while girls brought up the show with family members more often than boys (6 girls and only 1 boy). When data from screen test viewers is also considered, the survey results reveal that 70% of those who saw the series talked or intended to talk about it with other people.<sup>36</sup> Girls are more likely to discuss the show than boys (54% of the girls talked or intended to talk about MP with friends, and 42% of the boys did). Lebanese are more likely to discuss with friends, while Syrians more often discuss with family members. Participants under 18 are least likely to talk with others about the show (44% did not intend to talk to anyone). Between the three locations, respondents from Tripoli were least likely to share, with 41% of them not talking to anyone.

The high percentage of viewers who talked or intended to talk about the series has however to be considered in conjunction with qualitative data collected, which indicates that those who talked about the series tended to simply inform their relatives or friends about Madam President rather than engage in a discussion of the key themes. For example, one FGD participant informed her mother of a new production with Carmen Lebbos, the popular actress who plays President Noura, and another talked to a feminist friend about the series due to the main theme. Finally, and as already discussed, participants in the discussion groups did not use social media to discuss the key themes.

### 6.3.2. *Changing attitudes*

**The impact of the show on people's attitudes was modest at best, except, possibly, on the issue of refugees.** Interviewed outreach participants—who for the most part had seen one or two episodes—could not give examples of changes in their own attitudes towards key themes and messages; however, some said that the discussion raised new questions.

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<sup>35</sup> According to the OECD impact refers to "the positive and negative changes produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended. This involves the main impacts and effects resulting from the activity on the local social, economic, environmental and other development indicators" (OECD-DAC).

<sup>36</sup> These figures capture all survey respondents who watched the show, including outreach participants and respondents who watched the series in the context of test screenings organized during the evaluation.

*"I never considered the idea of a woman president in Lebanon, so I started asking myself the question [of] what would happen. I imagined the possibility of a woman president."*  
(Saida, Syrian male FGD participant)

One male participant from Saida said that he changed his attitude towards social media: specifically, Maya's blogging in the series made him think that social media can reach leaders. This could be an interesting finding, as blogs are not very popular with youth in Lebanon: the focus groups with youth who did not see the series and did not participate in any activities related to the project showed for instance that many young people were not even familiar with the term. And even in discussions with outreach participants, only one female participant mentioned following blogs, and one male participant said he wrote a blog.

Actual attitudinal changes are more likely to happen as a result of continuous engagement, whereby multiple episodes are shown and discussed. Interestingly, the guide for facilitation that SFCG developed included questions for all 15 episodes, suggesting that the original plan was to expose participants to the whole series. SFCG strategies at country level were however developed with a different objective. Local partners and facilitators all agreed that the limited time for outreach, which lasted around six weeks, prevented them from having a greater impact and expressed a preference for a longer-term engagement on the topics of the show. Several FGD participants also stressed the importance of real life examples when discussing women's leadership abilities. One participant said she was accepted as a leader of a dabke group, although the role is usually reserved for men. Another participant gave the example of a female judge that was brought up during the discussion.

*"It is impossible to change someone's mind in one session. Even those who said they changed their mind, they were mostly shy. To change attitudes you need to have several sessions."* (West Bekaa facilitator)

*"If a 40-minute episode provoked so much discussion, imagine if they watch all of [the series]."* (West Bekaa facilitator)

**Looking at the attitudes of female viewers, watching one or two episodes appears to have little to no impact on women's confidence and willingness for political engagement.** A few focus group participants gave individual examples of changes, but they cannot be considered as representative for a broader circle of beneficiaries. According to a facilitator from Saida, a teacher who participated in a discussion said she did not have the courage to apply for a job that involved leadership. After the session, the teacher felt empowered and told the facilitator she would apply. This is an interesting story, but the evaluators could not verify it. Another facilitator confirmed that Lebanese girls were more confident after the session, but did not see this change with Syrian girls. A female participant from the Bekaa said she felt empowered and asked herself 'why not'. Comparing the results of the baseline and endline surveys confirms this finding: asked if they would encourage a female acquaintance who started expressing her social or political views publicly by blogging or participating to protests, the number of respondents from Lebanon who agreed (strongly or somewhat) actually decreased from 91% to 80%, while the number of undecided rose from 3% to 11%.

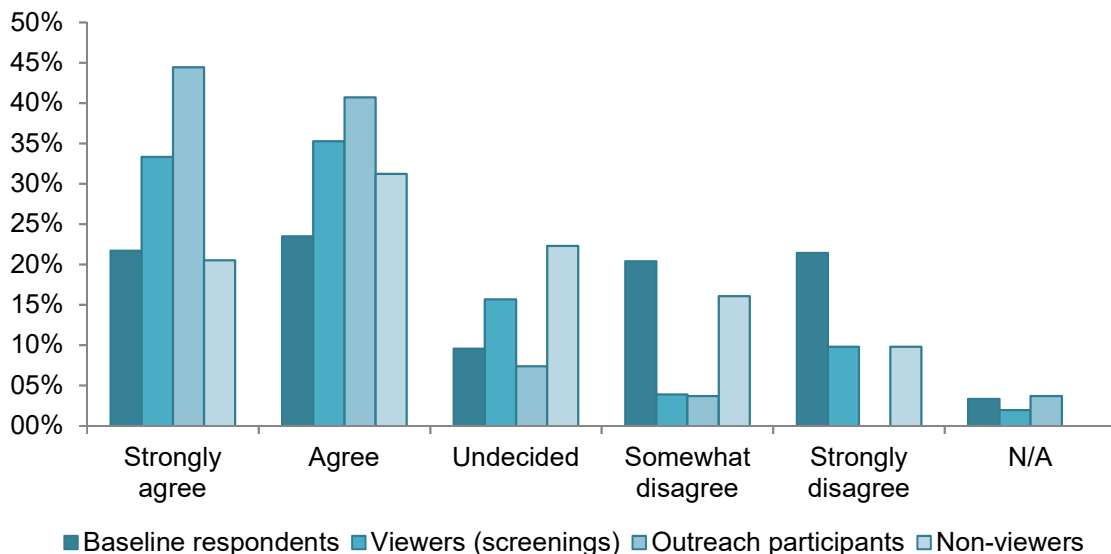
*"I did not have to wait to be encouraged by others. I learnt to be patient in the face of challenges."* (West Bekaa, female FGD participant)

Finally, asked if they see President Noura as a 'trustworthy' leader, 64% of respondents who saw the show in discussion groups and 56% of respondents who saw two episodes during test screenings replied 'a little bit' or 'no'. This can be partially explained with the limited exposure to the series: most viewers only saw the first episode and did not have a chance to follow the President's actions inspired by democratic values. As a senior staff member of

one of the implementing organizations summarized it, “when you only discuss one episode, you discuss based on your values and not based on what you watched.”

**Outreach events might have had a positive impact on attitudes towards refugees.** A comparison between baseline and endline survey data suggests not only that changes might have happened, but also that the outreach events might actually be more responsible for them than the series itself—all of this is captured in the chart below.

Chart 6.5: Imagine the scenario: “A civil war has sent refugees from another country seeking shelter in your country. [...] Your government decides to host refugees, mostly women and children. The country’s leaders threaten to cut off assistance to your country.” Do you agree with the government that the country should continue to provide shelter to the refugees?”



Take those who strongly agree with the statement. Among baseline respondents the number for those who picked that answer were 22%, compared to 33% among viewers, 44% among outreach participants and 21% among non-viewers: those exposed to Madam President showed in other words more support for refugees than those who did not. But let us now look at those who strongly disagreed. Among baseline respondents the number for those who picked that answer were 21%, compared to 10% among viewers, 0% among outreach participants and 10% among non-viewers: strong opposition decreased for both viewers and non-viewers and completely disappeared for outreach participants. This result carries some bias: we know in fact that local partners pre-selected participants who were already civically active and therefore more likely to have positive attitudes towards refugees. However, the result remains remarkable and show how outreach sessions in particular can truly contribute to changing people’s attitudes.

### 6.3.3. Inspiring new behaviors

**The project, and outreach activities in particular, have inspired new behaviors.** A total of 28% of survey respondents in Lebanon said they were inspired to take action after watching Madam President. Among those who felt inspired, girls were slightly more than boys: close to one in three girls felt inspired (32%), and one in four boys felt the same (24%). When nationalities are considered, Palestinians were more likely to feel inspired (38.5%), followed by Syrians (27%) and Lebanese (25%). This trend was also observed in focus groups, where Syrian and Palestinian participants talked about the show with more enthusiasm.<sup>37</sup> Among the three areas, the impact appears greatest in the West Bekaa, where 44% felt inspired to take action. Older participants (25-36 years old) were more likely

<sup>37</sup> Due to time constraints, the evaluation team was unfortunately unable to pursue this additional line of inquiry in more depth.

to say that they would take action after watching the show (38.5%, compared to 16% for under 18). Following are examples of behavior changes collected during the evaluation.<sup>38</sup>

Examples of **general behavior changes** among viewers include:

- A female respondent opened a blog (Palestinian, Saida)
- A female respondent continued her engagement with civil society and protests (Lebanese, Saida)
- A female respondent convinced others to watch the series (Lebanese, Tripoli)
- A female respondent wrote: "[The show] inspired me to defend myself and to say what is on my mind in a healthy way and preserving the rules of the freedom of speech" (Lebanese, Tripoli)
- A male respondent "started changing his opinion about women" (Palestinian refugee from Syria, Saida)
- A male respondent discussed the importance of women's role with his friends (Lebanese, West Bekaa)

In measuring behavior changes, it is however important to distinguish between the short-term and longer-term impact of the series—or, as already discussed, the difference between intended and actual behavior. Among respondents who participated to outreach activities, 37.5% said that they were inspired to take action compared to 24% among those who watched series during the evaluation process. Of these, 11 were female (7 Lebanese, 3 Syrians and 1 Palestinian); 4 felt inspired to participate in political life (3 Lebanese, 1 Syrian), one to open a blog (Palestinian, Saida), one to join a youth organization (Lebanese, Saida) and one to "defend her opinions at home" (Syrian FGD participant, Saida). Eight male respondents felt inspired: one intended to "start listening to my sister's opinions at home" (Palestinian, Saida), and one wanted to join youth organizations (Lebanese, Saida). Noticeably, none of the viewers from Tripoli felt inspired after seeing the episodes.

Finally, a small number of FGD participants gave examples of taking specific steps to participate more actively in political and social life. These are presented below.

Examples of **behavior changes related to political participation**:

- A female Palestinian refugee from Syria in Saida opened a blog after watching the show and was inspired to communicate with leaders. She later realized she did not know how to use the blog and gave up.
- A female participant from Tripoli said that she was inspired to vote for female candidates at the municipal elections in May 2016. She was disappointed to find very few women candidates and speculated that women feared that they would not be elected and therefore did not run for municipal council.
- In the West Bekaa, a male FGD participant said that he participated in informal conversations with youth ahead of the municipal elections and expressed support for women candidates. "This was partly due to Madam President", he said.
- In the Bekaa, one of the female facilitators was inspired by the series and planned to run for municipal council at the next local elections.

**However, the examples of *actual* new behavior derived from the project remain few.** The above examples demonstrate the potential of the series, coupled with the discussions, to inspire young people. However, it is important to note that in all these cases the young people were already active with local NGOs, had attended various trainings and were interested in activism. Targeting already active youth therefore has the potential to contribute

<sup>38</sup> The evaluation team could not independently verify these examples, which come from the endline survey. They remain useful, however, to triangulate and cross-reference information collected through qualitative tools.

to an ongoing process of learning and change, and empower them to become role models and leaders in their communities. On the other hand, younger youth with less exposure to civil society activities find the series and the discussions more interesting and provoking, and if engaged consistently, appear able to develop new ideas and positive attitudes towards women's leadership and youth participation.

## 6.4. Conclusions

In Lebanon the series had very limited reach, having been broadcast on TV stations with negligible audience reach in the country. In the outreach campaign, SFCG's strategy focused on showing one episode to a maximum number of viewers, and engaging participants in discussions facilitated by trained youth facilitators. The outreach took a little over a month and partner organizations reached over 850 beneficiaries. In spite of the limited time frame, the outreach was successful in reaching a large number of young people. However, it was implemented without a clear theory of change or gender analysis, which made it difficult to gauge or support the impact of the series on people's everyday lives.

In general, the evaluation found that the resonance of the series was quite positive. Viewers mostly liked the topics covered, but expressed some criticism about the quality of the series. Resonance is clearly correlated with exposure: viewers who saw multiple episodes, such as the facilitators and one group in the West Bekaa, found it much more engaging than those who saw only one or two episodes.

The evaluation findings suggest that, in order to achieve impact on attitudes and behaviors in Lebanon, one needs to look at the attitudes of specific national groups towards the key themes. The survey results reveal for example several important differences between Lebanese, Syrian and Palestinian respondents. Lebanese respondents were more accepting of women leaders than Syrians, for example. While 83% of the Lebanese and 87% of the Palestinians find it 'very likely' or 'likely' for a woman in a leadership position to be an honest, confident and respected leader, 63% of Syrian respondents gave this answer. At the same time, 13% of the Syrian respondents find it very unlikely for women to be respected leaders, compared to 6% of Lebanese respondents. Additionally, based on the survey, socio-economic status does not appear to significantly influence youth's attitudes towards women leadership. When looking at employed and unemployed youth over 18, they appear equally likely to support women leaders—80% of the employed and 83% of the unemployed say women in a position of power are likely or very likely to be honest, confident and respected leaders. The percentage of youth under 18 with this opinion is roughly the same (82.6%).

Differences in attitudes are also observed across locations. Tripoli is more polarized than Saida, with stronger positive and negative attitudes towards women leaders. In the West Bekaa, which is more rural, support for women's leadership is lower than in the cities.<sup>39</sup> Among those who think it is unlikely for a woman to be a good leader, Lebanese male respondents from Tripoli stand out, with 20% sharing this view, alongside Syrians from the West Bekaa (4 out of 15 males, and 3 out of 19 females). This points to different opportunities for programming in different locations. For example, in areas where youth from one nationality demonstrate visibly different views than their peers from another nationality, in-group work can be prioritized in interventions. Such an approach can allow the gradual emergence of more nuanced understanding of rights, roles and capacities, while avoiding potential conflicts in mixed groups that can reinforce negative stereotypes of the 'other'. At the same time, in areas where views are polarized, activities other than debates can help

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<sup>39</sup> In total 86% of respondents in Saida and 78% in Tripoli think it is either likely or very likely for women to be good leaders. In Tripoli however 50% think it is "very likely" and 8% "very unlikely", while in Saida there are less respondents who chose "very likely" and only 1% who answered with "very unlikely". In the Bekaa, 66% think it is likely or very likely for a woman to be a good leader, and 15% think it is very unlikely.

build a common ground rather than highlight the gap in opinions that emerges during discussions.

An additional intended impact of the outreach activities was contribution to social cohesion. In line with SFCG's priorities in Lebanon, many of the discussion groups brought together a mix of Lebanese, Syrian and Palestinian (including Palestinian refugees from Syria) participants. The underlying assumption with such programming is that increased contact and interaction will contribute to building relationships across nationalities. While the potential of a one-off activity to build trust is limited, the partner organizations often involved youth who already participated in other similar activities. Focus group participants thus said they were used to participating in events with mixed groups, and outreach efforts can therefore be seen as part of the partners' broader engagement of the selected youth participants. As chart 6.5 suggests, the project might have made a contribution to attitudinal changes, especially around the topic refugees. Behavior changes remains, however, difficult to assess at this stage. There is one specific example, related to this, where a facilitator, who was trained in conflict resolution, chose to show the episode on the refugee crisis, and led participants through a role-play: Lebanese participants had to speak on behalf of Syrian refugees and vice versa. This example shows the potential of the series to be used in specific social cohesion intervention, yet such interventions need to be designed with a specific theory of change and methodology.

## 7. Madam President in Tunisia

### 7.1. Country context

In many ways, Tunisia is still grappling with the effects of the 2011 revolution, which drastically changed the political and social course of the country leading President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali to resign and flee the country after 23 years in power. The protests and the civilian resistance were fuelled by high unemployment, food inflation, corruption, a lack of freedom of speech and other political freedoms. After a complex political deadlock, Tunisia's political transition made steady progress in 2014, as the country adopted a new constitution and held both parliamentary and presidential elections. The national dialogue platform, brokered by key civil society organizations, played a crucial role in building consensus among all major political parties. This resulted in the adoption of a consensual roadmap that paved the way for the elections, which took place peacefully at the end of 2014.

The social and economic situation of the country is improving, even if still problematic. According to the Human Development Index (HDI), Tunisia's HDI value for 2014 is 0.721, which put the country in the high human development category (96 out of 188 countries). Tunisia's economy has indeed grown steadily between 1980 and 2014 (its HDI increasing by 48% over that time). In this context, the economic downturn of the last few years—which was caused by the revolution, a drop in tourism revenue and increased insecurity—has been strongly felt, especially among young people. As the World Bank states, “one in three young men in rural Tunisia (33%) and one in five in urban Tunisia are NEET [not in education, employment or training]. Rates are even higher for young women.”<sup>40</sup>

Terrorism has in particular had a terrible impact both economically and socially, and it is one of the country's main challenges today. Three major attacks occurred in 2015 alone, two in the capital itself. Tunisia is also the country of origin for the largest number of foreign fighters joining jihadi groups: according to UN, the number was, as of July 2015, around 5,500. The roots of this phenomenon are to be found, as with many others, in Ben Ali's regime, which monopolized and sought to suppress the religious sphere in public and private life. And while much progress has been done to promote dialogue between secular and Islamist parties, a certain level of divide and opposition still persists.

In terms of gender equality, Tunisia is quite a liberal country compared to its neighbors, and has made significant progress since independence, extensively reforming family law and gradually eliminating gender-based discrimination in relation to health, education and employment. According to the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), between 1990 and 2011, Tunisia sustained this progress, almost halving fertility rates and achieving 94% enrolment of girls in secondary school (a free education law was issued in 1958).<sup>41</sup> In addition, several women's movements emerged in the 1980s. These played a key role in making women's equality central to public debate, and helped in drafting legislation leading to a gender-parity quota on party electoral lists.

These advances were strengthened after the 2011 revolution. The new constitution advanced social and political gains for women and in the October 2014 elections, women representation rose from 4%, in 1990, to 31% of the seats in the National Assembly of People's Representatives. In June 2016, Tunisia's Parliament also approved an amendment ensuring that women have greater representation in local politics.<sup>42</sup> According to the Gender Gap Report 2015, Tunisia is ranked 69<sup>th</sup> in terms of political empowerment, out of 145

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<sup>40</sup> *Tunisia: Breaking the Barriers to Youth Inclusion*, World Bank (2014), page 24.

<sup>41</sup> In the country, 32.8% of adult women have reached at least a secondary level of education compared to 46.1% of their male counterparts.

<sup>42</sup> This amendment, which applies to both municipal and regional elections, includes a proposal for “horizontal and vertical” gender parity in Article 49 of the electoral law. Horizontal parity requires that municipal election lists across Tunisia have an equal number of both men and women, while vertical parity requires that men and women alternate within each list.



countries. The Gender Development Index (GDI)<sup>43</sup> is 0.894 and shows gender social, economic and political differences in the country. In comparison, GDI values for Libya and Morocco are 0.950 and 0.828 respectively. Regarding the Gender Inequality Index (GII)<sup>44</sup>, Tunisia has a value of 0.240, ranking it 48 out of 155 countries in the 2014 index. In comparison, Libya and Morocco are ranked at 27 and 117 respectively on this index. Despite its advances in favor of gender equality and women's empowerment, however, Tunisia remains a patriarchal society and gender-based discrimination persists in public and private life. Although women have active roles in politics and civil society, traditional gender relations persist. Patriarchal norms and practices are also still reflected in the law; and cultural and religious norms also continue to influence policy reforms and everyday life.

Discriminatory provisions are thus still very much present, effectively restricting women's empowerment in the private sphere and supporting conservative social norms regarding the status and role of women. And while women's employment position has improved in Tunisia, labor equality is not guaranteed in practice, particularly in the private sector (even if the Labour Law of 1966 guarantee women and men equal rights to employment). In fact, the economic indicators of the Global Gender Gap Index 2015 show low scores for economic participation and opportunity for women (labor force participation, wage equality, number of managers, etc.). For instance, according to the GI, female participation in the labor market is still significantly lower than male participation: 25% compared to 71% for men.

#### *Role of media*

The Tunisian media sector, heavily controlled and censored during Ben Ali's time, has been liberalized in the years since the revolution. Journalism and freedom of media continue to face challenges, however, as the limited achievements of sector reforms, widespread corruption and growing partisanship still have a relevant impact. According to Fatima el Issawi, "the empowerment of the media community did not automatically lead to a new newsroom culture based on professional media practices. The complex and crucial issues at stake in the political transition and the tough political polarization left the media community in limbo. [...] A discourse of eliminating 'the other', 'the opponent', 'the different', is still triumphing over calls for unity and compromise. With the opening of the private broadcast sector for political reporting, national TV stations quickly became the main spearhead of the political polarization with businessmen investing heavily in the war between 'leftist TV channels' and 'Islamist TV channels'."<sup>45</sup> For example, NESSMA TV is considered to be one of the main media platforms for secular opposition parties.

Regarding the Internet and social media, Tunisia has the reputation of a well-educated and Internet savvy country, at least by Arab standards. Internet penetration has increased dramatically in the last 10 years: it was 46% in 2014, up from 34% in 2009.<sup>46</sup> Tunisians are also very active on social media, with about 20% of the population on Facebook.<sup>47</sup> Relevant for SFCG's project, the Facebook page of NESSMA TV is the third most liked page in Tunisia.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> GDI is based on the sex-disaggregated Human Development Index, defined as a ratio of the female to the male HDI.

<sup>44</sup> GI reflects gender-based inequalities in three dimensions – reproductive health, empowerment, and economic activity.

<sup>45</sup> "Tunisian media and political polarization: glorifying the self, rejecting the other" in Longo, P. and Meringolo, A. (eds.), *The Tunisian media: Between polarization and compromise* (The Monographs of Arab Media Report). Rome, 2015,

<sup>46</sup> Freedom of the Net report 2015

<sup>47</sup> Lowrance, S. (2016), Was the Revolution Tweeted? Social Media and the Jasmine Revolution in Tunisia. *Domes*, 25: 155–176.

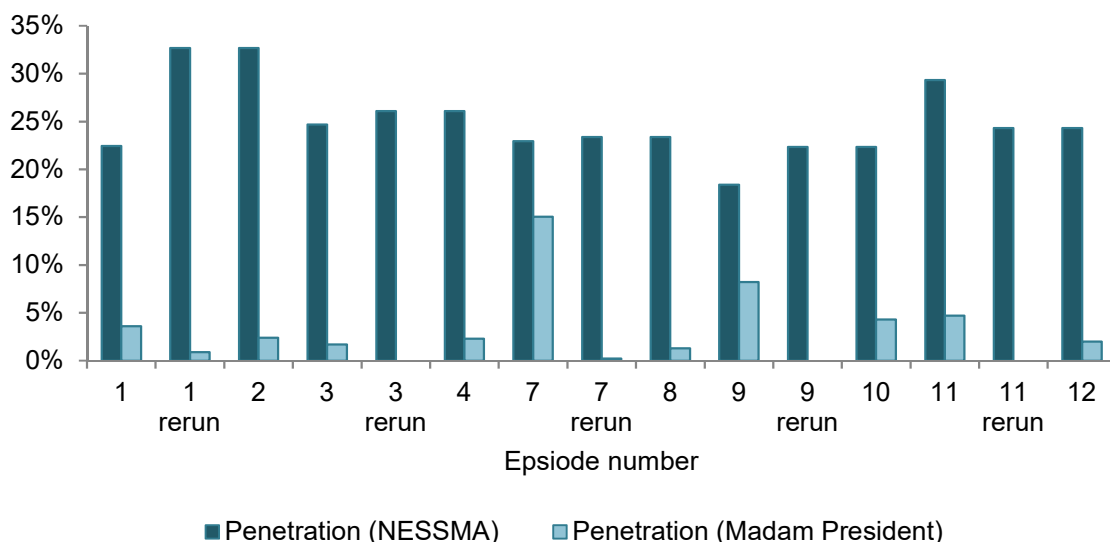
<sup>48</sup> See: <https://www.socialbakers.com/statistics/facebook/pages/total/tunisia/>

## 7.2. Effectiveness

### 7.2.1. Reach

**In Tunisia, SFCG was effective in reaching a mass audience.** Madame President was broadcast by NESSMA TV, which is the third national broadcaster in terms of penetration and audience share. The series was aired from April 16 to June 4, every Saturday and Sunday at 6:55 PM and re-broadcast the day after at 1:45 PM. NESSMA TV has also uploaded all episodes on its YouTube channel, as already discussed in section 5.

Chart 7.1: Penetration share in Tunisia (selected episodes)



The chart above shows the penetration share (at household level) for both NESSMA and Madam President specifically.<sup>49</sup> The data for NESSMA shows how popular the channel is in Tunisia. Penetration share for the series is a bit more varied, jumping from a high of 15% (for episode 7, aired on May 7, 2016) to 0% (for example, for the re-run of episode 3, aired on April 24, 2016). Overall, the average penetration share for Madam President is 3.11%: the number, however, increases to 4.42% for premieres and decreases to 1.23% for re-runs.

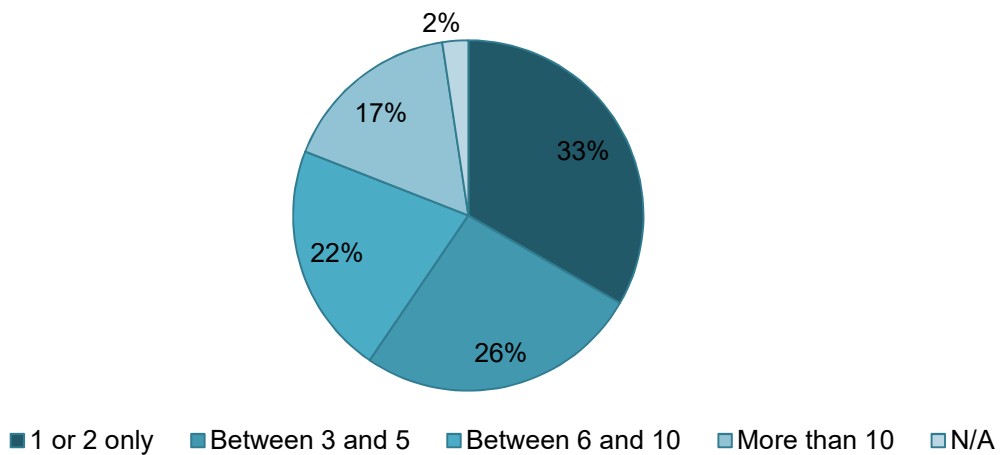
**The outreach campaign in Tunisia was also successful at reaching a large number of people.** Outreach events were organized in March and April 2016. SFCG's local partners in Tunisia held 9 viewing sessions of Madam President during the reporting period, including six in the Beja governorate (for 136 participants in total) and three in the city of Sidi Bouzid. Two episodes were shown during each outreach event, followed by facilitated debates.

**SCFG was definitely able to reach its strategic audience in Tunisia.** Survey data shows that 40% of all respondents who said that they saw Madam President were between 18-to-25-years-old and 50% between 18-to-25-years-old. This data might have a positive bias, as the survey sample includes outreach participants; however, it appears to be confirmed by other sources, such as viewership statistics from NESSMA.

**Most Tunisia viewers saw only a part of the series.** Results about exposure are more positive than in Lebanon, as presented in the chart below, which shows that over 59% of respondents from Tunisia have watched 5 or fewer episodes and that almost 17% have watched more than 10 episodes. This is consistent with the fact that the series was broadcast nationally. However, it still means that three in five viewers have watched only a third of the show.

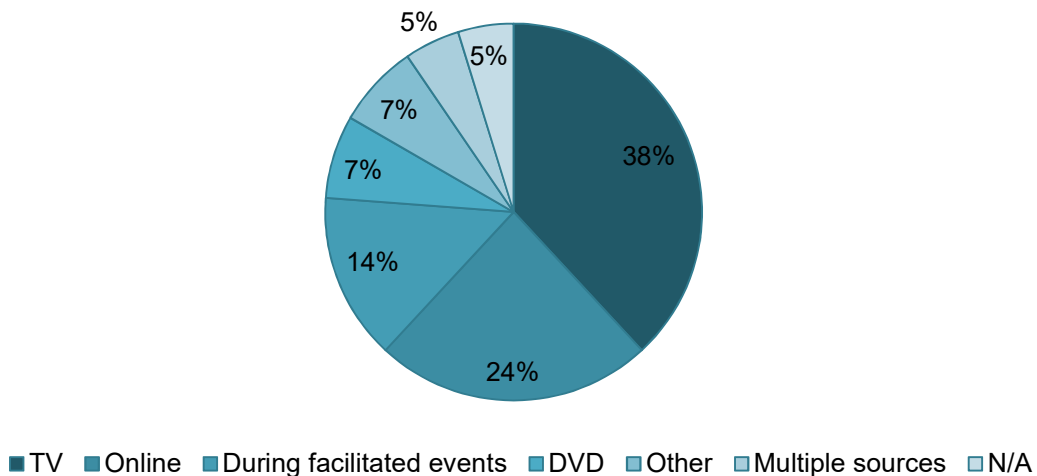
<sup>49</sup> The chart looks at selected episodes, as NESSMA could provide data only for these.

Chart 7.2: Number of episodes watched (Tunisian respondents)



The chart below shows instead how survey respondents answered the question of where they watched Madam President: 14% of them said that they watched the series during outreach events, 38% said on TV and almost 24% online. While these numbers are generally positive, and in line with what one would expect given reach of NESSMA.

Chart 7.3: Where did you watch MP? (Tunisian respondents)



**A challenge in this respect was coordination between SFCG and partners.** The local partners implemented the outreach activities as indicated by SFCG Tunisia. These were generally positive: partner representatives and facilitators both in Beja and in Sidi Bouzid affirmed that the participants took part to the discussions actively and they were satisfied about the level of the exchanges. A partner representative in Sidi Bouzid said that some topics, like gender equality, were discussed for the first time in those groups. However, he also felt that they were just implementing without knowing the details of the project. He said that SFCG asked them to implement the project and gave them a manual, but that their input was not sought. A colleague of his echoed this sentiment: “SFCG worked well, they are open-minded; but they left us half way, without a follow up.” Both discussed this challenge in the specific context of Sidi Bouzid, where the young people with whom they work, and whom attended outreach events, were close to Ben Ali’s regime while others were incarcerated for their religious ideas. These participants were not in favor of discussing some issues, such as gender equality, and it was possible to notice it also during the all-male focus group discussion. It seems that sensitive issues such as those discussed in Madame President could in fact be divisive in their community. This is an aspect that should be kept into consideration in similar project in the future and was indeed considered in the baseline

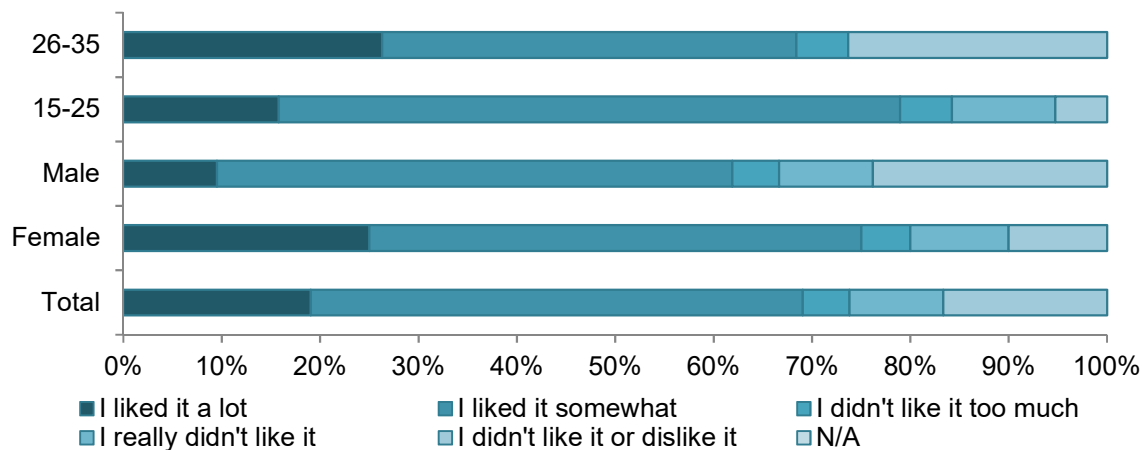
study. A related challenge was the time for the implementation of outreach activities, which was around two months and considered too short by SFCG’s country office and partners.

Finally, SFCG’s Tunisia office also decided to have a conference on gender equality, which took place in Tunis on September 23, 2016. Concretely, the conference was however not considered, per se, as an outreach event for Madame President, but the series was used to support discussions (during a full day of work, extracts of the show were projected for approximately 10 minutes). Yet, the conference was locally driven, with a robust organization guiding it and characterized by vivid debates.

### 7.2.2. Resonance

**In general, people who watched Madam President liked it.** The total number of survey respondents from Tunisia who said that they either liked the series a lot or somewhat is 69%, as per the graph below. This said, only about one in every five respondents (19%) indicated that they liked the series a lot. Interestingly, among respondents there are significant differences in terms of gender and age.

Chart 7.4: What did you think of the series in general?



Female respondents were generally the most enthusiastic group: 25% of them indicated that they liked the series a lot, and only 10% remained neutral. The situation is almost reversed for male responses, where the number of people who answered liking the series a lot decreases to below 10% while those expressing a neutral opinion increases to about 24%. Age-wise, there is a similar pattern. For the 15-to-25-years-old age group, those who liked it a lot are almost 16% against 5% who didn’t like it or dislike it; in the 26-to-36-years-old age group, responses are instead a lot more polarized, with 26% liking Madame President a lot against 26% expressing a neutral opinion.

What the figures in chart 7.4 show is that resonance appears to be correlated with both gender and age—findings that are hardly surprising, but useful nevertheless. The series was particularly well received by women and older youth, less so by men and younger people. In terms of difference between urban and rural locations, a similar breakdown was found: respondents from urban locations liked the series more than those in rural ones (75% vs. 59%).<sup>50</sup> However, it is worth noting that survey numbers in this case appear particularly small and biased: all neutral answers, for example, were recorded in Sidi Bouzid.

<sup>50</sup> Urban locations included Beja and Tunis; rural ones included Gafsa, Kasserine and Sidi Bouzid.

“I liked what [President Noura] represents, her capacity to resist and to implement challenges”. (Beja, female FGD participant)

“To provoke on a female president in the Arab world is a good idea.” (Sidi Bouzid, male FGD participant)

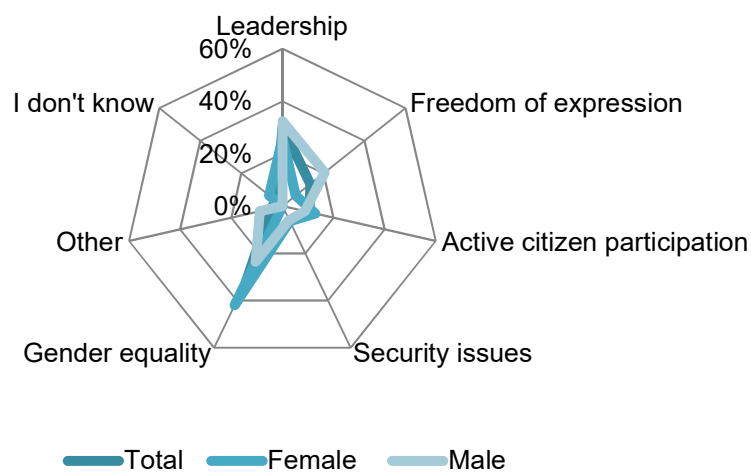
**The character of President Noura resonated particularly well with Tunisian viewers.**

Among the characters, a clear preference for President Noura is present among different viewer groups. A female participant in Sidi Bouzid liked “Madame President as a female leader and how she consulted her father and her husband, but was independent in deciding.” Her “capacity to be a leader and a moderator” and her “ability to speak to the people managing her emotions” were also mentioned. Survey results also confirm this, as almost 48% of Tunisian respondents indicated Noura as their favorite character. Among the female participants in Sidi Bouzid, one mentioned that she liked Noura “not because she is a woman, but because she is competent.” This idea of “competent person”, but also of “not corrupted”, was mentioned several times during the evaluation, highlighting a will on the part of several participants (viewers but also non-viewers) to stress skills without tying them to a specific gender. During the FGD in Sidi Bouzid, Maya was also mentioned as a positive character representing an active youth. In the survey, Maya obtained 9% of preference, slightly less than Malik (11%) and Samar (13%).

**Gender equality and leadership were the themes most appreciated by viewers.**

Outreach participants presented how these two topics (and *female* leadership more specifically) were the predominant part of the discussions. These topics still resonated largely during the FGDs in fact. Other issues, such as freedom of expression and active citizen participation, were much less discussed, and security, the last topic on the facilitators’ agenda, was almost completely disconnected from the mainstream discussions (6% of the viewers stated security as one of the main topics of the show, as the chart below shows). In reading this finding, it is important to note that most people did not watch the entire series, but only a few to a third of the episodes. SFCG’s facilitation manual had questions for all 15 episodes, suggesting that the original plan was to expose participants to the entire series. Same as in Lebanon, however, strategies at country level changed: maximizing numbers of participants was given priority over maximizing exposure to the series.

Chart 7.5: In your opinion, what was the main theme of the show?



**Positively, the project, and outreach events in particular, created opportunities to challenge gender stereotypes.** Outreach participants agreed that it was good to discuss if a woman can reach such a high position as president. Many agreed that women can have

positions of leadership, but acting as a president is too much, as explained by a female participant in Sidi Bouzid: “women can arrive until a certain point; the president’s role is beyond. It was possible for the support of her father and her husband.” Some males were also worried about too much power to women, both in the family and in society, as synthesized by a male student in Beja: “women are ready to talk about human rights in the society, but they are not ready for family duties: all the power is in women’s hands.” The discussions touched other aspects related to gender equality and leadership, such as social and cultural limitations to this kind of roles for women, social circumstances limiting women leadership, and women in the political institutions.

In general, it is clear that the figure of President Noura was again an added value for the discussions, allowing the participants to articulate good exchanges. In fact, participants who viewed and discussed the series showed more complex positions and a slightly more positive attitude toward women’s leadership compared to people who had not seen it. At the same time, outreach participants generally expressed the opinion that Madame President appears as a positive model, but more as a fictional example than a reality to follow in day-to-day life. This finding is also confirmed by how little engagement there was, among participants, following their participation to the project.

President Noura challenged many viewers, but it is not possible to say the same for the male figures of the series. Asked if they could identify themselves with any of the male characters, the attendants of the all-male FGD in Beja replied “none.” Just one of them mentioned Malik as a positive figure. The survey results appear to confirm this attitude: answering the question on their favorite characters, almost 11% of Tunisian respondents indicated him, while the other male character scored very little (between 0% and 4%).

On the whole, the extent to which SFCG was able to promote a discussion on women’s role in the society and on female leadership in particular is a positive and effective result of the project. This is the main issue mentioned by the participants to the outreach activities, by the local facilitators and SFCG’s partners. For instance, some female participants to the FGD in Beja mentioned the value of dynamic discussions with internal disagreements. A male participant in Beja also appreciated the courage to open up about the idea of a female leader in Arab society. Different male participants in Sidi Bouzid appreciated dialogue, interactions, exchange of ideas and “people watching a woman president.” One of them mentioned as positive that people were “discussing about a female president when the previous assumption was [that it was impossible].”

**Some challenges limited how much the show was able to resonate.** Challenges refer to the quality of the product and, in particular, to the dialogues. A female participant in Beja mentioned, for example: “the [series] scenario is too generic, missing details and enough variety of people.” During the same session, another viewer said that the end was too predictable. Another female participant in Beja mentioned women’s dynamics and dialogues. In Sidi Bouzid, a female participant indicated, “the conservative characters are not portrayed realistically in how they try to trap the people.” It seemed to them that the “bad characters” were too one-dimensional, that the plotting against Noura was not a very believable scenario, though not the fact that such conspiracies occur. Staff from NESSMA, who considered the product of good quality, also said that, in their opinion, the series’ messages were too direct and dialogues were far from the kind of real dialogue that takes place in Tunisia (e.g. family dialogues).

**Some critical issues also emerged, especially in Sidi Bouzid.** The FGD with male outreach participants in Sidi Bouzid pointed out three critical issues about the project, which were also confirmed by data collected through other FGDs and interviews: local and regional cultural features, the timing of the series and the role of foreign support. On the first issue, a male participant in Sidi Bouzid affirmed that “the series was produced in Lebanon; it cannot be realistic here.” Another participant in the same group confirmed that he felt that the context of the series is more related to Lebanon, and that the two contexts are different. For

instance, the role of the president in Tunisia is different from the show, since the position has little to no executive power. The issue of language also gave some Tunisian viewers the idea that the series was targeting Lebanon, which NESSMA staff confirmed: “the Jordan-Arabic has not helped [because it] gave a sense of distance.”<sup>51</sup> In addition, the series’ title was in English, and this created an obstacle for local audiences. It should be highlighted that NESSMA is proud of its Maghreb identity and they dub many series and movies from other Arab countries. Tied to this issue, a participant in Sidi Bouzid added that some parts of the series “do not mirror the Arab world: too idealistic; the transition from one president to another is represented as a quite smooth process.” This echoes another comment heard by other outreach participants indicating that they would have liked to see Noura struggle before she even arrived to her position as minister. It seemed like the set-up of the series itself was already too “idealistic” even before the plot moved forward. As a consequence, even though President Noura was a politician who intentionally tries to not belong to the political elites per se, she appeared as part of an unreachable elite.<sup>52</sup>

Concerning timing, the Sidi Bouzid group said that opening the issues of gender equality and women leadership could be positive, but that this was “too far from our time; maybe [it will be] good in 15 years.” The sentiment was echoed in in Beja, where one participant asked: “is now the right time to speak about a female president? People are just liberated by oppression.” This reflected a view, shared by several participants, that the series was not very relevant because of Tunisia’s social and economic challenges. The perceived lack of relevance also fed a suspicion, specifically in Sidi Bouzid, that the project was related to foreign interference in Tunisian affairs. “Is it part of an agenda to feel how the country reacts on this topic?” “Why Tunisia and Lebanon? It seems a message on what is going to happen”; these are some of the statements made during the all-male FGD in Sidi Bouzid. Interestingly, one person from this group articulated his opinion differently than all the others: he said that it was good to discuss issues of gender equality, but that using Tunisian examples would have been more effective.

### 7.2.3 Engagement

**Viewers in Tunisia were engaged online, but findings are ambiguous about the extent of these activities.** The data from the survey shows that just over 42% of all Tunisian respondents have posted about the show on social media: 24% on Facebook, 4% on Twitter and 13% on other social media. However, only a small part of participants to the focus group discussions affirmed that they talked about the show to parents and friends. It was only a small part of them who also discussed about it on the social media. Overall, findings related to online engagement were ambiguous and should be measured in the future with better monitoring data.

## 7.3. Impact

### 7.3.1. Sharing impressions

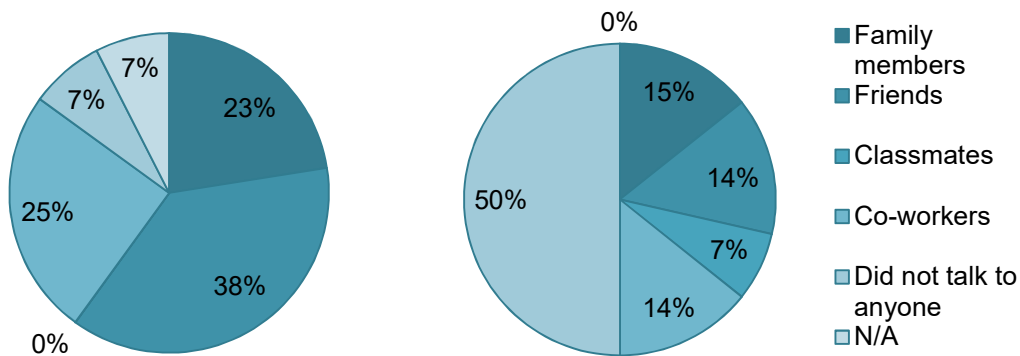
**Positively, viewers in Tunisia talked about the series with family and friends.** The project was successful in that people who watched the show talked about it with different people, with participation to outreach events being a critical factor in this respect. As the chart below shows, 50% of viewers said that they talked to someone about the show, and that figures increases to 93% for outreach participants.

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<sup>51</sup> Interview with representatives from NESSMA TV, Tunis (20 September 2016).

<sup>52</sup> These findings are based on qualitative data only, which resulted from a limited number of FGDs. The data might be biased in other words, although at this stage it is considered valid and reliable, as it was collected from multiple sources, exposed to similar activities and relating similar observations regardless of locations.

Chart 7.6: Have you talked about the show with other people?  
(Outreach participants vs. viewers only)



Overall, it is however important to highlight that sharing did not generally mean having theme-focused discussions, as confirmed through the FGDs. This might be due to different issues identified in the evaluation: limited cultural affinity between Tunisia and the series, language issues and how realistic for Tunisian people was the show perhaps played a role. In Sidi Bouzid it also emerged, in reference to what participants there interpreted as the series' main themes, that they have other priorities. The local partner in Beja summed it up: "there are some changes in the discourses, but not radical changes."<sup>53</sup>

### 7.3.2. Changing attitudes and behaviors

**The project led to some examples of personal changes.** A female student in Beja said that she became more active at community level, joining a student's union and engaging more in a local NGO. Another female participant in the same group echoed her, saying that she was already active and she became more enthusiastic. A female participant in Sidi Bouzid said: "before [the series] I did not think that it was realistic for a woman to be a president, but then I said: why not?" Another female viewer said that she discussed new topics with her family and friends and she got more engaged in her organization as a result.

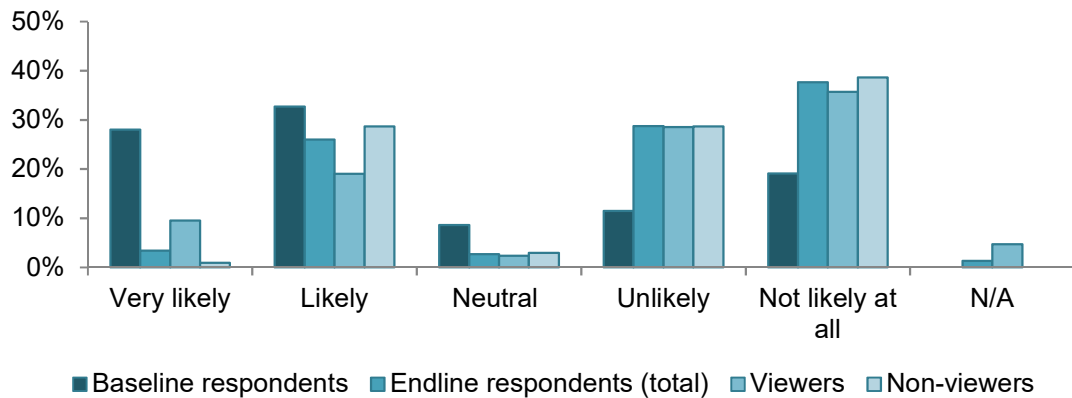
*"Personally, I adopted a lot of ideas [from Madam President]. Initially, I was thinking like my mother that women were ruling only domestically. Then, after the series, I took the ideas of the show."* (Sidi Bouzid, Female FGD participant)

**Overall, evidence of impact is however ambiguous and cannot be isolated from context-related factors.** All examples above do not provide enough evidence for impact, as they are neither sufficiently mature nor specific enough to assess a clear contribution link between Madam President and any attitudinal changes recorded. First, and as already discussed, only a small percentage of people watched the series and most viewers appear to have been exposed only to a part of the series. Secondly, there appear to have been other forces at play, stronger and more influential than the project, which affected people's attitudes and views on some of the key themes touched by the project. These include the dynamic reform processes started after the revolution and the amount of attention and resources that have been given, by the Tunisian government and international donors alike, to issues of gender equality, democratization and youth empowerment. The strength of these forces can be seen in the following chart.

<sup>53</sup> Interview with local partner, Beja (Insert date)



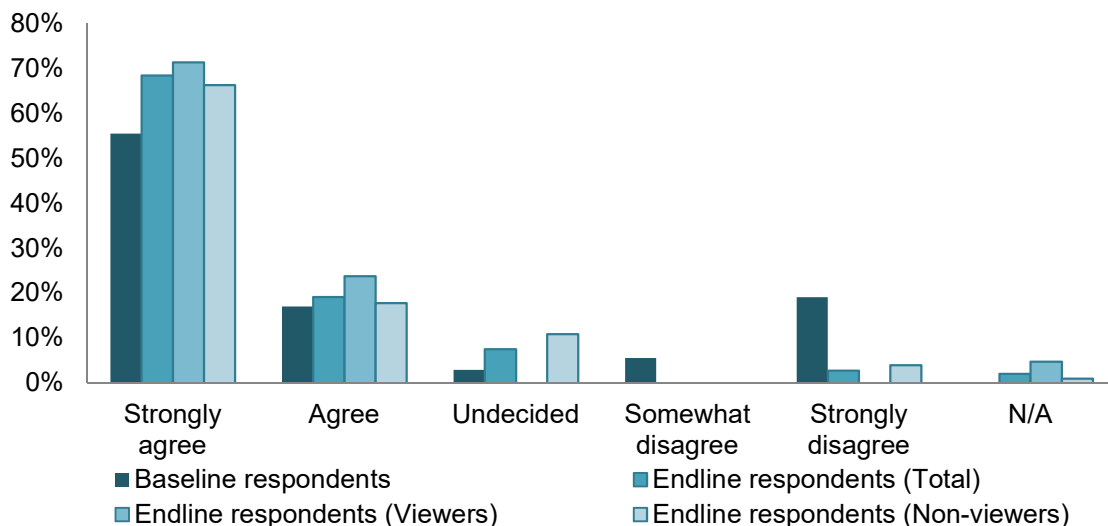
Chart 7.7: If a civil society organizer started a blog that voiced the concerns of youth, how likely is it that elected government officials in your country would listen to the concerns described in it?



According to the chart, the total number of respondents who thought the described scenario as very likely or likely dropped from 61% at baseline to 29% at endline. The number of those who thought it unlikely (those who chose unlikely and not likely at all) increased proportionally, but without any significant differences among endline respondents: 64% of viewers picked the negative answers (up from 31% for baseline respondents) compared to 67% of non-viewers. What this data suggests is that people in Tunisia have grown more pessimistic about citizen engagement in their country since early 2015, but that the project does not appear to have impacted attitudes one way or the other.

**This notwithstanding, the evaluation found that Madam President might have the potential for influencing behavior.** This evidence is presented in the chart below, which shows again comparisons in attitude changes, this time related to women’s political and social participation, between baseline, endline survey respondents, viewers and non-viewers.

Chart 7.8: If a female acquaintance of yours starts expressing her social or political views publicly by blogging or participating to protests, would you encourage her to continue?



The survey results show that in the period between the baseline and endline surveys (March to August 2015), the attitudes of all respondents changed for the better: 55% of baseline respondents strongly agreed with the statement about supporting a female acquaintance if she decided to express her social or political views; in the endline survey, this number is over 68%. Similarly, respondents who strongly disagreed decreased from 19% to below 3%.

More interesting findings, however, come from comparing viewers and non-viewers to baseline respondents. Among viewers, those who strongly agreed with the statement increased the most (more than 71%) and those who strongly disagreed decreased to 0%. For non-viewers, instead, there were increases, but less than those experienced by viewers. The following table summarizes the differences between all the different groups:

Table 7.1: If a female acquaintance of yours starts expressing her social or political views publicly by blogging or participating to protests, would you encourage her to continue?  
(Baseline vs. Endline vs. Viewers vs. Non-viewers)

Respondents	Baseline	Endline/ Non-viewers	Difference/ BL vs. Non-viewers	Endline/ Viewers	Difference/ BL vs. Viewers	Difference/ Non-viewers vs. Viewers
Strongly agree	55,50%	66,34%	10,84%	71,43%	15,93%	5,09%
Agree	17,00%	17,82%	0,82%	23,81%	6,81%	-5,99%
Undecided	2,91%	10,89%	7,99%	0,00%	-2,90%	-10,89%
Disagree	5,50%	0,00%	-5,50%	0,00%	-5,50%	0,00%
Strongly disagree	19,10%	3,96%	-15,14%	0,00%	-19,10%	-3,96%
N/A	-	0,99%	0,99%	4,76%	4,76%	3,77%

The survey results have obviously to be taken with a grain of salt: the total sample was small and purposively selected, so likely biased in terms of favoring individuals with positive attitudes to begin with. What the table shows, however, is that Madam President might be having an effect on changes on people's attitudes towards women's roles and participation in society *in addition to* (or perhaps reinforcing) other forces already at play on this issue. Perhaps this is an area to further explore in future evaluations.

## 7.4. Conclusions

In Tunisia, Madam President's reach was solid due to the agreement signed with NESSMA TV. This ensured a good level of exposure for the series, both on satellite TV and, to a lesser extent, social media. The outreach campaign reached a small additional segment of the target audience, but their engagement beyond the project activities was limited. The local partners were involved, but felt more like implementers: they received documents and manuals from SFCG's Tunisia office, but were not asked about their needs. The time for implementing outreach activities was very short and ultimately inadequate for promoting the kind of outcome and impact-level changes sought by SFCG.

In general people who watched Madam President liked it, although not enthusiastically so. Data shows that one in two viewers (and nice in ten outreach participants) talked about the series with other people. Among the characters, Noura was the most inspiring one, while the whole series was considered as having some non-realistic traits. It also seems that in Tunisia the show was perceived as far from local cultural, social and political dynamics. The show's messages that most resonated were gender equality and leadership, while other issues, such as freedom of expression, active citizen participation and security were much less discussed.

Ultimately, the impact of the show cannot be fully demonstrated with the data collected. Examples of attitudinal and behavior changes do not amount to enough evidence for impact. In the case of Tunisia, unlike Lebanon, there is in other words an absence of evidence. Positively, discussions during outreach events were successful at challenging the views of participating young people, and creating safe space for dialogue and constructive

confrontation and some personal changes. Positively, there are indications that the series could potentially be contributing to behavior change related to women's political participation, as chart 7.8 shows. However, these changes might be due to larger forces linked to the country's ongoing political and social transitions. In this respect the evaluation could not, unfortunately, isolate project-specific contributions from contextual factors. Future research efforts, perhaps using a theory-based approach, might be able to better explore this.

## 8. Recommendations

### 8.1. General and online dissemination

Based on the evaluation findings, the following recommendations are aimed to increase the effectiveness of Madam President in general and on online platforms specifically:

1. Ensure coordination and integration across platforms, partners and activities. As discussed, Madam President's reach was negatively influenced by the fact that dissemination efforts were fragmented. SFCG had a strategy to integrate content, using the website as a reference tool and driving all traffic through Facebook, but this was not effectively executed. In the future, SFCG should develop stronger strategies for coordinating efforts across platforms.
2. Related to the above, SFCG should make sure that dedicated staff and systems are in place to manage online engagement. Broadcasters should also be better incentivized to coordinate content dissemination.
3. Adapt content and tactics to specific platforms. Different platforms require different formats: according to the evaluation findings, YouTube appears to be best for long videos, Facebook for clips. Platforms also offer different tactics: paid advertisement on Facebook clearly works to reach a high number of users. SFCG should ensure that it takes advantages of all that the different platforms can offer.
4. Invest resources in a more consistent and rigorous monitoring of how the series is being disseminated. In particular, whenever web analytics are available, make sure that they are captured regularly, including from broadcasters, recorded and analyzed.

### 8.2. Lebanon

Based on the evaluation findings and specific suggestions proposed by participants, the following recommendations are aimed to increase the impact of Madam President in Lebanon:

5. Prioritize the use of Madame President in structured, facilitated activities, engage the same group of participants over time and combine with other activities on the topics of the show. As demonstrated by the impact of the project on the facilitators, a combination of activities and a level of ownership of the process are essential for developing positive views of women's leadership and active citizenship.
6. Allocate adequate time for the preparation of discussion sessions including the development of tailored approaches for engaging groups of different nationalities or backgrounds. Provide continuous training and support to the facilitators to ensure that the sessions are facilitated professionally and with the required cultural and conflict sensitivity.

7. Consider that specific sub-groups may have noticeably different attitudes towards key topics. Ensure that the groups are structured in a way that allows participants to feel comfortable expressing their views without being ostracized, i.e. by using facilitators whose views are not known to the participants.
8. Consider the development of a shorter version of Madam President that can be used as a tool in trainings and discussions on women's leadership. As demonstrated by the viewership of the shorter 'Behind the Scenes' videos, viewers are more likely to engage with shorter video products that provoke discussion.
9. Broadcast the series or key episodes as part of a TV program that discusses the issues of the series with key groups. TV debates can be initiated with different groups including politicians, opinion-makers, civil society representatives and artists, and put on air immediately before or after the broadcast of Madam President.
10. Actively promote the show on social media to stimulate interest in the series (and accompanying TV products) and generate viewership. Link the show with real life, local examples of women's leadership to enhance resonance.
11. SFCG's country office should develop interventions together with the local partners and tailor them to the needs and attitudes of youth in each location based on a jointly developed theory of change. When activities aim at strengthening social cohesion, consider an analysis of dividers and connectors for each group and ensure that divisive topics, such as women's leadership, are approached as part of broader structured engagement.

### 8.3. Tunisia

Based on the evaluation findings and specific suggestions proposed by participants, the following recommendations are aimed to increase the impact of Madam President in Tunisia:

12. SFCG's country office should develop outreach activities together with the local partners and tailor them to local needs and attitudes in each location, avoiding a top-down approach both between headquarters and the local office and between the local office and local partners.
13. SFCG's country office should keep the local partners involved in the different phases on the project and provide them with more support to ensure that the sessions are facilitated properly and without exacerbating cleavages among the participants.
14. Enhance local resonance, if not in the show, at least in the outreach activities. In relation to the show, Madam President could be made into a broader brand (as it is with "The Team"), but then produced with local actors, local language and local cultural understanding. In relation to outreach activities, if changes to the show cannot be made, it would be useful to create a manual that is specific to Tunisia and uses local examples of leadership and women empowerment.
15. Invest more time and strategic analysis to plan the promotion of the show on social media and to synchronize it with other communication tools, and also consider having "local ambassadors" for the series.

## **9. Annexes**

Annex 1 – Evaluators' bios

Annex 2 – List of interviews, FGDs and surveys collected

Annex 3 – Key project indicators

Annex 4 – Evaluation terms of reference

Annex 5 – Data collection tools