



# **INTERSECTIONALITY BOOKLET**

■■■ HEINRICH BÖLL STIFTUNG  
TUNISIA  
Tunis

**Editing and proofreading:**  
*Siavash Eshghi*

ISBN 978-9938-27-018-1



9 789938 270181

# INTERSECTIONALITY BOOKLET

## Research Team

Chems Radhouani Abdi

Hazem Chikhaoui

Henda Chennaoui

Ramy Khouili

Tunis • December 2023

# INDEX

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>I. Literature Review</b>	<b>10</b>
1. The Emergence of the Concept of Intersectionality	11
2. The Evolution of Intersectionality within Black Feminism	15
3. From Black Feminism to Other Feminisms: <i>Postcolonial Feminism as an Example</i>	20
4. Roots of Intersectional Research and Activism in Countries of the Global South	23
5. From Black Feminism to Other Knowledge Fields and Frameworks: <i>Intersectional Environmentalism as an Example</i>	25
<b>II. Intersectionality in the Tunisian Context</b>	<b>30</b>
1. Intersectionality in Knowledge Fields and Activism in Tunisia: <i>The Reception of the Term 'Intersectionality' in the Tunisian Context</i>	31
2. The Position of Intersectionality in Tunisian Knowledge Productions	35
<b>III. Intersectionality in Field Research</b>	<b>38</b>
1. Full Adoption of Intersectionality as a Term, Methodology, and Practice	40
2. Partial Adoption of Intersectionality as a Methodology and Practice	43
3. Practical Adoption of Intersectionality as a Practice	46
3.1. Practices within the Framework of Associations and Groups	47
3.2. Cross-organizational Practices: <i>The Congress of Social and                 Citizen Movements as an Example</i>	49





**IV. Categories of Intersectionality in the Tunisian Context 54**

**V. Training Guide for Intersectionality 61**

**CONCLUSION 110**





# **INTRODUCTION**

We present to you this booklet at a time when the world is constantly changing and evolving to resist forms of subjugation and dependency, against policies that have impoverished, marginalized, and subjected peoples and individuals to all forms of violence and still continue to exert their domination.

Such resistance movements persist and convey their messages from one generation to another despite the suppression and systemic silencing. Since the 1960s, the world has witnessed the emergence of wide-ranging social, political, and economic movements demanding an end to wars and colonization, the realization of justice, and progress towards freedom. As part of these resistance movements, we have existed and intersected with each other in different places and times, carrying our burdens, being present in various arenas, and responding to the same issues from different perspectives and priorities; We have long been intersectional in practice, without even defining it as such!

The same universal demands were and continue to be central to the Tunisian social, economic and political scene. Since May 1968, all anti-colonial, labor rights and student movements have consistently called for freedom and social justice. Over a decade after the outbreak of the Tunisian Revolution on December 17, 2010 / January 14, 2011, the same intersectional slogans and demands are still raised in public squares. The protests and marches of 2021 across Tunisia are clear proof of this. If we seek to understand these protests from an intersectional perspective, we will find that the participating groups are diverse: women and men from impoverished neighborhoods, those affected by unjust economic policies, feminist activists opposing the patriarchal police state and crimes against women, LGBTQI+ individuals advocating for personal freedoms and striving to assert their right to

public presence. All of these groups, experiencing various forms of multi-dimensional oppression, gathered in the arenas of struggle and echoed the same slogans in unison.

Other multi-dimensional movements continue to take place around the country. Yet, the diversity of resistance at the heart of these movements were missed by all official and mainstream coverages. For instance, the movements demanding the right to water for regions of the country suffering from thirst, hunger, and poverty were so poorly covered it reached the point of censorship and suppression. The official media treatment of these events did not do justice to their significance. We did not hear the voices of protesting landless female farmers due to laws and male-dominated customs, except in some alternative media outlets attempting to shed light on overlooked issues that are absent in the mainstream narratives. The same was true of the struggles of Black African migrant women and men facing racism, poverty, and marginalization, or the issues of people with disabilities marginalized and excluded from attention and research.

Despite its widespread popularity globally, the term 'intersectionality' remains somewhat mysterious at both the intellectual and the conceptual levels, especially in countries of the Global South.

Many associate the term 'intersectionality' with academic research fields characterized by a technical and scientific nature that is not easily comprehensible. However, for many, the term also belongs to the field of activism, somehow allowing one, consciously or otherwise, to simultaneously combat the various forms of oppression, violence, and discrimination.



Intersectionality has often been drawn into vague discussions, adding to its layers of ambiguity. For instance, it is often linked to cultural specificity by dominant religious voices, who employed it politically against rights and freedoms. In other words, in many contexts intersectionality was sometimes interpreted as the antonym of universality and was used as an excuse to justify the restriction of rights and liberties. These were attempts to associate it with certain ideological purposes to diminish its power to bring together marginalized groups.

Affected communities worldwide, such as queer communities and Black women, have understood that intersectionality enables them to analyze systems of oppression and the cultural reality that reinforce the dominant party's strength and its hold over power mechanisms. These movements and many others see their independence and the achievement of their political, economic, and intellectual maturity as a strategic step aimed at dismantling oppressive systems under all names.

During a year and a half of discussions about and the collective writing of this booklet, we encountered many of the above challenges and more. Our aim was to have a critical approach towards telling the Tunisian version of intersectionality. Through this narration, we wanted to debase the common (mis)perception that intersectionality in Tunisia is a flat and dry story. On the contrary, we aimed to show that not only does it exist as a vibrant practice in the country, it also predates the theory or the terminological use of the word.

Accordingly, the first part of our work focuses on how to take intersectionality as a concept out of the realm of academic studies and present it to various actors, interested parties, and individuals. Our objective is to make this booklet accessible beyond the complex

and often elitist academic studies. We strive to clearly present the most important ideas so that they could serve as companions for anyone wishing to study intersectionality as a theory, methodology and practice.

Following the first step, we then seek to extract intersectionality from the Tunisian context, gathering the most significant experiences that allow us to understand the various degrees of its application and the mystery that is often associated with it.

Thus, with this booklet, we aim to reach all actors in Tunisian civil society, social movements, journalists, human rights activists and individuals involved in various humanitarian causes. We aspire for this to become a reference for anyone who wishes to adopt intersectionality as a lens for understanding reality and as a tool to deconstruct and analyze various systems of oppression and their varied impacts on our lives and livelihoods.

Our ambition is for intersectionality to be accessible to everyone, without theoretical complications and relatively simple to apply to different contexts. We believe that intersectionality has traveled all over the world, aiming to achieve a certain level of political and social maturity that makes it a means of liberation from the shackles of oppression and discrimination in all its forms.

Methodologically, the working team initially conducted a literature review. In the second stage, they carried out in-depth interviews with representatives of Tunisian associations interested in issues that can be analyzed from an intersectional perspective. Finally, a field survey was conducted on both the theoretical and practical aspects of intersectionality to understand the extent of its practice.

Accordingly, and after extensive discussions and collective writing, this booklet was completed in three main parts:

1. The literature review of intersectionality, which serves as the foundation for the synthesis of the various intellectual, theoretical, and scientific contributions to intersectionality at significant historical milestones.
2. The study of intersectional practices as both discourse and association activities in the Tunisian context and the analysis of various interviews conducted that helped us understand the extent of the application of intersectionality and its domains. This enabled us to better comprehend the areas of deficiency in practicing intersectionality.
3. The presentation of a series of exercises that are designed to assist actors within various associations and activist frameworks in applying intersectionality. A detailed training guide has been developed for this purpose. Additionally, videos that can be used in training sessions and activities are included.

In conclusion, we hope that this booklet will serve as a starting point for thinking and engaging in collective intersectional activism.



# **LITERATURE**

---

# **REVIEW**

---



The concept of intersectionality is relatively recent, only clearly emerging in the intellectual and academic scene in the late 1980s. Hence, the scholarly uses of intersectionality in research fields are a contemporary phenomenon worldwide.

The history of writers, intellectuals and activists rebelling against various forms of oppression is rich with narratives and contents through which we can understand the intersection of multiple issues, including slavery, occupation, torture, killing for ethnic, racial or gender-based motivations and so forth.

Given the concise nature of this introductory literature review, it is challenging to collect and enumerate this heritage in a way that does justice to the vast range of work done on the topic of intersectionality. However, we have attempted, in turn, to refer to sources that may help further clarify the theoretical part, especially in aligning it with the Tunisian activist reality.

## 1. The Emergence of the Concept of Intersectionality

There are numerous definitions of intersectionality in the field of feminist studies and other disciplines. However, in the context of this booklet, we will attempt to present the commonly agreed-upon definitions that established intersectionality as a theoretical and activist framework.

In 1989, the American academic Kimberlé Crenshaw wrote a seminal article titled *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics*. In this article, she points out that Black women did not find themselves adequately represented within traditional forms

of anti-discrimination, which typically addressed discrimination based on race against Black men and discrimination based on gender against White women. Crenshaw argues that the situations of Black women are determined by being both women and Black simultaneously. The gender-based discrimination they face is different from the discrimination faced by White women, and the racial discrimination they experience is distinct from that faced by Black men. Thus, these situations, where gender-based discrimination intersects with racial discrimination, become specific to Black women alone.

In her article, Crenshaw discusses a case of Black women workers she defended in court against a car factory that refused to hire them. The judge argued that these women were not victims of discrimination since there were White women workers and Black male workers in the factory, dismissing charges of discrimination based on gender and race. Crenshaw clarified that the reality was more complex than what the judge stated, leading her to name something that had always been tangible but not explicitly articulated: intersectionality.

Intersectionality, as an analytical tool, helps us understand the diverse experiences of women who suffer from multidimensional oppression. In this case, Black women not only face male oppression but also racial oppression. While the car factory employs both White and Black workers, along with women, seemingly denying charges of racism and sexism as the judge suggested, a closer examination from an intersectional perspective reveals that the factory only employs black men and restricts White women to specific roles.

When we refer here to intersectionality as an existing practice without being a standalone concept, we want to point out an important stage in the history of the struggle of Black women. Many literary works (such as

*The Bluest Eye* by the African-American author Toni Morrison, *The Color Purple* by the renowned author Alice Walker, and *To Kill a Mockingbird* by the novelist Harper Lee) have shown women's awareness of themselves as victims of various forms of exploitation, persecution, and discrimination, without their experiences being encompassed within a clear theory. This can be traced back to the history of the formation of conscious resistance by Black women against a reality governed by racism and masculinity. This awareness was fundamentally social and political as reflected in the persistent resistance of Black women against all forms of suppression, including the refusal of their bodies being used in exchange for unpaid labor, exploited in various forms of work and deprived of the right to express or protest. In other words, various expressions against different forms of discrimination have led to an awareness that the livelihood of Black women is compounded by multiple aspects of exclusion and injustice.

One of the most significant and pioneering figures in this context, illustrating the ways in which Black women were suppressed and their attempts to liberate themselves from it, is Sojourner Truth. She suffered from slavery, rape, forced marriage, beatings and perpetual exploitation. All of these injustices drove her to fight against the exploitation and oppression faced by Black women in the United States. Her famous speech in Ohio in 1851 had a profound impact on the audience, especially when she uttered her iconic slogan "Ain't I a Woman?", urging White feminists to consider the reality of Black women. Today, this can be expressed as equality among women in achieving freedom and social justice.

Truth's experience had a significant impact on the Black women activist circles, primarily through her famous book *Narrative of Sojourner*

*Truth*, which was also a fundamental pillar in the struggle against forms of slavery at that time. It is considered a significant intellectual contribution to the abolitionist movement in the United States.

Truth's struggles in the mid-nineteenth century, which, according to the commonly accepted timeline, coincided with the emergence of the first wave of feminism,<sup>1</sup> represented one of the earliest tangible imaginings of an intersectional analysis. What she articulated encompassed the oppression and injustice faced by individuals based on gender, class and race simultaneously.

The accumulation of literary and academic writings and productions have directly contributed to the nourishment of the concept of intersectionality. In this context as well, intersectionality is often used as a tool by actors interested in topics including healthcare, sexual orientations, and diverse gender expressions. In this booklet, we cite as examples the emergence of the gender concept and the struggles of the LGBTQI+ community, advocating for the importance of treatment for individuals living with Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV).

---

<sup>1</sup> Some theoretical delineations distinguish four waves of feminism in terms of ideology and politics. The first wave of feminism emerged in the late 19th century and early 20th century, primarily advocating for property rights, suffrage, and entry into the political sphere. The second wave of feminism, which began in the mid-20th century, was characterized by its demand for complete equality and opposition to various forms of discrimination. The third wave of feminism began to take shape in the 1990s, emphasizing diversity in terms of race and sexual orientation. The fourth wave is the contemporary wave that began with the spread of the internet and the emergence of social media, gaining momentum with movements like #MeToo. This wave is distinguished by its cyber-feminist activism.



## 2. The Evolution of Intersectionality within Black Feminism

Black feminists emerged during the second wave of feminism (mid-late 1900s), in particular due to the unchallenged racial and class privileges of White liberal feminists, who until then dominated the feminist movement, marginalized the struggles of Black feminists, and focused on demands that emphasized their racial and class privilege. During that time, Mary Ann Weathers, a Black political and feminist activist, published an article titled *An Argument for Black Women's Liberation as a Revolutionary Force*,<sup>2</sup> critiquing the notion that Black, colored and white women share a 'common oppression'. About a year later, the Third World Women's Alliance published the *Black Women's Manifesto*, clearly affirming the intersectional analysis of the types of oppression experienced by Black and colored women, combining race, gender, and social class.

On the other hand, many Black feminists, especially lesbians, did not join the civil rights movement in the United States. Instead, they advocated for a separate political space through the Combahee River Collective, addressing the intersection of forms of repression and persecution they faced distinct from other Black women. The Combahee River Collective Statement, published in 1977, is considered a reference for radical leftist feminist movements that rely on intersectionality in their analysis of reality and political positioning. The Statement emphasized the importance of politicizing the reality of Black women within their communities and families. It further highlighted the crucial links between domestic and sexual violence perpetrated by Black men and the

---

<sup>2</sup> Mary Ann Weathers, *An Argument for Black Women's Liberation as a Revolutionary Force*, in *No More Fun and Games: A Journal of Female Liberation*, 1969.

violence perpetrated by White individuals and the authorities in general. Following this line of thought, the African-American writer Shahrazad Ali published her book *The Blackman's Guide to Understanding the Blackwoman* in 1989.<sup>3</sup> In this book, she clarified that Black men's violence against Black women is a direct reflection of all the racial oppression and persecution they endured from White men and White hierarchical power. The diversity of opinions among Black feminists is arguably a direct result of an already existing intersectional approach/sensibility amongst activists and theorists within the wider movement. The Black feminist movement demonstrates how the experiences of Black women cannot be explained/analyzed solely by highlighting conventional and distinct forms of discrimination; rather, it is only possible through a specific understanding of a shared reality that involves three interrelated dimensions simultaneously: discrimination, exploitation, and oppression based on gender, social class, and race. In this context, it is important to briefly mention the works of several theorists.

We have previously mentioned that intersectionality became associated with American academic feminist circles in the 1980s and gradually gained popularity in activist circles and intellectual gatherings. Among the most influential thinkers who emerged during this period and contributed greatly to the theoretical framework of intersectionality was the American sociologist Patricia Hill Collins. She argues that dominant groups, culturally, socially, politically and economically, seek to maintain their complete and direct control over Black groups, primarily Black women, by eliminating all forms of awareness within them. She further emphasizes that the only way to overcome this complex domination is to transcend its interwoven dimensions.

---

<sup>3</sup> Shahrazad Ali, *The Blackman's Guide to Understanding the Blackwoman*, 1989.

Collins argues that the exploitation of Black women was necessary for American capitalism to maintain a system of domination, consisting of three complex aspects:<sup>4</sup>

- A class-based domination rooted in slavery and exploitation, manifesting in extremely low wages that did not ensure a decent standard of living. This aspect encompassed nearly the entire economic dimension.
- The systematic political marginalization of Black women for extended periods, depriving them of their right to active participation in elections, party formation, and other forms of collective organization. This included depriving them of legal rights and placing obstacles to educational opportunities, whether directly or indirectly.
- A long-standing racist ideology against Black groups. This played a significant role in their exclusion through the legacy of stereotypical images from the era of slavery and its practices, the entrenchment of these images in social and cultural structures, their direct impact on public policies, and their normalization.

One of Collins' important contributions is the development of an analytical framework called the 'Matrix of Domination'.<sup>5</sup> This framework is utilized in sociological analyses related to feminist and gender studies to explain and interpret issues of race, class and gender. Accordingly, despite being recognized as distinct social categories, they are viewed as interconnected at a deep level and are shaped through interaction with other classifications such as sexual orientation, religion and age.

---

<sup>4</sup> Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment*, 1990.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*

The concept of the 'Matrix of Domination' draws attention to the various inherent complexities within the hierarchical structure of dominant systems in social life. Collins based the development of this theoretical framework on the lived experiences and social realities of African-American women.

In light of this introduction, it is essential to also address a key issue that is inseparable from the context of complex racial and structural violence. This pertains to the work of Christine Delphy on the 'economy of the household'.<sup>6</sup> In her work, Delphy illustrates the forms of exploitation of women's efforts in providing non-monetized material services. She argued that women undertake unpaid labor within the domestic sphere and fulfill their 'natural role' within patriarchal societies. This analysis led to the emergence of the radical-materialist feminist currents, which strongly challenge the essentialist view of women defined according to conventional gender roles.<sup>7</sup> This intellectual movement opposed everything related to the patriarchal view of household care, reproduction, children, and domestic matters.

In the same context, approximately eight years before Crenshaw's article on intersectionality, Angela Davis, in her book *Women, Race and Class*,<sup>8</sup> highlighted the struggle of Black women against class exploitation. In this book, Davis emphasizes women's persistent efforts in the fight for their full rights, whether they were political, economic, social, or cultural. She points out instances in the history

---

<sup>6</sup> Christine Delphy, *L'ennemi principal, économie politique du patriarcat*, 2013.

<sup>7</sup> Essentialist views regarding the role of women in society are regularly criticized by thinkers and activists within feminist and gender studies. Essentialists base all perceptions, clichés or stereotypes that define women's roles in society as wives, mothers and housekeepers on the 'natural' argument that "nature has assigned these tasks to women." In other words, they fail to acknowledge that social roles are historical, cultural, and political constructs.

<sup>8</sup> Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race and Class*, 1981.



of suffrage movements that failed to not encompass all women due to the underlying racial perspective that fragmented political awareness within the movement. Davis also illustrates the historically close connection between the struggle against racism on the one hand, and ensuring political consciousness for Black women on the other.

Angela Davis's thesis is deeply rooted in her activism as a communist against the domination of the capitalist system, as indicated by her intersectional analysis of the reality of oppression. For her, it is crucial that the goal of the Black feminist struggle, to which she belongs, is to dismantle the power relations that allow the patriarchal system to dominate all social representations. This is because the status quo made of the intersection of multiple domination systems and power dynamics benefits from excluding non-normative individuals (in terms of their sexual orientations or racial identities) and perpetrates various forms of violence and discrimination against them. Thus, the existing reality becomes an ally to the oppressors. The aim of 'intersectional activism', for her, is to eliminate forms of exploitation and discrimination that only serve the existing capitalist system.

In the same way, the Black feminist activist and thinker Bell Hooks points out that activists striving to combat gender-based discrimination without supporting struggles against racism or classism inadvertently help preserve the cultural foundations of all forms of oppression and repression. Even if they sometimes manage to initiate seemingly significant reforms, their efforts will not lead to any fundamental or revolutionary change.<sup>9</sup>

Despite the historical distance or differences in methodological and analytical approaches, all Black feminist women theorists implicitly agree that the intersection of class, race and gender discrimination is

---

<sup>9</sup> Bell Hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*, 2017.

a clear and integral part of the theory of intersectionality as presented clearly by Kimberlé Crenshaw.

Before concluding this section related to early practices and theoretical framings of intersectionality within the context of the Black feminist movement, it is important to mention writings that expressed experiences conflicting with the prevailing norms, highlighting the injustices and oppression faced by non-normative individuals. These writings can be traced back to the 1950s and 1960s, for example, with the writings of the author James Baldwin,<sup>10</sup> who was a significant symbol of intellectual revolution and activism for being a Black homosexual writer. Baldwin clearly demonstrated that American democracy was nothing more than a misleading facade in the face of a reality laden with discrimination, inequality, and relationships of domination based on race, class, and gender and sexual expression. He may not have explicitly used the term 'intersectionality', but everything he wrote in his novels, poems and plays indicates the existence of the intersection of various factors such as class, sexual orientation, socio-economic considerations, slavery and racial discrimination.

### **3. From Black Feminism to Other Feminisms:** ***Postcolonial Feminism as an Example***

At a time when the concept of intersectionality was gradually crystallizing within the African-American struggle, some postcolonial researchers, scholars and theorists were using concepts such as interconnectedness<sup>11</sup> to deconstruct layers of domination and to

---

<sup>10</sup> James Baldwin's work is quite diverse, from which we strongly suggest *Go tell it to the Mountain*, *Giovanni's Room*, and *Nobody Knows My Name: More Notes from a Native Son*.

<sup>11</sup> The concept of 'interconnectedness' was used by Angela Davis and she continued to use it even after the emergence of the concept of intersectionality.

analyze types of discrimination and their interconnections and intersections. Just as Davis and others used the tools of intersectional analysis without naming them as intersectionality, writers like Gayatri Spivak, Chandra Talpade Mohanty and Uma Narayan laid the foundation for intersectional feminist analysis, considering the intertwined layers of domination, including masculinity, racism, colonial hegemony, and their implications on the perceptions of women in the Global South by white feminism.

In her article *Can the Subaltern Speak?*, Spivak explains that during the British colonial rule in India, the colonizer claimed to advocate for colored women.<sup>12</sup> The issue boiled down to the notion that “white men would save colored women – i.e. Indian women – from colored men – i.e. Indian men.” In this article, Spivak demonstrates how colored women were seen as a territory for colonial investment. This investment continues in European countries today, where governing systems use colored and immigrant women as a crucial element to subdue minorities or attempt to integrate them through emancipation. In this context, Spivak analyzes white feminism, highlighting the distorted view it holds about colored women and the negation of the colonial aspect of their suffering, suppressing their voices under the label of universal feminism.

Chandra Talpade Mohanty, another influential thinker, who, similar to Spivak, challenged the existence of a universal experience/position of women.<sup>13</sup> Using the progressive social movements of the seventies as cases in point, Mohanty used a range of theoretical tools to reveal the disparities in relationships among women, in particular citing

---

<sup>12</sup> Gayatri Spivak, *Can the Subaltern Speak?*, 1985.

<sup>13</sup> Chandra Talpade Mohanty, *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*, 2003.

colonialism and its repercussions on women of color. This highlighted the need to think beyond gender analysis and to expand the analytical framework to intersect gender, class and race, and to make the relations of domination among women more visible and tangible.

The most prominent and influential feminist writer from South-West Asia and North Africa (SWANA), who embraced intersectionality in her analysis of forms of violence and discrimination against women, is Nawal El Saadawi.<sup>14</sup> In her writings, she highlights the sheer complexity behind the oppression of women. In doing so, she names multiple intersecting factors, including capitalism, social stratification, patriarchy, racism, religion and colonialism, causing such societal oppression.<sup>15</sup>

During the first decade of the current century, before the discussion of intersectionality began in feminist movements within Arab countries, extensive writings on the subject had emerged in Canada, France, Belgium, and the United States. Many of these writings were authored by immigrant researchers or researchers of Arab immigrant origins, and focused on the experiences of immigrant women, non-normative immigrants of Arab origins and Islamic cultures and the intersection of forms of oppression and discrimination against them.

---

<sup>14</sup> Raneem Al-Afifi, *Nawal El Saadawi: The Revolutionary Who Resisted Authoritarianism in All its Forms and the Rebel Whose Writings Uncovered the Darkness*, 2021: <https://urlz.fr/nT7s>

<sup>15</sup> Ranim Al-Afifi, *Because It's a Feminist Issue: How Nawal El Saadawi Responded to Betty Friedan When She Wanted to Prevent Her from Speaking about Palestine*, Wlahawogohokhra, 2021: <https://urlz.fr/INbS>

## 4. The Roots of Intersectional Research and Activism /Relating to the Global South

The Asian Immigrant Women Advocates (AIWA),<sup>16</sup> founded in 1983 in Oakland, is considered one of the early adopters of intersectionality outside the framework of the Black feminist movement in the United States. This organization embraces intersectionality as a tool and a political identity, selecting its members (the advocates) from an intersectional feminist perspective that combines racial discrimination, gender-based discrimination, class exploitation, and linguistic discrimination. AIWA presents mechanisms based on the advocates' self-definitions of their identities and raises demands that reflect the complex reality experienced by Asian immigrant women. The organization continues to be highly prominent within American feminist movements and anti-imperialist groups. They have succeeded in solidly integrating intersectionality into their work through three main avenues; first, as a theoretical and analytical framework that enables them to understand the interplay between sexuality, family, work, nation and migration in the experiences of Asian immigrant working women; second, as a reflective tool that combines theoretical and applied aspects within the social movement that formed around the organization and its members; and third, as a structure to develop an efficient and replicable organizational model and as a tool to promote new and more inclusive forms of mobilization.

In South America (or otherwise referred to as Latin America), the intersectional analysis of different forms of oppression started developing in the 1960s. An early example of this was when the issue of the specific oppression faced by Black women within the Brazilian

---

<sup>16</sup> To learn about the aims and identity of the organization, see, <https://www.aiwa.org/about/>

Communist Party was raised in 1960. Many activists and intellectuals (such as Teresa Santos, Lélia Gonzalez, Maria Beatriz do Nascimento, Sueli Carneiro, Luiza Bairros and Jurema Werneck) spoke about the theory of triple oppression or the trinity of 'class, race and gender' to illustrate the types of discrimination suffered by women that were ignored by the mainstream feminist discourse, which assumed a universal sisterhood based solely on patriarchal oppression.

Several feminist movements in Latin America highlighted the absence of the issue of race in the political discourse of the feminist movement during the Second Encounter of the Latin American and Caribbean Feminist Encuentros, held in 1983 in Lima. Since then, intersectional feminist movements have gradually emerged in countries across the Global South.

In the late 1970s in Britain, a number of feminist movements emerged, which brought together women from the Caribbean, South Asia and Africa. They began comparing their situations to those of Black women in the United States and started analyzing the implications of racism experienced by them and not by males in Britain. In 1978, a project for Black British feminism was initiated by collaborating local women's organizations, focusing on issues such as wages, working conditions, immigration law, fascist violence, reproductive rights and domestic violence. These local groups came together in the same year to form a national body called the Organization of Women of Asian and African Descent (OWAAD).

OWAAD discussed issues of racism and gender discrimination, highlighting the interconnection between them. The organization addressed the unique burden faced by women of color, describing it as twofold and insufficiently recognized by the mainstream feminist



movement. They documented the experiences of Black women in the United Kingdom, publishing significant works such as the book *Heart of the Race: Black Women's Lives in Britain* (1985).<sup>17</sup>

## 5. From Black Feminism to Other Knowledge Fields and Frameworks:

### *Intersectional Environmentalism as an Example*

As mentioned earlier, intersectionality emerged within the frameworks of Black feminism to explain the reality of Black women, shedding light on the intersection of gender and race, i.e. the intersection of two different types of exploitation, oppression and discrimination. Yet, even though the concept of intersectionality was initially grounded in the feminist knowledge framework, its use is not limited to feminism. Other knowledge and activist frameworks, such as anti-colonial movements, student movements, LGBTQI+ movements and environmental movements among others, also utilize the concept. In this context, we will take the example of environmentalism, which relies on the intersectional approach to analyze climate change and environmental disasters witnessed in the world today. Intersectional environmental activist Leah Thomas discusses this extensively in her book *The Intersectional Environmentalist: How to Dismantle Systems of Oppression to Protect People + Planet*.<sup>18</sup>

Intersectional environmentalism calls for an examination of climate change and environmental issues and disasters in relation to their impact on marginalized individuals and communities. It analyzes the intersection of these changes, problems and disasters with other

---

<sup>17</sup> Beverley Bryan, Stella Dadzie and Suzanne Scafe, *Heart of The Race: Black Women's Lives in Britain*, 1985.

<sup>18</sup> Leah Thomas, *The Intersectional Environmentalist: How to Dismantle Systems of Oppression to Protect People + Planet*, 2022.

forms of exploitation, discrimination and oppression. The beginnings of intersectional environmentalism can be observed in the concept of 'environmental racism' developed by Benjamin Chavis in 1982.<sup>19</sup> In the foreword of Robert D. Bullard's book titled *Confronting Environmental Racism: Voices from the Grassroots*, Chavis defines the term as racial discrimination related to the production of environmental policies, laws and decrees, "deliberately targeting Black communities [within the United States]." He offers the dumping of toxic waste near or within Black neighborhoods as an example. This is in addition to a history marked by the exclusion of Black individuals from leadership positions within environmental movements, despite being the most affected by waste problems, among other issues. It should be noted that in his limited writings on these topics, Chavis did not explicitly state that his approach was intersectional. Neither did he use the term 'intersectionality'.

If we were to apply Chavis's approach in relation to waste issues today, we would make similar observations, not only in the American context but also in many others, including the Tunisian one. In various Tunisian cities, low-income neighborhoods adjacent to or in the heart of the capital Tunis, such as Hay Hlal, Jbal Lahmer, Hafsia, Sijoumi and Borj Shakir, confront the consequences of having high concentrations of waste dumps within them. This occurs in the absence of a state policy regulating waste management that allows everyone to have better living conditions. The deterioration of public health services adds to the complexity of the situation, making those unable to afford healthcare more susceptible to diseases. Here, we clearly see the intersection of waste issues with socio-economic class, a criterion which is at the heart of exploitation, oppression and discrimination.

---

<sup>19</sup> Benjamin Chavis, *Confronting Environmental Racism: Voices from the Grassroots*, 1993.

Marginalization, oppression and patriarchy intersect in the issue of waste. This can be observed in the appearance of women known in Tunisia as *Barbacha* (dump waste pickers). The term describes impoverished women who come from low-income neighborhoods to collect plastic and aluminum waste and sell it to middlemen for minimal prices. These women do not have access to social security or any legal framework that ensures their protection and a minimum level of dignity. They also face violence and abuse from competing men in waste collection. Moreover, they are exposed to various health hazards due to daily contact with the waste. Discrimination based on class and gender intersects here with discrimination in accessing health and enjoying a healthy and clean environment.

In addition to the waste issue, the problem of land and natural resource depletion can also be analyzed through the intersectional approach. This problem does not affect people in the same way, given its intersection with other forms of exploitation, oppression and discrimination. For instance, rural populations are the first to be affected by land and natural resource depletion.

Intersectionality within the context of environmental research raises several key questions and challenges. For instance: what is the impact of government policies on marginalized communities' ability to access land and enjoy water resources? How does this affect food sovereignty? Does climate change only directly impact marginalized individuals? These questions and more highlight how fundamental and key the intersectional approach is to the pursuit of environmental justice, a pressing issue globally and in Tunisia.

The intersectional environmental approach emerged within environmental feminist movements as a framework for critical political

thinking about scenes of destruction and ecological degradation caused by dominant and post-colonial policies worldwide. Feminist scholars have carved out various theoretical frameworks to oppose the rampant production and consumerism that deplete natural resources and devastate the earth at a rapid pace. Notable among these frameworks is the concept of 'ecological shift' by Vandana Shiva and Maria Mies, which aims to establish a shared life between humans and the earth. In this regard, they state that:

The ecological shift involves not seeing ourselves as outside the ecological web of life, as masters, conquerors and owners of the earth's resources. It means seeing ourselves as members of the earth family, with responsibility to care for other species and life on earth in all its diversity, from the tiniest microbe to the largest mammal. It creates the imperative to live, produce and consume within ecological limits and within our share of ecological space, without encroaching on the rights of other species and other people.<sup>20</sup>

Therefore, through examining the intersection of the categories of gender, class, race and land, the present intersectional feminist perspective critiques dominant ideologies that are destructive to ecological systems in the world. In her book *Ecofeminist Natures: Race, Gender, Feminist Theory and Political Action*, Noël Sturgeon argues that the goal of environmental feminism is to analyze reality based on racial inequality, gender-based discrimination in labor and the domination of the normative patriarchal view on the world and its reflection on the ecological

---

<sup>20</sup> This definition was included in *Dare to Care: Ecofeminism as a Source of Inspiration* by Dirk Holemans, Philsan Osman & Marie-Monique Franssen: <https://urlz.fr/nT7G>

balance. She concludes by emphasizing that “we can introduce a breath of fresh air into the various ways in which humanity relates to nature.”<sup>21</sup>

To conclude this literature review, it is important to note that adopting the intersectional approach in non-feminist knowledge and activism frameworks necessitates being aware of systems of privilege and the hierarchical stratification that classify individuals, groups, and communities based on the sum of their privileges. Privilege in turn is a characteristic acquired by individuals since birth or during their lives, enabling them to live more comfortably compared to those who do not have it. For example, men have the privilege of maleness compared to women, and white people have the privilege of white skin color, making their lives easier compared to black people. They cannot, under any circumstances, be the victims of racial discrimination and hence do not have direct experience with racism. Heterosexual individuals also enjoy the privilege of conforming to their heterosexual identity, allowing them to lead their lives more comfortably compared to LGBTQI+ individuals. Similarly, the Global North has the privilege of enjoying freedom of movement compared to the Global South.

Hence, seen from the perspective of the hierarchical stratifications mentioned above, we find wealthy heterosexual white men at the top, while impoverished transgender black women lie at the bottom. What we observe here is that the reality of these women is the result of the intersection of many different forms of exploitation, oppression and discrimination. This realization is only made possible through the use of the intersectional approach in our analysis.

---

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*



# **INTERSECTIONALITY** **IN THE TUNISIAN** **CONTEXT**

# 1. Intersectionality in Knowledge Fields and Activism in Tunisia:

## Acceptance of the Term 'Intersectionality' in the Tunisian Context

As we mentioned in the previous section of this booklet, intersectionality emerged as a term in an article by African-American lawyer Kimberlé Crenshaw,<sup>22</sup> where she describes the reality of Black women in the United States using an intersection or crossroad metaphor, with one road representing gender and the other, race. Through this metaphor, she illustrates that these are two intersecting categories where discrimination, oppression and exploitation are experienced. Crenshaw explains that when an incident occurs at this crossroads, the cause cannot be attributed to one street or the other but to the intersection of both. What she precisely means is that the discrimination and oppression faced by Black women in America in the 1980s - and even today - cannot be attributed solely to either gender-based discrimination or racial discrimination, but rather to the intersection of both. In other words, Black women and White women face different types of gender-based discrimination due to race or skin color, and Black women and Black men face different types of racial discrimination due to gender.

The term 'intersectionality' originated in the United States in relation to the intersection of gender and race categories, and it became a widely used term to refer to a situation where discrimination, oppression or exploitation within which the gender and race categories intersect.

However, the scope of this term expanded to include other categories such as social class, gender identity and more. It also traveled beyond

---

<sup>22</sup> Kimberlé Crenshaw, *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics*, 1989.



the United States to various geographical contexts, including the Tunisian context.

In Tunisia, the use of the term 'intersectionality' is still rather limited. This is particularly the case among academics compared to activist circles. This could be attributed to the complexity and confusion surrounding this concept. It is not easy to define a comprehensive and agreed-upon definition from the available writings in the Tunisian context today. However, the vagueness attributed to this concept has not prevented many feminists and various other liberation movements that oppose oppression and exploitation from utilizing the term. In this context, the concept of intersectionality represents a continuation of successive feminist waves. Contemporary writings largely agree on the necessity of having a common and broad space for activism that unites all movements combating various forms of discrimination, oppression, and exploitation. Thus, this space becomes a framework in which various causes intersect. This in turn makes it necessary to seek and reflect on the intersection of struggles for equality and social justice in order to address respective issues.

The use of the concept of intersectionality in the Tunisian context has three fundamental dimensions: The first dimension belongs to feminist movements in all their diversity of currents, as well as organizations that advocate for LGBTQI+ rights.<sup>23</sup> These groups openly and specifically use the term 'intersectionality' to describe their activist identity. The second dimension primarily involves the use of intersectionality, as forged by Crenshaw and as developed by Black feminism, as a methodological tool to analyze reality and to renew feminist strategies. This, however, is done without adopting the label 'intersectional feminism' due to theoretical ambiguities related to cultural

---

<sup>23</sup> LGBTQI+ refers to individuals with non-normative sexual and gender identities, including queer individuals.

specificity or a lack of complete understanding of the concept. The third dimension encompasses the political use of the intersection of various causes towards the achievement of a collective and common purpose, without necessarily reverting to the feminist heritage of intersectionality and its theory.

**Definition 1 • Intersectionality as a Term:** This definition expresses the necessity of being aware of the intersection of gender and racial identity in defining the economic, social, and political situations of women. In a second stage, it signifies the intersection of multiple categories, including gender, racial identity, geographical affiliation, social class, educational level, physical and mental well-being, and more, in defining the economic and social situations of women. Intersectionality is closely linked here to feminism, representing an extension of its history. In this context, this awareness is placed at the forefront of the struggles of individuals and groups that adopt the term 'intersectionality' to describe their activist identity, including intersectional feminism.

**Definition 2 • Intersectionality as a Methodological Tool for Activism:** this dimension represents an analytical tool that can be utilized by intersectional activists, as well as non-intersectional activists and others, to understand and analyze the discrimination, oppression, and exploitation faced by women. For example, the experiences of economically privileged women differ from those of impoverished women in terms of their understanding of male domination and their suffering from it. The demands and struggles of women in urban areas differ from those in rural areas or geographically

marginalized regions. The experiences of light-skinned women differ from those of dark-skinned women, as do the forms of oppression they face. The experiences of heterosexual women are distinct from those of lesbians and transgender women, and the struggles of able-bodied women cannot be compared to those of women with disabilities.

**Definition 3 • Intersectionality as Activist Practice:** This refers to practices that can be used in the context of daily activism by associations, groups, and movements without using the technical term 'intersectionality'. These practices involve a simultaneous awareness of intersecting forms of discrimination, oppression, and exploitation. For example, a feminist organization might use language that all women can understand regardless of their educational level, or a non-feminist organization advocating for a cause like food sovereignty might incorporate a gender-sensitive analysis into their readings of the issue.

Also, these practices encompass various forms of solidarity, whether coincidental or deliberate, between movements and associations advocating for freedom and social justice, which gather around a common ground irrespective of the different issues and modes of activism they are concerned with.

These three definitions represent the multifaceted nature of intersectionality, and when combined, they can construct a comprehensive definition. In this regard, it is suggested that this comprehensive definition should consider the concept of intersecting structures of domination in the analytical aspect, which necessarily requires the intersection of struggles in the activist aspect.

## 2. The Significance of Intersectionality in Tunisian Knowledge Production

The concept of intersectionality holds a very important place in contemporary knowledge production and its uses vary in different contexts. It has been directly addressed only in academic writings.

In this regard, it is important to mention work of research led by Sana Ben Achour<sup>24</sup> within/around the work of the Tunisian association Beity.<sup>25</sup> These include the work of Soumaya Mestiri,<sup>26</sup> Amel Grami,<sup>27</sup> Abir Krefa,<sup>28</sup> and others, who are interested in the evolution of the feminist movement and its mechanisms of struggle.

Intersectionality as an analytical approach occupies a significant place in the various discussions held among feminists within associations, coalitions, and activist groups. For example, in the Tunisian Association of Democratic Women (ATFD), this discussion holds an important position in their attempt at answering the question: What kind of feminism do we want? Here, intersectionality is used as an economic and social approach that links sex and gender, a category upon which discrimination and exploitation are built. This approach allows the inclusion of other categories such as social class, skin color, geographical affiliation and more, which concern issues related to the

---

<sup>24</sup> Collective work under the direction of Sana Ben Achour, *Le logement, miroir et vecteur de discriminations à l'égard des femmes*, Beity, 2020.

<sup>25</sup> Beity is a non-profit organization aimed at combating discrimination and violence based on gender, economic and social vulnerability of women, and uses all means available to achieve this goal.

<sup>26</sup> Soumaya Mestiri, *Elucider l'intersectionnalité, les raisons du féminisme noir*, 2020.

<sup>27</sup> Amel Grami, *Al-'Ilm ḡakar la yuḡibbuhu ila-l-ḡukran: Qirā'a min mandhūr al-taqātu'iyya* [Knowledge is a Man's Privilege and Favors Men: An Intersectional Reading], in *Al-Nisā' wa-l-mā'rifa wal-sulṭa* [Women, knowledge, and power], 2019.

<sup>28</sup> Abir Krefa and Amélie Le Renard, *Genre et féminisme au Moyen-Orient et au Maghreb*, 2020.

exploitation and oppression of women and the violence inflicted upon them.

This utilization of intersectionality is also found in the intellectual output of Beity.<sup>29</sup> Researchers apply intersectionality to the problem of urban planning and women's access to housing. Within the collective research and documentation framework carried out by the association, an initial methodological framework was developed that sought to apply intersectionality to an issue rarely addressed locally in Tunisia.

The research traces the impacts of housing issues in reference to sexual orientation, gender expression, ethnic identity<sup>30</sup> and other classifications that make individuals vulnerable to discrimination, oppression, and exploitation. To a lesser extent, we notice the presence of this approach in a study published by the Center for Research, Studies, Documentation, and Information on Women. Titled *Gender-Based Violence in the Public Space in Tunisia*, the research dedicates a significant portion of the study to illustrate intersection of forms of violence against women without explicitly stating intersectionality as a method.<sup>31</sup> However, the intersection of forms of violence is reflected in the data and analyses presented in this field study regarding the reality of the multiple and interwoven forms of violence primarily targeting women.

---

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> "Nous voulons dans cette étude garder une approche intersectionnelle et multidimensionnelle du genre, car elle nous permet de rendre visibles non seulement les interactions du genre avec l'urbain et l'urbanisme, mais aussi de déterminer l'influence d'autres facteurs comme l'orientation sexuelle, l'identité de genre les violences de genres, la race ou la classe pour expliquer la féminisation du mal-logement en Tunisie", Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> The study « a permis de mesurer la fréquence des violences subies par les femmes dans l'espace public (violences psychologiques, économiques, physiques et sexuelles), d'identifier les profils des femmes victimes ainsi que les formes de violences exercées et leurs impacts sur ces femmes », CREDIF, La Violence fondée sur le genre dans l'espace public en Tunisie, 2016.

Intersectionality occupies the most significant space in Tunisia as a practice. This is the case not only within feminist and women's frameworks, whether organized or unorganized, but also within the frameworks of political and social struggles that engage in intersectionality without explicitly naming it or delving into its academic history. Ala Talbi (a civil and human rights activist and the executive director of the Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights (FTDES)) described this as "practice prior to the terminological use of the word" when explaining what the December 2021 conference of social and citizen movements, organized by FTDES in December 2021, represented. The conference was considered intersectional but without imposing the use of the term 'intersectionality' on its various components.

The direct and explicit application of the intersectional approach is not present in most of the intellectual endeavors related to the study of Tunisian society. However, careful examination of some of these endeavors highlight the implicit presence of the idea of intersecting structures of domination and intersecting mechanisms of struggle.

In this context, one can point to studies on the LGBTQI+ community, which constituted the focus of various written works, whether in academic research or in research and studies produced by Tunisian associations.

The above description of the different areas occupied by intersectionality sought to clarify how the term/concept is received in the Tunisian context. Despite the great prominence of this approach, explicit discussion of it remains scarce, and academic knowledge productions related to it are primarily limited to the field of feminist and gender studies. As for activist knowledge productions, legal studies, which tend to dominate the field, tend to overlook the intersectionality that lies at the heart of power dynamics and the relations that govern them.



# **INTERSECTIONALITY** **IN FIELD RESEARCH**



While in the previous section we looked at the presence of intersectionality in the Tunisian context more generally, this section of the booklet seeks to focus on the role of this concept/term specifically in field research. As it will become clearer throughout the section, findings of field research testimonies point to a primarily practical use of intersectionality up to this moment. Actors in the Tunisian civil society believe that intersectionality is not a comprehensive theory with clear and diverse dimensions. This is attributed to the diversity of intellectual perspectives and analytical approaches on the one hand, and the lack of a conducive ground for producing intersectional knowledge on the other.

However, this does not prevent us from noticing the early signs of a Tunisian version of intersectionality taking shape in the coming years. Here we discern a recurring idea that intersectionality should be a principle of political thinking about the concept of the state; i.e. the role played by the state and its institutions. These institutions represent a set of structures that reproduce cultural and historical representations and maintain the permanence of class domination by excluding women, subjecting them to violence, imposing all forms of oppression on the LGBTQI+ community, and exacerbating the precarious situations of Black women and women agricultural workers.

The field research testimonies and the collective thinking for intersectionality that surrounds them reflect another crucial issue; that of the need for creating common spaces. This leads us to observe that the search for a common ground/space for all actors is due to the lack of an open and safe democratic space. The public sphere represents the framework dominated by marginalizing policies, patriarchal practices and everything that can result from that.

The consultations and live testimonies have led to the emergence of three different positions among the interviewees, who are mostly

civil society activists. The first position involves full and complete acceptance of intersectionality as a term or as a word that must be used to describe various activist identities, as an analytical approach to lived reality, and as a daily activist practice. The second position is acceptance of intersectionality as an analytical approach and an activist practice without resorting to using the term due to the contention around it or lack of prior knowledge of it. The third position pertains to the representation of intersectionality as an entrenched practice in the Tunisian context without the necessity of awareness of its academic history and methodological nature.

## **1. Full Adoption of Intersectionality as a Term, Methodology, and Practice**

This understanding of intersectionality is linked to the necessity of using the term to describe lived reality and to describe various mechanisms of struggle. In what follows, we will show how some actors in the field of defending women's rights (i.e., feminist organizations) and the rights of the LGBTQI+ community adopt intersectionality fully. For them, the concept/term is considered the fundamental pillar in understanding the interconnection of economic and social issues, bodily integrity, sexual orientations, various gender expressions, skin color, geographical affiliation, linguistic discourse used at the spoken level (discrimination between the standard dialect and regional dialects), and other elements upon which discrimination, oppression and exploitation are built.

In this context, Khaled Ghrairi (a queer activist and civil rights activist) stated, on behalf of the association Damj for Justice and Equality, that the association explicitly uses intersectionality. The activists within

the association, in Sfax and Kef branches, describe themselves, in the interviews, as intersectional in their daily practices related to the association's work or in developing its projects. Here, intersectionality creates a space built on the principles of engagement, action and interaction, allowing for awareness of all issues related to feminist and queer demands, defending freedoms and interacting with different contexts of social change and the movements and actions that stem from them. Damj, therefore, directly links issues concerning women, gender non-conforming individuals, and victims of police violence and economic marginalization. Moreover, it provides an intersectional political reading of its reality, struggles, and demands.

Mawjoudin Initiative for Equality (hereinafter Mawjoudin), an association that primarily works on the rights of gender non-conforming individuals, categorizes itself as an intersectional association opposing all structures of domination, whether colonial, capitalist or patriarchal.

Karam Aouini, Communications and Art Projects Manager at Mawjoudin, affirms, in an interview, that the association operates in an intersectional manner without explicitly stating that intersectionality means this or that from a conceptual or knowledge-based perspective.

In his view, Mawjoudin adopts and practices intersectionality by assisting oppressed groups without silencing their voices. This is to allow these voices to convey their issues in the way they find appropriate. We observe this in the 'ASYLUM' project, which focuses on gender non-conforming migrants, overseen by those directly affected by the issue. To confirm this, Karam Aouini says, "We do not appropriate causes at Mawjoudin, nor do we take other people's voices."

Several activists emphasize the political essence of intersectionality.

In other words, they consider intersectionality as a principle for political thinking. For instance, the Intersection Association for Rights and Freedoms asserts that the framework of intersectional analysis primarily starts from the discrimination against women and against people based on their sexual and/or gender identity. The activist vision in this context is based on the idea that traditional rights-based and partisan approaches have not explicitly included them in their literature or at the level of their defense of the principles of freedom, dignity and social justice. Although they have been briefly mentioned in some contexts, they remain superficial and insufficient.

What we mean by political essence here is what Hamza Nasri Jeridi (a political and civil activist) refers to as '*tactical interaction*' with cases of oppression, violence, and persecution in their various forms, considering them as systemic political violence. The official state institutions (such as the police, education, health, etc.) inflict this violence on specific groups (women, the queer community and all the politically, economically and socially disregarded and marginalized individuals). Yet, the systemic nature of this violence requires us to confront it through an intersectional approach. Hamza Nasri Jeridi emphasizes the necessity of spreading this form of analysis within political activist circles, even if those involved are not fully embracing intersectionality. This is in essence an invitation to use intersectionality tactically. In other words, dealing with situations, contemplating the next steps, and progressing on the path toward achieving social justice in the face of systemic discrimination and violence always involves a complete alignment of the aforementioned intersectional elements.

## 2. Partial Adoption of Intersectionality as a Methodology and Practice

This stance involves adopting the intersectional approach in analyzing reality but without fully subscribing to the intersectional activist identity. For example, many Tunisian feminists use intersectionality as a methodological tool to analyze women's situations without necessarily labeling themselves as intersectional feminists.

For instance, the ATFD perceives intersectionality as already reflected in the cumulative feminist path in Tunisia. This path has addressed significant issues and deconstructed and understood them based on various factors. In this context, the association recalls women's participation in the struggle against direct colonization while taking it upon themselves to struggle for complete equality between women and men (such as Bchira Ben Mrad, Cherifa Fayach, Radhia Haddad, and others). Therefore, the feminist space is a space for activism against all forms of domination in their plurality and diversity. Seen from this perspective, they argue that intersectionality is an early practice in the history of feminist struggle in Tunisia.

Samar Shayek (a feminist activist and a board member of ATFD) states that the term 'intersectionality' carries many meanings. The epistemic authority implied by the term can be intimidating, which leads many Tunisian feminists to not identify themselves as intersectional, despite their belief in the scientific foundation of the intersectional methodology and the necessity of intersectional activism. One key source of this reluctance, is arguably the belief held by some that the adoption of intersectionality as fundamental tenet of one's (or a group's) activist identity will inevitably lead to cultural specificity.<sup>32</sup> This

---

<sup>32</sup> 'Cultural specificity' is an anthropological term that refers to the idea that a society is a product of its inherited culture, which contributes to shaping its political, social and economic perspectives. This description does not imply

perception leads some feminists to refrain from using the term, even though they practice intersectionality in their daily struggles.

Samar Shayek speaks of her own experience and describes her observation of the seeds of intersectionality in various political analyses undertaken by the members of ATFD within its framework. She recounts her own experience of being simultaneously engaged in the association's work and political party activities. Initially, she thought that the discussions within the association would only revolve around women's issues and that the discussions within the political party where she was active were expected to be comprehensive analytical discussions covering various dimensions of politics. On the contrary, the discussions within the association turned out to be more informed about politics and the economy than the context of party-politics. The women within the association demonstrated a greater ability to deconstruct mechanisms of domination, suggesting an intersectional approach. This intersectional approach is related to public policies, laws, and other issues that are not usually described as feminist but inherently contain feminist aspects.

Sara Ben Saïd, a feminist activist and the executive director of *Aswat Nissa*,<sup>33</sup> points out that the association she is involved with does not

---

any form of cultural, civilizational or social differentiation. 'Cultural specificity' encompasses shared values, ethics and existential aspects among a group of individuals. It is a given that predates the production of knowledge and forms of learning. In essence, 'cultural specificity' delineates material and moral relationships among similar groups.

**33** *Aswat Nissa* is a feminist Tunisian non-governmental organization created in 2011. The organization is non-partisan and free from political influence. It advocates for the integration of the gender approach in all public policy areas. *Aswat Nissa* supports women to voice their opinions and to become active members – as they should be – in the public and political spheres of the Tunisian society. In Arabic, *Aswat Nissa* means "Women's voices". (<https://www.aswatnissa.org/en/about-us/>)

directly adopt intersectionality as a theory; it remains an internal subject of discussion and one of the main axes that the association aspires to solidify in its official documents. However, this has not prevented Ben Saïd from offering important observations indicating the presence of intersectional practices within the activities of the association. For example, she points to their attempt to tackle the issue of the intersection of language domination (of both Modern Standard Arabic and French) with the challenges faced by women in accessing information crucial to their lives (such as health and legal knowledge). This has driven the association to work on providing them with as much information as possible in the Tunisian vernacular. Additionally, the association tries to create links between different issues and categories that it deems discriminatory. For instance, they connect to the issue of violence directed at the LGBTQI+ community by expanding the scope of their activities through collaborations with other associations such as Mawjoudin. In the same spirit, the association also strives to engage with and connect to the concerns of economic and social movements, including the Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights.

In different contexts, *Aswat Nissa* seeks to integrate common issues within a collective activist vision that combines enhancing cultural activities (such as creating cinema clubs and intellectual discussion groups) with advocating for the right to water, access to land and the fight against various forms of discrimination and violence against women. Sara Ben Saïd explains that emphasizing the intersection of these issues represents a strategic and pragmatic plan to unify efforts and intensify forms of activism.



### 3. The Adoption of Intersectionality only as a Practice

The practical aspect of intersectionality is the one that appears and is discussed most often in the testimonials collected in our research. By practical, we mean the practice of intersectionality without a full grasp or adoption of the relevant theories and methodologies. Defining and pinpointing these practices can be difficult. Here, we find ourselves facing the idea that has been repeated in several testimonials: that intersectionality, according to the views of actors and activists, is a 'practice preceding theory'. In other words, the practice of intersectionality in the Tunisian context precedes an understanding of the theory developed by Crenshaw and the methodology that emerged from it. By this, we mean that activist practices can be described as intersectional without them explicitly adopting this description. The hesitation to describe actions as intersectional might stem from a lack of awareness of the existence of this term or a conscious or subconscious resistance to intersectionality as a theoretical concept due to the controversies it stirs within various activist circles and the discomfort it might cause in different contexts.

Using intersectionality to serve cultural specificity is considered one of the major challenges in the Tunisian context. The prevailing discourse employs these two terms, intersectionality and cultural specificity, interchangeably with the aim of resisting attempts towards a fair and equal society that protects all women and other oppressed and marginalized groups.

In the remainder of this section, we point out two types of pre-theoretical intersectional practice. The first type involves a set of daily collective behaviors adopted by an association concerning its projects,

members and beneficiaries. The second type pertains to the challenges, concerns and shared issues that connect these associations with one another.

### 3.1. Practices Within the Framework of Associations and Groups

An activist within the association *Hia – Kasserine* (who chose not to disclose her personal information) emphasizes the importance of establishing communication methods and adopting approaches that respect the diversity to accept information. In other words, in disseminating information and/or raising awareness about a particular issue, she advocates for the adoption of communication methods which consider factors like geographical belonging, age or educational level.

Language is considered one of the key practices that can be seen as a tool of domination, such as using the language of the colonizer in a colonial context or utilizing academic discourse in grassroots activism. Therefore, observing the different uses of language can reflect and shed light on different disparities among individuals and communities. In this regard, the majority of testimonies agree that using the Tunisian vernacular, or 'Tunisian Darija' (instead of French, English or Modern Standard Arabic), is the primary collective practice that contributes greatly to the creation of an inclusive space for everyone. Various associations, whether self-identified as intersectional or not, share and engage in this practice according to the field research conducted.

The second type of intersectional 'practice preceding theory' emphasizes the need to unite efforts for a specific cause. This necessitates active participation and integration of initiatives among

a variety of actors in the field. This is notably visible in internal regions of Tunisia, where many associations feel a sense of estrangement with respect to the center of the activist context, Tunis, where the trajectory of most political trends are shaped. In these regions diverse actors and proponents of different demands and local needs come together to further a particular cause. For instance, while the overall objective of a mass protest in the center may be improving infrastructure and roads, the specific demands for an internal region may revolve around the right to water or access to government lands for the benefit of the community. In this context, Youth for Women's Service in Kasserine (a local association represented by activist Lawahedh Samaali) and Tanit (an association in Maknassi – Sidi Bouzid represented by its president Wiem Kasmi) have both adopted the strategy of networking with local and national associations and tailoring activity goals and demands based on the context. Although they share with the center the demand to improve infrastructure, they collaborate with local actors in various fields (cultural, artistic, developmental and educational) to establish a shared activism-base built direct observations towards the realization of direct local needs.

This difference between the the local and the center, the specific and the general, which can sometimes reflect the divergence of issues, reveals a new form of intersection on two levels: the level of addressing an issue that is specific to a geographical or social context, and the comprehensive level, encompassing the broader scope that concerns everyone and is directed towards the wider society. Intersectionality is thus embraced in this context based on clear needs, some being specific and others more general and comprehensive.

### 3.2. Cross-organizational Practices: *The Congress of Social and Citizen Movements as an Example*

In December 2021, FTDES organized the Congress of Social and Citizen Movements (hereinafter 'the Congress') with an aim "to organize debates, consultations and rapprochements between the various components of the social and citizen movement, while respecting their different positions, in order to give the slogans of the 2011 revolution a concrete content focused on the fight against economic and social inequalities, and respectful of [...] democratic principles."<sup>34</sup> This gathering of social, economic and political actors and activists turned into a key example of moving intersectionality from an often ambiguous concept to actual application on the ground.

The experience of the Congress also created an important setting for what could potentially constitute the theoretical grounds for the future of intersectionality in Tunisia. It emphasized the possibility of having various actors, representatives of social movements and civil society within the same space, despite all the differences that could limit communication between them. The practice of intersectionality here is based on the idea of alliance primarily for utilitarian reasons, enabling the presence of allies to overcome the isolation of a particular cause. Solidarity is then built from a shared political awareness between the sphere of socio-economic struggle and the sphere concerned with (political) human rights and freedoms. This commonality was expressed by the famous slogan of the 2011 revolution: "Work, Freedom and National Dignity." This meant unifying efforts within the framework of converging demands,

---

<sup>34</sup> "Call for a National Congress of Social and Citizen Movements, FTDES, Aug 2021. <https://ftdes.net/appeel-pour-un-congres-national-des-mouvements-sociaux-et-citoyens/>

objectives and aspirations between social movements and civil society, despite the differences in their struggles. Thus, the space of the Congress became a venue for collective thinking about the fundamental commonalities representing various parties.

As stated by Ala Talbi of FTDES, the Congress provided a real opportunity to exercise the idea of intersectionality, where participants were gathered based on their various causes, diverse intellectual references, normative and non-normative gender identities, and understandings of activism and civil and political action. As acknowledged and explicitly stated by some feminist activists during the preparatory meetings, the Congress, through its attempt to bring social issues closer to freedom-related matters, was engaging in intersectionality. In practice, this meant that, during the Congress, intersectionality became a daily activist practice and mission for everyone who believed in it. This included prominent associations such as Damj and its secretary general and queer political activist Saif Ayadi.

During the various workshops of the conference, women were the connecting link between different social and citizen movements, embodying the idea(l) of intersectionality that the conference aspired to since its early meetings. In addition to opening the conference with a women's march, women played a significant role in all workshops, even if these workshops were not specifically related to what is commonly described as feminist or women's issues.

In the workshop related to migration, a dialogue took place about the suffering of women who lost their husbands in the Mediterranean during irregular migration from Tunisian coasts to European shores. In this context, one woman spoke about her struggle to claim her rights

due to her husband's disappearance. She was not allowed to use a piece of land that was owned by her husband before he left Tunisian territory. The land was seized by the husband's brother, justifying it by the absence of a death certificate. Here, we observe that the lack of freedom of movement intersects with gender discrimination, making women suffer from multi-dimensional oppression.

Despite the clear espousal of intersectionality at the conference and during the discussions, the diversity of participants in the workshops did not accurately reflect this theoretical and activist approach. The term 'intersectionality' was not explicitly mentioned in the various speeches and discussions that took place at the conference. However, most of the workshops expressed the idea of intersectionality. For example, in the workshop on women agricultural workers, various aspects were addressed and the issue of marginalization was discussed from the angle of different systems of oppression and discrimination. Older women workers in the agricultural sector, for instance, suffer from discrimination based on age, and their employment prospects are fewer compared to younger women workers. The accessibility of healthcare services for these women was also discussed, along with the availability of these services in rural and inland areas.

The practical or applied aspect of intersectionality in the previously mentioned experiences, in general and in the specific experience of the Congress, have led to a deep engagement with all the issues that concern Tunisian women and men. Ala Talbi emphasized that "intersectionality exists in practice and exists in minds with a fluid logic." would ground the concept of intersectionality not only as a practice but also as a term and methodology.

We can thus say that the practice of intersectionality is the first step towards what we can call 'the pedagogy of intersectionality'. This means that the ongoing experiences should create educational and learning methods that aim to solidify the principles of intersectional activism among various causes. In this way, intersectionality becomes a symbol of the maturity of the activist mind regarding the composition of the fabric of social and citizen movements. Here, we emphasize the need to search for ways to communicate, disseminate information and support causes through methodologies that value the intelligence of the participants in different contexts of struggle for freedom, dignity and social justice.

Based on the field research data and the three positions described above, we can say that intersectionality in its Tunisian version is:

- **An identity embraced** by some activists to reflect their fundamental awareness of economic and social privileges, combined with a recognition of the intersection of layers of domination and forms of activism in relation to their vision for a path of struggle for freedom, dignity and social justice.
- **A methodology to archive and trace the evolution of the feminist movement in Tunisia**, focusing on various issues such as the right to education, access to public spaces, economic independence, healthcare, combating male violence against women, empowering women in all fields, fostering political awareness and seeking to achieve equal feminist awareness on a national level (bridging the gap between the center and the marginalized regions).
- **A deconstructive methodology that resists the problematic arguments of cultural specificity.** Cultural specificity is not a category in intersectional analysis or practice; rather, it is a tool of the dominant political discourse that exploits heritage, history and the symbolism of customs and traditions to convey its ideas and policies.
- **A solidarity and collaborative practice among various components of the Tunisian activist scene**, whether in relation to civil society or social movements. Here, we emphasize what was previously mentioned regarding the practice of intersectionality without awareness of its terminological usage or without an awareness of its methodological dimension. This allows for the enhancement of activist approaches in their various aspects.





# IV

## CATEGORIES OF INTERSECTIONALITY IN THE TUNISIAN CONTEXT

Intersectionality is a migratory notion that moves from one location to another. Thus, it presupposes that we do not necessarily adopt the same analytical tools aiming to deconstruct a certain social, geographic, political and economic reality.

The application of intersectionality in the Tunisian context is directly linked to a specific set of groups that are subject to exploitation, persecution and oppression. There are a number of key categories that are crucial to the Tunisian context:

### • Gender

Gender is a term that was coined in the 1970s and denotes a set of considerations, definitions and physical, linguistic and moral roles divided according to a social, economic, historical and political heritage between men and women. In other words, gender defines an individual's social and psychological identity according to the sex they were assigned at birth. Gender studies have evolved over time to become a framework for analysis, criticism and deconstruction of all these legacies and their repercussions on individuals' intimate and collective lives.

Gender is also considered an analytical tool aiming to understand the power relations in a given social environment and to perceive the mechanisms consolidating various forms of discrimination, violence, oppression and exploitation (unpaid work, harassment, rape, torture, etc.). Hence, this tool is indispensable to the intersectional approach.

Generally, there seems to be a confusion between discrimination on the basis of gender and discrimination against women. It is necessary to understand that the first includes the second as discrimination against women is a form discrimination, persecution and exploitation on the basis of gender against which feminist movements have fought since the beginning of the twentieth century. The discrimination against, and persecution and exploitation of women because they are women are present in both public and private spaces; a phenomenon that Tunisian

feminists are attempting to deconstruct. It is noteworthy here that sex is a major dividing factor in the professional sphere (precarious work, lack of protection and coverage, etc.), education (a patriarchal epistemic domination), entertainment spaces (cafés, bars, public parks, cultural centers, theaters, cinemas, etc.) and other interactional spheres.

Experiencing discrimination, persecution and exploitation on the basis of gender is not exclusive to women. It also includes all individuals and groups that do not conform to a man/woman binary assigned at birth on the basis of a binary understanding of sex (i.e. male/female).<sup>35</sup> These include, crucially, some members of the LGBTQI+ community who question gender roles and do not conform to preassigned and expected social norms.

### • Sexual orientation

Sexual orientation refers to the sexual desire and/or attraction felt by an individual towards another (and at times towards no one). It is a wide and diverse spectrum that varies between heterosexuality, homosexuality, asexuality and pansexuality, to name but a few. In Tunisia, individuals who do not conform to the norms of heterosexuality suffer from discrimination and persecution because of their sexual orientation and they are criminalized under Article 230 of the Penal Code. Numerous associations and groups, such as Mawjoudin and Damj, are campaigning to abolish this article, to put an end to the injustice that homosexuals and the LGBTQI+ community are suffering and to ensure a dignified life in a country that respects them and their choices.

---

<sup>35</sup> We mean here the violation of rights concerning sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sexual characteristics, which are essentially the rights of the LGBTQI+ community. This set of rights consist of the freedom to choose one's partner or partners regardless of their gender, in addition to choosing one's own gender identity and expression regardless of the gender assigned at birth. These rights also include intersex rights, i.e. the rights of individuals born with sexual characteristics that do not conform to the binary categorisation of 'male' and 'female'. Tunisian law does not recognise these rights. In fact, it criminalizes the LGBTQI+ community and overlooks the forms of violence and discrimination to which they are subjected.

## • Gender identity

Gender identity refers to a person's own sense of their social sex. It is an intimate internal experience that reflects one's feelings of being a woman, a man, both, neither, or at any other point of the spectrum of different gender identities. Gender identity is exclusively defined by the person in question. Any denial, negotiation or redefinition of this identity is considered to be a violence. When a person's gender identity conforms to the gender they were assigned at birth, we refer to the person in question as cis-gender. When it does not, we refer to the person as transgender and we refer to it as trans identity.

In Tunisia, transgender individuals face direct and extreme forms of oppression, discrimination and exploitation. For instance, they are deprived of legal transition (officially changing their names in a manner that suits their gender identity) and of legal access to hormones required for their physical transition if they wish to do so. In addition, they are subjected to other forms of discrimination, persecution and exploitation in both public and private spaces, the most alarming of which is the lack of access to healthcare services. Transgender individuals who come from impoverished social backgrounds are extremely vulnerable due to the intersectionality of discrimination, persecution and exploitation to which they are subjected.

## • Social class

Socio-economic conditions are the common point of concern among all stakeholders in the Tunisian civil society and social movements. Poverty is a major factor affecting the living conditions of individuals of different gender identities and affects a wide range of people who are marginalized geographically, economically and socially, and who lack support, security and resources.

Precariousness is an entirely different notion to poverty as demographic transformations and the rising population (especially in postcolonial

contexts) have contributed to the emergence of the concept of leasing. As a result of the expansion of capitalism through globalization, the value generated through one's labor no longer has a direct effect on an individual's wellbeing. This is in turn due to the emergence of various forms of precarious work, the persistence of traditional forms of production (especially in the agricultural sector), the reinforcement of consumer culture with new technologies, the hegemony of mass advertisement culture and the systematic destruction of environmental resources. As a result of these factors, workers are experiencing a systematic state of precariousness.

The different forms of class inequality, the hegemony of the colonialist capitalist economy and the adoption of neoliberal policies affect all individuals to various degrees. This marginalization, both moral (dignity) and material (well-being), of workers and unemployed individuals generates an expansion of the same economic hegemony, which in turn affects the course of social life.

### • **Skin color**

In Tunisia, discrimination on the basis of skin color is practiced on a daily basis against black Tunisian nationals and sub-Saharan migrants, who face different forms of violence in a reproduction of colonial hegemonic relations consisting in the superiority of people with white skin over those with black or brown skin. As explained by Crenshaw in her seminal work on intersectionality, skin color intersects with other categories such as gender and other socioeconomic conditions. Hence it is not a surprise that skin color is one of the main axes that formulate understandings of and approaches to intersectionality in the Tunisian context.

## • **Geographical location**

Geographical location is another category of discrimination, persecution and exploitation in Tunisia. In fact, it constitutes the basis of institutional discrimination, since it was a systematic policy of the post-independence state. The Tunisian guideline for spatial planning of 1996 clearly states that *“interior regions are not beneficial in the context of a globalized economy and national interest requires excluding these regions since economic efficiency requires three poles in which all economic activity is focused.”*

The ongoing marginalization of interior regions has resulted in the discrimination, persecution and exploitation of the population on various fronts, the most important of which is impoverishment. Culturally, the inhabitants of these regions suffer from social stigmatization exemplified in the use of derogatory expressions such as “coming from beyond the signs” and profiling in mainstream cultural products.

## • **Physical and mental health**

Discrimination on the basis of physical and mental health affects individuals with motor disabilities and individuals with psychological disorders. This discrimination consists of limited access for such individuals to public spaces and services (healthcare, transportation, education, entertainment, etc.) due to negative stereotypes, stigmatization and institutional discrimination. This can be seen in the set of policies and practices exhibited in social, administrative and urban bodies, resulting in deprivation and exclusion. This form of discrimination is formed by social and institutional barriers and the existence of environments and infrastructure that hamper a full, effective and equal participation in public life.

## • Age

Age is defined here as the amount of time separating a person's birth and the present. Discrimination on the basis of age is a daily occurrence in many social institutions such as healthcare and social services. This form of discrimination involves treating a person from a certain age group unjustly relative to individuals from a different age group for reasons that are not related to their qualifications or capacities.

Similar to other forms of discrimination (e.g. based on gender or skin color), age discrimination can have serious repercussions for a person's health and wellbeing. For example, discrimination against the elderly, which is often more extreme against women, is directly linked to poor physical and mental health can lead to social exclusion and loneliness, lack of financial security and a deterioration of the quality of life.

The more forms of discrimination a person encounters, the more extreme are the sense of persecution and exploitation they experience. For instance, a vulnerable and impoverished trans woman suffers aggravated forms of discrimination, persecution, and exploitation by virtue of being a woman, trans, and impoverished. If the same woman happens to live in an interior region or a marginalized urban area, the situation aggravates further. The reading of this woman's situation takes into consideration all the social categories to which she belongs and their repercussions on her life. That is the essence of intersectional analysis.



**V**

**TRAINING**

**TOOLKIT FOR**

**INTERSECTIONALITY**



# INTRODUCTION

The concept of intersectionality has begun to spread over the past few years among activists and researchers in Tunisia despite its different definitions.

This expansion has given rise to two major developments. The first is the creation of spaces through which multiple causes and struggles for justice can intersect and come together. The second is the development of ways for the impoverished and the marginalized to voice their concerns and represent themselves on the stage of political activism in a manner that enables them to make themselves heard with interest and seriousness.

Intersectionality is thus considered by many activists and militant groups as a tool of liberation from hegemony and centralized or imported policies that are vertically projected on marginalized and precarious realities. In addition, it provides a theoretical framework to explain the policies and structures of domination and different forms of persecution, oppression, exploitation and marginalization. Intersectionality is a unique tool for deconstruction and critical thinking in a manner that does not overlook the inner workings of different power structures and their points of intersection.

Our research team has performed analytical work and field research for over a year and a half in order to reflect on the concept of intersectionality, to study it and to determine its outlines and details in the Tunisian context.

In this research, we focused on the ways of practicing intersectionality in Tunisia by holding meetings with associations, social movements and civil society organizations.

Among the conclusions of our fieldwork was the idea, or the necessity, of a training on the topic of intersectionality from our partners. In the remainder of this booklet we will outline a proposed model for such a training which is the culmination of our writings, discussions and experiments in the last months of our research work. The proposed training is the first to entirely focus on this topic.

This manual seeks to help facilitators of workshops and trainings to master the notion of intersectionality and to be able to present in a smooth yet

concise manner to participants. The training will tackle the concept of intersectionality as a theoretical framework and will provide people with an overview of its intellectual and activist foundations before deconstructing its broad notions, especially 'privilege' and 'discrimination', as well as its multiple aspects using different exercises. Then, these theoretical notions will be applied to the Tunisian context through the analysis of three specific cases that are different in terms of topic and forms of organization.

In this training, it is important for each individual participant to understand the concept of intersectionality and use it as a tool to reflect on their positioning in the map of the intersections of privilege and discrimination.

They also need to practice, or at least start practicing the use of intersectional analysis, and the mechanisms thereof, on the cases they are working on and the reality in which they live.

The aim behind the practical aspect of this booklet, and this project in general, is the democratization of intersectionality for as many activists as possible within and without their groups, movements and organizations. In addition it seeks to provide a space for discussion and collective thinking within this theoretical and activist framework in the hope of finding new ways for resisting and surviving all the intertwined structures of domination, oppression and marginalization around us.

It is with great pleasure that we offer you this work that will remain open for regular discussion and development since we are firm believers in the necessity of developing every collective work.

The training lasts two days featuring four sessions, i.e. two sessions per day. There are three videos attached to this training manual. The first introduces intersectionality in a manner that we intended to be as comprehensive as possible. The other two contain two different stories that support the suggested exercises with living examples. The videos are available through the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/@hbstunis6381>

## PROGRAMME

### AND SUMMARY OF THE SESSIONS

#### DAY 1

##### *First session*

Content	Duration
Welcome speech	15 minutes
Meeting participants ( <i>Exercise 1</i> )	60 minutes
Expectations and shared norms	15 minutes
<b>Break</b>	
An introduction to the notion of 'privilege' and initial questions on the concept of intersectionality ( <i>Exercise 2</i> )	30 minutes
An introduction to the notion of 'discrimination' and further questions on the concept of intersectionality ( <i>Exercise 3</i> )	30 minutes
Introducing the concept of intersectionality ( <i>Exercise 4</i> )	90 minutes

##### *Second session*

Mastering the concept of intersectionality - part 1 ( <i>Exercise 5</i> )	90 minutes
<b>Break</b>	
Mastering the concept of intersectionality - part 2 ( <i>Exercise 6</i> )	60 minutes

## DAY 2

### Third session

Content	Duration
Emotional exchange and enhancing positive communication among participants ( <i>Exercise 7</i> )	30 minutes
Reminder of the outcomes of day one	15 minutes
Introducing power relations and initiating reflection on intersectionality in relation to local contexts ( <i>Exercise 1</i> )	60 minutes
Break	
Utilizing intersectionality as a tool of analysis in the Tunisian context ( <i>Exercise 9</i> )	120 minutes

### Logistics and materials

- Attendance register
- Flipchart papers
- Markers of different colors
- White paper sheets
- A computer and a projector
- Colored paper sheets
- Post-its of different colors
- Speakers
- Notepads and pens

# DAY 1

## First session

### Exercise 1 *(60 minutes)*

This exercise is used in the beginning of a training session in order to get to know participants. It consists of participants introducing themselves to one another and shows the importance and inevitability of the intersection of experiences and identities on the one hand, and their difference and diversity on the other. This exercise also provides an opportunity for participants to express themselves and to focus on what defines them with respect to what they are comfortable sharing. In addition, it allows the group to meet one another in a participatory and amusing manner. Participants are also able to identify the differences among them and learn to listen to these differences and welcome them. The exercise must be fun and entertaining thanks to the use of a ball of wool and the facilitator's remarks.

<b>Objectives of the exercise</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Breaking the ice among participants</li><li>- Focusing on the complex nature of the identities of different intersections</li><li>- Introducing the notion of intersecting experiences and identities</li><li>- Introducing the notions of 'privilege' and 'discrimination'</li></ul>
<b>Duration of the exercise</b>	<i>60 minutes</i>
<b>Materials</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- A large ball of wool</li><li>- A space allowing the possibility to stand in a circle</li></ul>

## Description of the exercise

Participants stand in a circle before I ask them to introduce themselves and tell them that the exercise will be fun and playful in nature. When a participant receives the ball of wool, they introduce themselves in the manner they see fit. They keep on sharing information about themselves until another participant identifies a detail that they have in common, interrupting them with a “me too”. The first participant then throws the ball of wool to the second while keeping hold of the thread. The second participant proceeds to introduce themselves until interrupted by another participant, and so on. Eventually, the participants will find themselves connected by a web.

I then ask participants to comment on what they have been doing with the following question:

- **What do you see now?**

I make sure that the answers remain focused on describing intersections and common points between participants through the intertwining ball of wool within the circle.

I make sure that participants describe their feelings: happiness, surprise, relief or curiosity to hear other participants' stories.

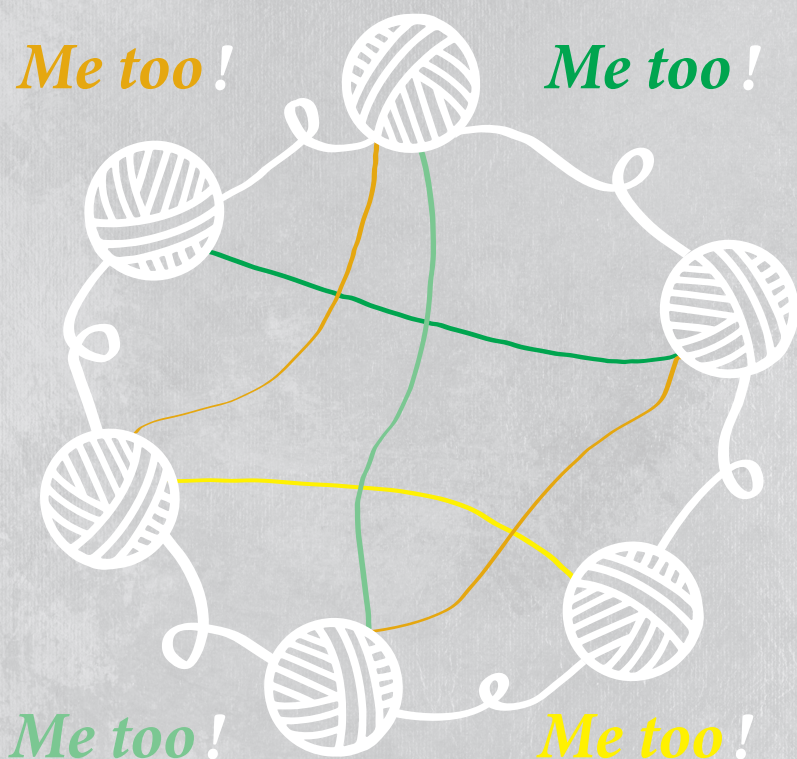
- **What is the connection to today's training?**

I clarify and deconstruct again the intersections that have occurred among participants through the ball of wool. I take examples of experiences, identities, and situations shared by participants.

For example, Maha and Leila intersect in motherhood but Leila is not only a mother. Her thread intersects with ‘woman’ and ‘worker’. The woman/mother intersection might be more relevant to her life at the moment than the woman/worker intersection, which had been more relevant before. The spider web shows that we have many points of similarity and convergence (the intertwining ball of wool), but also different and diverse experiences.

### ***Note to the facilitator***

When we enjoy a comfortable and privileged social status, we might tend to deal with intersectionality as an abstract notion and confine it in a discussion of our differences as potential diversity, while in fact, intersectionality is a political tool of analyzing power and power relations. It is crucial to be careful not to fall in the trap of ridding intersectionality of its political dimension and limiting it to a diversity of experience and identity without questioning the various power structures, forms of discrimination, racism, patriarchy, discrimination on the basis of language, persecution, exploitation, discrimination on the basis of social class, etc.



## Break

### Exercise 2 (30 minutes)

The exercise features a video of *Rasha*, a woman in her twenties, briefly telling her life story. This exercise consists of watching the video, discussing its content, while making sure to identify and overcome prejudice and orienting the exercise towards understanding discrimination and its forms. The exercise also helps to treat the duality of success and failure in reaching our goals in addition to the interwoven and intersecting levels of persecution, exploitation and discrimination.

#### The video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m8tFvzZfq-U>



<b>Objectives of the exercise</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Introducing the concept of discrimination and understanding the intersection of its different levels/types</li><li>- Drawing attention to the fact that discrimination against women is not only on the basis of sex or gender</li><li>- Discussing the notion of idealism (the ideal woman) and representation in society and institutions</li><li>- Understanding the notions of discrimination, marginalization and impoverishment within their social and political frameworks</li></ul>
<b>Duration of the exercise</b>	<i>30 minutes</i>
<b>Materials</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- A computer and a projector</li><li>- Video 1</li><li>- A room furnished with chairs</li><li>- Posters and markers</li></ul>



## Description of the exercise

I prepare the room for a video screening by turning off the lights, asking everyone to be quiet and turn off their phones. I ask everyone to focus on the content of the video and take down notes for the discussion to take place after the screening without disclosing any details about the video. After the screening, I ask the participants to answer the following questions:

- **What do we understand from Rasha's life?**

I make certain that the answers focus on the details of Rasha's suffering throughout her life and the various forms of discrimination she has faced.

- **Can we consider Rasha a victim of discrimination on the basis of her sex only?**

The answers must focus on enumerating other forms of discrimination to which Rasha has been subjected, especially those related to: decent healthcare services, education, social class, financial services and loans, geographical location, land rights, sexual orientation, skin color and physical integrity.

- **Do we see women like Rasha in the media? Why?**

I should focus here on the notion of the ideal woman or the model of women perpetuated by the authorities in order to omit life stories and different narratives that might question the policies of marginalization and discrimination among individuals within state institutions and society.

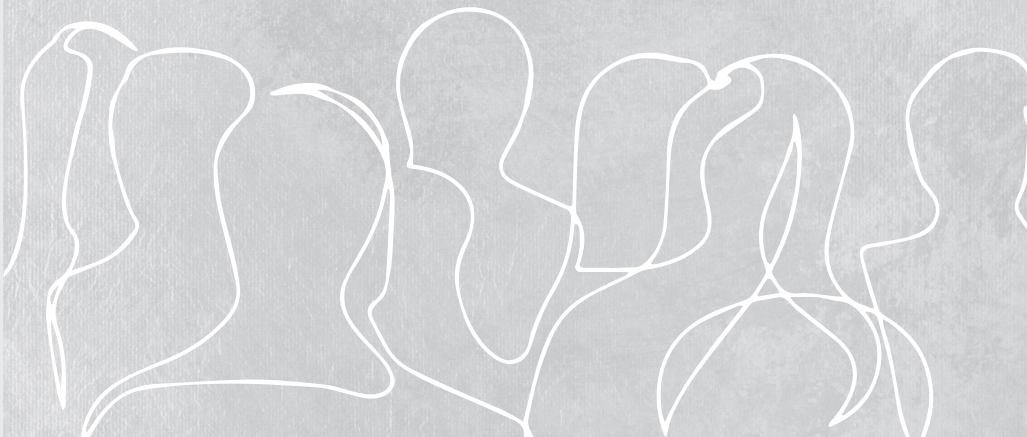
- **Rasha considers herself to have failed as a woman. Do you agree?**

I focus here on the idea of discrimination on the basis of competence and holding individuals responsible for their failure regardless of the circumstances and the forms of discrimination to which they were subjected. I should also focus on the fact that ensuring a minimum decency of life is a purely political matter that depends on more factors than just an individual's will or desire to fulfill themselves.

### ***Note to the facilitator***

While the video features an actress playing a scripted role that we contrived, her life narrative is inspired by many Tunisian women's. Rasha's life is very realistic and all the forms of discrimination she suffers exist in Tunisia. In fact, oftentimes, reality can be and is worse than this fiction. Thus, it is crucial to avoid the side chats on whether or not the video is realistic and discussing the performance of the actress. It is important to focus on the content of the video unless there are women who share Rasha's experience with unemployment, discrimination on the basis of skin color or sex, disability, discrimination on the basis of geographical location, etc.

# *Rasha's story*



### Exercise 3 (30 minutes)

This exercise is connected to the previous one, since it features a video of another woman, *Khadija*, who tells her success story. The exercise consists of watching the video and discussing it, while making sure to avoid prejudice and to orient the exercise to understand privilege and its various forms. The exercise will also help tackle the notions of success and failure to achieve one's goals as well as the intertwining and intersecting levels of privilege.

#### The video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m8tFvzZfq-U>



<b>Objectives of the exercise</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Introducing the concept of privilege and understanding the intersection of its different degrees</li> <li>- Drawing attention to the fact that discrimination against women is not solely on the basis of sex</li> <li>- Discussing the notion of idealism (the ideal woman) and representation in society and institutions</li> <li>- Understanding the notions of privilege, excellence and competence within their social and political framework</li> </ul>
<b>Duration of the exercise</b>	<i>30 minutes</i>
<b>Materials</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A computer and a projector</li> <li>- Video 2</li> <li>- A room furnished with chairs</li> <li>- Posters and markers</li> </ul>

## Description of the exercise

I prepare the room for a video screening by turning off the lights, asking everyone to be quiet and to turn off their phones. I ask everyone to focus on the content of the video and take down notes for the discussion to take place after the screening, without disclosing any details about the video.

After the screening, I ask the participants to answer the following questions:

- **What do we understand from Khadija's life?**

I make certain that the answers focus on the details of Khadija's life and the various forms of privilege she has enjoyed since birth.

- **What are the forms of discrimination that Khadija has suffered?**

I focus on the discrimination on the basis of sex that Khadija has experienced within and outside of the family.

- **What privileges has Khadija enjoyed?**

I make sure to list all the privileges: class, education, health, social relations, sexual orientation and access to banking services and loans.

- **How does the media deal with success stories of women like Khadija?**

I should focus here on the notion of the ideal or model woman that the authorities (political, social or academic) promote and how these success stories are presented as possible for everyone and that they only depend on individuals' will. I also point out that the notions of success and privilege are used out of their political context and explained by competence and skill.

### Description of the exercise

- **Khadija suggests that she succeeded on her own with no help from anyone. Do you agree?**

Here, it is necessary to focus on the idea of privilege and the difficulty to admit and to recognise its existence. I explain that being conscious of one's privilege helps us better position ourselves on the map of intersectionality. It also helps us question the role of institutions in consolidating the hierarchy of individuals and groups through discrimination, unequal opportunities, impoverishment, marginalization, oppression and persecution. I should also focus on the fact that ensuring a minimum decency of life is a purely political matter that is not purely dependent on an individual's will or their desire to fulfill themselves.

### ***Note to the facilitator:***

While the video features an actress playing a scripted role that we contrived, her life narrative is inspired by many Tunisian women's. Khadija's life is very realistic and all the forms of privilege she enjoys exist in Tunisia. Thus, it is crucial to avoid the side chats on whether or not the video is realistic. The discussion should also not turn into a trial for Khadija because she enjoys many privileges. The purpose of the exercise is to be conscious of privilege and not to express vindictiveness against the privileged, and in doing so question institutions and power structures.



# *Khediya's story*



## Exercise 4 (60 minutes)

This exercise introduces the concept of intersectionality as defined by *Kimberlé Crenshaw*, using a video detailing the history of the black feminist movement in America. It is an exercise that combines listing information and group work, i.e. discussing and reflecting on the content in order to gain knowledge in a faster and more efficient manner. We recommend watching the video before screening it to the group.

### The video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Tt-NRASfRk>



<b>Objectives of the exercise</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Introducing the concept of intersectionality</li> <li>- Primary proficiency in the analytical tools of intersectionality</li> <li>- Understanding the political and historical framework in which the term intersectionality was coined</li> <li>- Understanding the importance of intersectionality, its benefits, the reasons behind its spread around the world</li> <li>- Drawing attention to the use of intersectionality as a tool sometimes used against feminism, thus justifying the hegemony of the white imperialist capitalist system</li> </ul>
<b>Duration of the exercise</b>	60 minutes
<b>Materials</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A computer and a projector</li> <li>- Video 3</li> <li>- A room furnished with chairs</li> <li>- Posters and markers</li> </ul>

## Description of the exercise

I start by asking the following questions in order to prepare participants for the video and gauge the extent of their knowledge of intersectionality:

- **Have you heard of intersectionality? Where and how?**
- **What is your definition of intersectionality?**
- **What do you think about intersectionality?**

I only take three answers to each question and avoid comments and discussions of the answers, even the incorrect ones. I ask the participants to listen to the answers and remarks and to keep their opinions for after the screening. When listening to the answers, I focus on keywords, correct and incorrect, and I write them on the flip charts and/or posters.

Example: *intersection, discrimination, feminism, queerness, imported notion, intersection of struggle, intersection of different forms of activism, etc.*

Then, I prepare the room for a video screening by turning off the lights, asking everyone to be quiet and turn off their phones. I ask everyone to focus on the content of the video and take down notes for the discussion to take place after the screening. I state that the video is an introduction of the concept of intersectionality and its theoretical and activist foundations.

After the screening, I ask the participants the following questions:

- **Who is Kimberlé Crenshaw?**

In addition to the answers, I provide the attendants with a few details of her life and her article (see the Intersectionality Booklet).



### Description of the exercise

- **Why did intersectionality come to be? What problematic does it aim to shed light on?**

I focus here on the invisibility of the intersection of different forms of discrimination, which leads many to overlook particular situations such as the condition of black women, who simultaneously suffer from three types of discrimination: on the basis of race, sex, and social class. Intersectionality came to shed light on a previously hidden problem (i.e. the intersection of forms of discrimination) and assigned a term to it. This in turn led to the analysis of such intersections and laid bare its specificities and traits before attempting to solve it.

- **Have you changed your mind about intersectionality? Do you understand it now?**

I listen to the group's comments and remarks and encourage participants to discuss their opinions on the epistemic materials shown, all the while reminding them of the contents of the video and the examples.

# *Definition of intersectionality*

*Kimberlé  
Crenshaw*



## Second session

### Exercise 5 *(90 minutes)*

This is a collective exercise in which participants will learn about themselves and delve into their privileges and the forms of exploitation, persecution and discrimination to which they are subjected. This exercise is divided into an individual part and a collective or dual part.

We recommend that the latter is done in groups that share a degree of trust and safety, since the exercise requires participants to disclose details of their lives, which can be challenging for some people. We must at all times allow everyone to choose whether or not to share.

<b>Objectives of the exercise</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Mastering intersectionality and starting to apply some of its notions to the Tunisian context through the participants' identities and experiences</li><li>- Adopting the concept of intersectionality by participants in order to express their own lives and reality.</li><li>- Learning the difference between intersectionality and cultural specificity</li></ul>
<b>Duration of the exercise</b>	<i>90 minutes</i>
<b>Materials</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Paper and pens</li><li>- Chairs</li></ul>

## Description of the exercise

I ask the participants to take 10 minutes to individually think about their privileges and the forms of oppression to which they are subjected. Then I ask them to choose a partner and introduce themselves according to the list of privileges. I make sure to point out that participants have the freedom to choose their partner and not to go through with the exercise should they be uncomfortable sharing details about their lives. In addition, I mention that participants can limit themselves to one or two examples of intersecting forms of discrimination or privilege according to how comfortable and ready they are to share and chat.

After dividing the group into pairs, I allow them a maximum of 15 minutes to discuss and chat among each other, after which I ask participants to talk about themselves or on behalf of their partners and give examples of the intersecting forms of discrimination and/or privilege. I open the discussion for as many forms of oppression and discrimination as possible in addition to their intersections, before starting the process of recognising one's privilege.

### List of privileges

- **Social class:** Belonging to a wealthy social class is a privilege that provides access to quality services such as education, healthcare and transportation, and enables us to have privileges that are not available to everyone such as wider social networks, respect and self esteem. On the contrary, coming from a poor social class hampers access to quality services. Example: think of all the privileges available to some by virtue of their prosperous social class on the one hand and the discrimination suffered by others due to their impoverished social class on the other.

## Description of the exercise

- **Skin color:** Here, we are talking about racism suffered by individuals with black or dark skin. Society classifies individuals and groups in a hierarchy that places white/light skinned people at the top and darker skinned people at the bottom. The fairer the skin, the more privilege one has in their day-to-day life. For instance, if you have fair skin, the probability of being randomly harassed by the police is much lower than that of people with dark and black skin.
- **Gender:** This refers to the discrimination resulting in male privilege at the expense of women and non-normative people. Society gives a number of privileges to males such as access to public spaces at all times without having to justify their being there while women and non-normative individuals face constant threats of sexual and physical violence in the same spaces. Males also enjoy privileges related to work, pay, decision-making, and longer free time since they often do not partake in care work. They enjoy more freedom to take initiative and assume leading roles in addition to their economic privileges with regards to private property. If you are a man, try to think of all the privileges that you have been enjoying just for being a man, such as safety in the public spaces and comfort in the private space because you do not have to do chores.
- **Geographical location:** Where one lives is another source of privilege. Residing in a good geographical location, close to the center of power, for instance, can provide access to additional privileges such as access to drinking water, better transportation, proximity to schools and universities, entertainment, abundance of goods, more job opportunities and other privileges. The farther we go from capitals and major cities, the harder it becomes to have the above privileges. Think about the privileges you enjoy or the discriminations you face that are due to your geographical location. According to your own geographical location, think about your privileges or the discrimination that you suffer.

## Description of the exercise

- **Sexual orientation:** Society celebrates heterosexuality and punishes non-heteronormative sexualities (the LGBTQI+ community). LGBTQI+ members are subjected to many forms of violence, harassment and assault in both public and private spaces by society, family and the state. They live in constant fear of imprisonment, murder, and social stigmatization while heterosexuals enjoy a social acceptance of their sexual orientation, since they are considered normal, natural and conforming with the rules. Members of the LGBTQI+ community often consider dropping out of school or are sometimes expelled by an educational institution.
- **Education level:** While everyone in Tunisia has a legal right to education, the access to education and the exercise of the right is not equally distributed. For instance, many Tunisians drop out of school due to social and economic reasons, forcing many impoverished families to make a choice between their sons and daughters as to who gets to finish their education. On the other hand, due to increased privatization of education and the impoverishment of the public sector, few can enjoy high-quality education by paying large sums of money for it (e.g. to attend medical, engineering or accounting schools). Some individuals have the opportunity to study abroad by virtue of their social class. Education level directly affects people's lives and their future in terms of accessing jobs that ensures a decent, and at times luxurious, lives. In addition, education is crucial to better understand the complexities of the world around them, their ability to make sense of its codes and to overcome the obstacles of bureaucracy and administration. As an exercise, try to think of the privileges you enjoy due to your education in comparison to someone you know, who did not have the chance to gain as much education as you.

### Description of the exercise

- **Physical health:** Enjoying physical health and being free from any apparent or hidden disability is a privilege. This is primarily because public spaces, in terms of facilities, institutions and roads are often not designed to meet the needs of people with disabilities. Media, education and knowledge as a whole is not equally available to all. There are many situations featuring structural discrimination and violence against people with disabilities. If you know someone with a disability, try to compare your own rights and privileges to theirs and you will find many examples that may be useful to this exercise.
- **Language and/or dialect:** Language can also be a privilege if we master all its codes, especially when this language is that of the center or a 'superior language', as is often the case for foreign languages such as French and English in Tunisia. Dialects are also a factor of privilege and discrimination. In Tunisia, for instance, the dialects of the North West, the Centre, and the South are frowned upon and excluded from the official media to the point that these dialects are mocked and ridiculed on television. The inability to speak a certain language, especially a foreign one (here, we can mention the discrimination against migrants who do not speak Arabic), and/or speaking a marginalized language or dialect can be a ground for discrimination against individuals, groups and minorities. Here, you can ask yourself: do you have the necessary tools to speak the dominant language where you are from? Is your original dialect accepted in your environment?

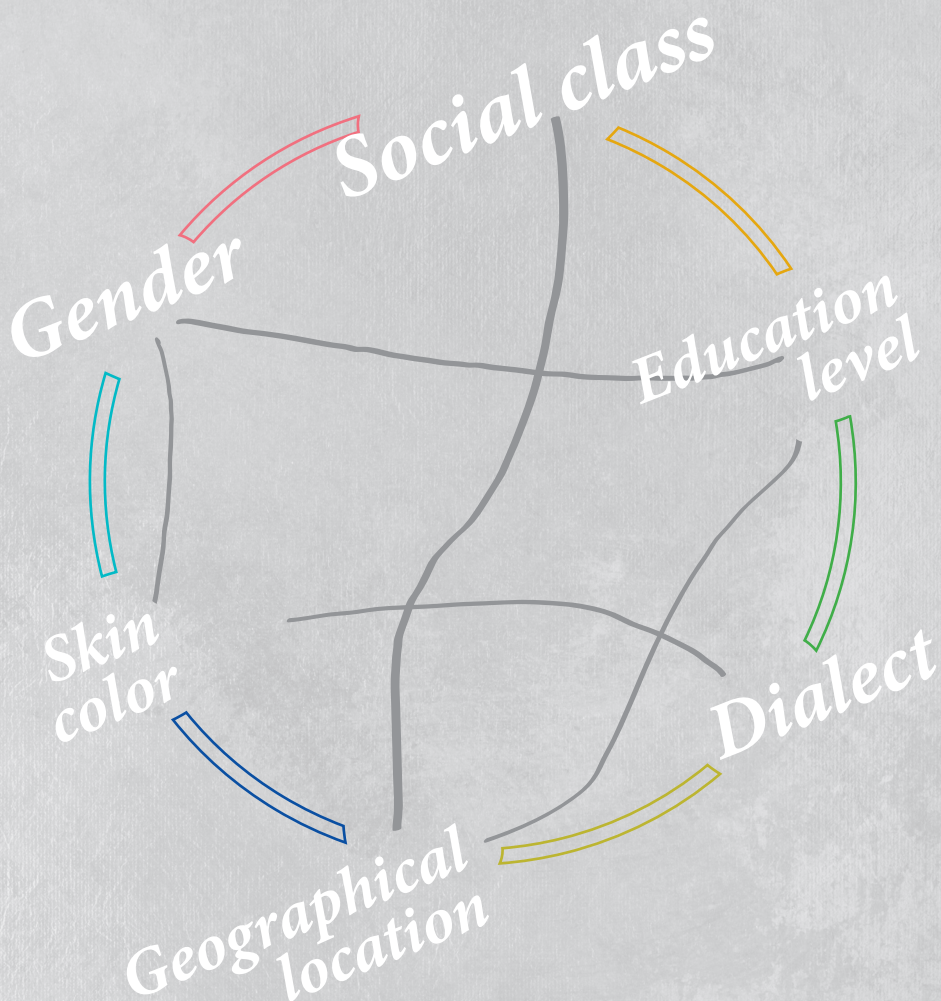
### Note to the facilitator

The discussion must focus on intersectionality as a tool for analyzing power relations and not on the cultural and political diversity exemplified in the various identities and experiences. You should make sure that enough attention is given to the theoretical aspect as well.



# *List of privileges*

*and the forms  
of oppression*





## Exercise 6 *(90 minutes)*

This exercise is a simulation of society with the different components, categories, groups and classes coexisting within it. It aims to show the wide gaps among individuals and the characteristics defining them, such as sex, skin color, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, social status, economic and health conditions, immigration and refugee status and physical ability. The exercise also seeks to explore the ways these characteristics interact and influence one another culminating in the individual's position within society and their ability to meet their needs and fulfill their ambitions.

<b>Objectives of the exercise</b>	Raising awareness among participants regarding unequal opportunities in society, helping them gain further proficiency on topics of discrimination and privilege and showing how these factors add to the precariousness of life for some groups in society.
<b>Duration of the exercise</b>	<i>90 minutes</i>
<b>Materials</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A card for each participant featuring a specific character (see character list below)</li> <li>- Calm and soothing music</li> <li>- List of data (see description of the exercise)</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> this exercise requires a large room, so if the room is small, it is possible to do the exercise outdoors.</p>
<b>Description of the exercise</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I write the name of each character (listed below) on the cards.</li> <li>- I can add or delete characters in order to adapt to the group with whom I am working.</li> <li>- I give participants the opportunity to ask me questions about some of the terms related to the characters should they be unclear. I can resort to the definitions below.</li> </ul>

## Description of the exercise

While explaining the terms to each participant individually, I make sure that participants do not learn about one another's characters.

### • List of characters:

- Female sex worker, 32
- Pediatrician, divorced mother of two, 43
- 11-year-old girl in a Defense and Social Integration Centre
- 15- year-old boy in a children protection institution
- Head of a small municipality in the South West, 62
- Single mother of two, 7 and 4, living in a village in Kasserine
- Visually-impaired girl, 10, living in a working-class area in the suburbs of Sousse
- Businessman, 45, of a wealthy family and married to a famous politician's daughter
- 16-year-old boy who injects himself with drugs and who dropped out of school three years ago
- 39-year-old male teacher in the North West, homosexual
- Businesswoman, 33, owner of an IT startup
- Pregnant woman living with HIV, 26, unemployed
- 11-year-old girl going to a private school with a foreign system
- 15-year-old girl with black skin in search of a job
- Irregular Ivorian migrant, female, 22, victim of human trafficking
- Head of a police station, male, 51
- General director of a central administration in a ministry, 48, married with no children, wife beater
- Judge in the Court of Cassation, living in Tunis, married and father to one child
- Father of three, disabled, 49
- Migrant worker, male, 43, with a family of 4, none speak Arabic

## Description of the exercise

## Definitions

- **Sex worker**: a term referring to people, men and women, who offer sexual services in exchange for money. This term covers people working in both the regulated sector (overseen by the state) and the non-regulated sector (procurers and gangs dealing in human trafficking who mainly run and control this type of activity). It also includes independent workers who face prejudice and social stigma.
- **People living with HIV**: HIV is a virus that targets the immune system responsible for protecting the human body from diseases, thus making it vulnerable to illnesses. When the virus transfers to a person, they become living with the virus without necessarily exhibiting symptoms. It is different from AIDS, which occurs at a later stage if the person does not follow the treatment.
- **Human trafficking**: Organic Law n° 2016-61 dated 3 August 2016 defines human trafficking as follows: "Human trafficking is the luring, recruitment, transportation, transfer, embezzlement, repatriation, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or arms or any other form of coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of authority or of a position of vulnerability or by the offer or acceptance of sums of money or advantages or gifts or promises of gifts in order to obtain the consent of a person having authority over another person for the purposes of exploitation, whatever form this may take, whether such exploitation is committed by the perpetrator of these acts or with a view to placing this person at the disposal of a third party."
- **Exploitation includes, but is not limited to:** exploiting the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or begging, removal in whole or in part of organs, tissues, cells, gametes and genes.

### Part 1:

- I try to create a serene atmosphere by playing calm music in the background and I ask participants to remain quiet while I randomly distribute the cards.
- I ask them to read their cards silently without showing them to anyone else. Then I ask them to make themselves comfortable, either sitting or lying down.
- I ask them to close their eyes and imagine their characters.

In order to assist them, I read some of the following questions out loud and stop after each question to give them time to think and invoke the character: *How was your childhood? What kind of house did you grow up in? What type of games did you play as a child? What jobs did your parents have? How is your daily life now? What do you do in the morning, afternoon and evening? Where do you live? How much money do you make a month? What do you do in your free time? What do you do during your holidays? What scares you?*

Now stop the music.

### Part 2:

- I ask the participants to open their eyes and line next to one another (as if starting a race) in silence.
- I tell them that I will be reading a list of descriptions.  
Each time a description matches their character, participants must take a step forward. Otherwise, they stay put.
- I ask participants to keep in mind how many steps they have taken until the end of the exercise or I draw parallel lines enabling them to determine their progress.
- I read aloud the descriptions below one at a time (I can adapt them to my local context) and I can re-read to make sure that everyone has heard them clearly.

### Description of the exercise

- I live in a decent house with the necessary facilities (electricity, drinking water, etc.).
- I can get new clothes whenever I want.
- I have a university degree or I intend to enroll at university.
- I have access to social assistance should I need it.
- I can ensure a decent life for my children and can protect them.
- I can support my parents or relatives financially if need be.
- I can have a decent job easily.
- I can go to a private clinic if I need to.
- I do not suffer from loneliness.
- I can see my parents and talk to them.
- I can talk to a trusted adult if I face problems.
- I have the time and possibility to watch television or go to the cinema/theater and spend time with friends.
- There are no threats to my physical integrity.
- I am not at risk of harassment or sexual exploitation.
- I am not constantly harassed by law enforcement.
- I attend workshops and trainings allowing me to hone my skills.
- I can easily take part in meetings that are relevant to my life (municipality/local or regional council, parliament, etc.)
- I can influence decisions that are of influence to me.
- After reading this data, I ask everyone to remain where they are and take note of their final positions: some participants will have gone farther than others.
- I ask participants in the front to reveal the roles they are playing, then I ask the ones in the back to do the same.
- I give participants a few minutes to get out of their roles before opening the discussion.

## Description of the exercise

### Part 3:

Participants remain in their positions.

- I ask about their opinions on the activity, then I open a discussion on the following questions:

*Was it difficult to play the different roles? How was the process of imagining the different characters?*

*How did the ones who were in advance feel? How did those who only took a few steps or did not move forward at all feel, seeing everyone else go past them? For those who moved forward, when did they start to notice that the others are not moving as fast and as far?*

*Why are there some people in front and some in the back? What are the factors that can explain this difference?*

*Does this exercise reflect society? If so, how?*

### ***Note to the facilitator:***

It should be stressed that this exercise is important to understand the concepts that were treated in previous sessions, especially intersectionality. Participants should also be assisted in reaching their own conclusions on the differences witnessed in the exercise and realizing how they can get even more stark in society, especially since we do not start the race from the same line. Inequality begins at birth.

The discussion should also touch on the possibility of many groups breaking the cycle of marginalization and fulfilling their potential. In doing so, the group should discuss the notion of competence and attempt to relativize it through the obstacles facing some groups, which are hard to overcome. The following questions can be helpful in this regard: What are the first steps that we can take as activists to deal with inequality in society? How can we reach the people in the back? How do we minimize their precariousness? What are the steps and policies necessary to support them in enjoying their rights?

*11-year-old girl  
in a Defense  
and Social  
Integration  
Centre*

*Pediatrician,  
divorced  
mother of two,  
43*

*Female  
sex  
worker*

*15- year-  
old boy in  
a children  
protection  
institution*

*Head of a small  
municipality in  
the South West,  
62*

*Single mother  
of two, 7 and  
4, living in  
a village in  
Kasserine*

*Pregnant  
woman living  
with HIV, 26,  
unemployed*

*Father of three,  
disabled, 49*

*Migrant  
worker, male,  
with a family of  
4, none speak  
Arabic*

*Judge in the Court  
of Cassation,  
living in Tunis,  
married and  
father to one  
child*

*Head of  
a police  
station, male,  
51*

*Visually-impaired  
girl, 10, living  
in a working-  
class area in the  
suburbs of Sousse*





## DAY 2

### Third Session

#### Exercise 7 (30 minutes)

This exercise helps participants get things off their chests and break the ice after a first day that was laden with emotions and information.

<b>Objectives of the exercise</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Giving space to everyone to express their feelings, especially on intersectionality and self-perception, in addition to our positions on the map of privilege and discrimination</li> <li>- Strengthening the relationship between the participants</li> </ul>
<b>Duration of the exercise</b>	30 minutes
<b>Description of the exercise</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I ask participants the following questions:  <i>What are the feelings that you would like to express about what we heard, observed and learned yesterday?</i>  <i>What are the lessons that you learned yesterday?</i> </li> <li>- I give them enough space to express their feelings for the first 15 minutes. I then move to the second question, giving the participants space to answer.</li> </ul> <p>Answers to the second question:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><u>Definition of intersectionality:</u></b> intersection of different forms of discrimination, e.g. based on race, sex and/or social class against women and/or black people; discrimination crossroads.</li> <li>• <b><u>Uses of intersectionality:</u></b> analyzing power relations and identifying forms of discrimination and their intersections, which are often invisible.</li> </ul> <p>Determining the different forms of privilege and discrimination as well as authority and power within social structures.</p>

social  
class

Discrimination  
against black  
people

**intersection  
of different**

**Sex forms of  
discrimination**

Discrimination  
against  
women

race

## Exercise 8 *(60 minutes)*

This exercise is a practical entry point to putting intersectionality within its activist, practical and collective framework. This is a key step after having discussed its personal dimension, which helped us identify cases of discrimination and situations of privilege. It is necessary to remember that intersectionality is mainly a tool for analysis and activism that should be used politically and contextually within organizations and associations. This should be done in a manner that reflects our awareness of the privileges that constitute power relations and the different forms of discrimination that impoverish, marginalize and exploit certain groups, and by doing so exclude them from decision-making, representation and presence in activist spaces.

<b>Objectives of the exercise</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Understanding the use of intersectionality on the collective activist level</li><li>- econstructing the power relations within state institutions and society</li><li>- Discussing practices within associations and institutions leading to more intersection and space for all</li></ul>
<b>Duration of the exercise</b>	<i>60 minutes</i>
<b>Materials</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Large papers</li><li>- Markers</li><li>- Papers with a pyramid drawing</li><li>- Papers with a list of people with different identities</li></ul>

## Description of the exercise

I distribute papers with drawings of a pyramid and other papers featuring people with different identities. I divide participants into small groups of 3 or 4 and ask them to place the people in the second set of papers in the pyramid (which represents an institution). I suggest that they describe the relations among them and their roles.

Suggested set of characters (it is possible to add other characters) include:

- Unemployed mother of two children
- Visually-impaired individual
- Transgender woman who is a sex worker
- Educated black woman
- Fair-skinned, heterosexual man with a university degree
- Male sub-Saharan migrant non-Arabic speaker
- Fair-skinned, heterosexual woman with a university degree

Discussion questions should go as follows:

- *Who are the people inside the pyramid? Who is outside? And why?*

I focus here on the real-life examples provided by the participants as I try to urge them to describe the privileges enjoyed by people at the top of the pyramid and the discrimination suffered by those at the bottom. I then open the discussion on the characters outside the pyramid, giving examples of the most marginalized groups such as sex workers, transgender women and people with disabilities.

- *What are the common characteristics among people at the bottom of the pyramid and among those at the top?*

I continue to encourage participants to speak of the privileges that provide people with the opportunity to be at the top of the pyramid. I also give space to enumerate the intersecting forms of discrimination that lead to staying at the bottom of the pyramid or outside of it all together.

### Description of the exercise

- **What are the relations tying all these people together?**

Here, I supervise a discussion leading to a deconstruction of the relations among different people and what they reflect in terms of hegemony and exclusion, both conscious or unconscious. I also deconstruct the notion of social structures and the necessity of being aware of them in all phases of collective work in order to resist the hegemony within them.

**Note:** *It does not matter whether all groups finish answering the last question since everyone will have the opportunity to delve into the details of the answer in the following and last exercise. What is important about this exercise is for participants to discover that intersectionality is mainly a collective practice that is subject to a particular form of political awareness and conceptual analysis.*





*Unemployed  
mother  
of two*

*Visually-  
impaired  
individual*

*Educated  
black  
woman*

*Male sub-  
Saharan migrant  
non-Arabic  
speaker*

*Transgender  
woman  
who is a sex  
worker*

*Fair-skinned,  
heterosexual  
man with a  
university  
degree*

## Exercise 9 *(120 minutes)*

A collective exercise aiming to analyze three real cases from Tunisia from an intersectional perspective. These cases are divided into the following axes: right to water, land rights and LGBTQI+ rights. Every group will work on one axis for 45 minutes in which they will reflect on the ramifications of the problem at hand from an intersectional point of view and on how to address it with an intersectional approach. The facilitator must provide every group with the statistics and the historical and legal information necessary to facilitate the work and help each group focus on intersectional analysis.

<b>Objectives of the exercise</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Using intersectionality as a tool of political analysis for social, economic and political issues in Tunisia</li><li>- Learning details of intersectional analysis through practice</li><li>- Understanding intersectionality in the Tunisian context</li><li>- Attempting to create shared action plans within an intersectional framework</li></ul>
<b>Duration of the exercise</b>	<i>120 minutes</i>
<b>Materials</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Flipchart</li><li>- Large papers</li><li>- Markers</li></ul>

**Part one** 20 minutes

I start by dividing participants into three groups, then I write the following expressions on each of the large papers: Right to Water, Land Rights, LGBTQI+ Rights. I then give every group a paper and ask them the following question:

***What do these expressions mean to you: Right to Water, Land Rights, LGBTQI+ Rights?***

Participants will take 15 minutes to answer. I make certain that they have a clear sense of the meaning of these expressions. In case there is a confusion, I try to clear it by providing them with these definitions and the relevant historical data.

- **Right to Water:** The right to water entitles everyone to have access to a sufficient amount of water to meet all their needs, as water is a fundamental natural resource necessary to ensure a decent life for all citizens. The right to water is guaranteed in the Tunisian constitution without discrimination. However, Tunisia faces extreme water scarcity, which in turn seriously compromises the exercise of the right to water.
- **Land Rights:** Land rights are connected to the right of individuals and groups to access the natural resources in their region, enabling them to benefit from the said resources in terms of feeding themselves or earning an income guaranteeing a decent life. This right includes, for instance, giving rural populations the right to use agricultural lands.

Land rights help people secure their rights and provide for themselves in addition to protecting the environment through a sustainable investment, which in turn contributes to a sustainable food sovereignty.



## Description of the exercise

These rights stand in stark opposition with major investors monopolizing lands and exploiting in a lucrative manner, yet, it does necessarily ensure food security in addition to harming the environment through excessive use of water and pesticides, etc.

In Tunisia, many groups are currently involved in fighting for their land rights, including Djemna, Youth of Sidi Bouzid, as well as the group of Small Farmers in the governorate of Siliana in the north west of the country, among others.

It is noteworthy that land rights are globally interconnected with peoples' self-determination rights and indigenous people's rights over their ancestral lands and resources in order to survive.

- **LGBTQI+ Rights:** These are the rights of gays, lesbians, transgenders and other people with non-normative sexual orientations and gender identities. The Tunisian law does not recognise any of these rights and even criminalizes people with non-normative sexual orientations and gender identities (Article 230 of the Penal Code). In Tunisia, many associations and collectives fight for LGBTQI+ rights, including Mawjoudine and Damj, among others.

**Historical background on Article 230:** There is no trace of criminalizing homosexuality in any Tunisian law prior to colonization. The Penal Code issued in 1861 following the first constitution of the Tunisian Kingdom did not criminalise consensual sexual relations between two adults of the same sex. The criminalization of homosexuality in Tunisia began with the Penal Code of 1913, in which Article 230 criminalizes "homosexuality" and "lesbianism" with a penalty of three years of prison. While the Arabic version of the Code (which was a translation of the original French Code) criminalizes homosexuality, the French version criminalizes sodomy. In other words, the French version in theory does not criminalize the sexual orientation, but the practice.

There have been different readings as to the reason this article was included in the Penal Code. Some scholars view it as an attempt by the colonial authorities to respect the “cultural specificities” and Islamic Sharia, at least according to their understanding of it. It is crucial to stress that Article 230 was included in a penal code that was established under colonial rule and was drafted by a committee composed of notable colonial officials. Although the Penal Code has been amended on numerous occasions, many articles are still in effect to this day, including Article 230.

### **Part two** 45 minutes

After presenting the three axes, I ask every group to work on one axis and answer the following questions:

1. *What are the main initiatives or activities relating to this axis?*
2. *What are the main strengths and weaknesses of these initiatives from an intersectional point of view?*
3. *What are the suggestions and practical solutions that would make these struggles more intersectional?*

### **Part three** 60 minutes

This section commences with the first group working on the ‘right to water’ presenting their work. Based on the outcomes of this collective work, I voice the following conclusions:

In order for activism around this axis to be more intersectional, we need three key elements:

1. **To read our reality in an intersectional manner:**
  - The danger and challenges surrounding the right to water do not affect Tunisians equally. For instance, during the months of summer, the practice of cutting the water only affects the interior regions and working class areas. (It is tragicomic that the water is often cut in the North West, where most of the country’s dams are located).

## Description of the exercise

- Scarcity is only one reason why many rural communities suffer from the lack of access to water. Other reasons include the pollution of water sources as a result of industrial activity nearby (as is the case in the Houeideyya Village in Tabarka, Jendouba), and the exploitation of available resources by water bottling companies (as is the case in the villages of Labiedh and Baten El Ghazel in Jelma, Sidi Bouzid). The people of these regions remain thirsty while the neighboring cities drink their water.
- Women tend to bear the brunt of water scarcity since our patriarchal societies assign the task of collecting and managing water to women. This is justified by treating water as a matter of the private sphere (household chores such as cooking and cleaning). Lack of access to drinking water adds a mental load\* to women due to a sense of responsibility for water. In addition, they are more likely to fall victim to domestic violence because of "failing to do their duty."
- Rural women with no access to land rights face an acute form of danger related to the right to water since they face intersecting forms of discrimination based on factors such as geographic location, sex, and social class.

(\*) Mental load is a term for the invisible labor involved in managing a household and family, which typically falls on women's shoulders entailing a persistent pressure on their mental and emotional health. For instance, women are often solely responsible for thinking of their children's education, managing their various appointments and doing chores.

### 2. Adopting intersectionality, even partially, in our activist literature:

- The papers on the right to water should include arguments on regional and social inequality, as well as what women face in both public and private spaces when collecting and managing water resources within the family. Today, we can no longer talk about water scarcity as if it affects all citizens similarly.

### 3. Practicing intersectionality in our daily activism:

- Movements and associations fighting for the right to water could give more space to those who are directly or doubly affected by this issue due to its intersection with other issues.
- The second group working on 'land rights' will present their work and based on the outcomes of this collective work, I voice the following conclusions:

In order for this activism to be more intersectional, we need three elements:

### 4. To read our reality in an intersectional manner:

- In Tunisia, there are many situations in which the state grants some investor (usually a powerful, wealthy man) the right to use large parcels of land for personal material gains, while the people living near these lands are prohibited from using them to feed themselves. Often, women are doubly affected by this since they lack access to the land and/or inherit less than men in case the family owns a piece of land. They are thus exploited by big farmers making them vulnerable to precarious and dangerous working conditions. An example of this is the dangers women are exposed to when they are forced to use unsuitable means of transport to get to the fields they work in. Here, we can cite the example of Blahdeyya Village, Sabbala, Sidi Bouzid, where 12 women died and many others injured in an accident in 2019 and many others were injured. Even when some women own very small parcels of land, they receive little to no support from the state (despite the numerous promises), e.g. to dig wells, in order to be able to do their agricultural activities that guarantee a minimum of dignity and physical integrity.

### 5. Adopting intersectionality, even partially, in our activist literature:

- The living and working condition of female agricultural workers is an intersectional cause par excellence as it simultaneously holds exploitation, violence and discrimination in addition to the lack of land rights.

## Description of the exercise

- The issue of gender (in)equality in inheritance is an intersectional cause par excellence as it includes, but is not limited to, women who are subjected to two forms of violence. The first is economic as they are robbed of their social and economic rights, such as social security, and consequently robbed of their access to equal inheritance, even if it is a small plot of land. The second is sexual violence as they often suffer from sexual harassment and rape in their precarious agricultural work.

### 6. Practicing intersectionality in our daily activism:

- Associations working on the issue of equality in inheritance should link this to land rights and women's suffering due to the intersecting socio-political violence (by the state and society) to which they are subjected.

The third group working on 'LGBTQI+ rights' will present their work and based on the outcomes of this collective work, I voice the following conclusions:

In order for this activism to be more intersectional, we need three elements:

### 7. To read our reality in an intersectional manner:

- The oppressive practices targeting the LGBTQI+ community differ according to the privileges enjoyed by the individuals targeted. For instance, individuals from impoverished social classes are more likely to be subjected to police violence as they reside in areas where institutional violence, especially police violence, is aggravated. Thus, these individuals are more likely to be tried and imprisoned according to Article 230 of the Penal Code.
- The discrimination against LGBTQI+ individuals on the basis of their sexual and gender identities is often accompanied by racist practices, such as discrimination on the basis of skin color if they are black. If these individuals are also sub-Saharan migrants and/or living with HIV, the discrimination does not merely double, it increases exponentially.

## Description of the exercise

- Most organizations fighting for the rights of the LGBTQI+ community are located in Tunis (with regional offices in Sousse, Sfax and Kef). Thus they are unable to help a victim of violence in an interior or rural area as efficiently as they would a victim in Tunis.

### 8. Adopting intersectionality, even partially, in our activist literature:

- In order for our work as LGBTQI+ activists to be more intersectional, we have to take categories other than the main ones (i.e. sexual and gender identity) into account, since they also contribute to the discrimination, persecution and exploitation faced by this vulnerable community.
- In the advocacy work to abolish Article 230, we have to mention social class as a key factor rendering homosexuals from impoverished and marginalized social classes more likely to be tried and imprisoned.

### 9. Practicing intersectionality in our daily activism:

- Associations working on this issue could attempt to be more present in areas where individuals lacking economic privileges reside, thus being able to intervene in cases of emergency.



*LGBTQI+  
Rights*

*Land*





*Right  
to Water*

*Rights*



# CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we aimed for this booklet to be as comprehensive as possible on two fundamental levels. Firstly, the working team sought for this production to be an attempt to tackle intersectionality theoretically.

This was not an easy task, given that intersectionality has indeed become a global phenomenon since the formalization of the concept by Crenshaw more than thirty years ago and after multiple important historical milestones, whereby different dimensions of intersectionality were highlighted without the term being fully sculpted.

Intersectionality possesses analytical tools that are versatile in a way to apply to different corners. Our attempt at such an overview is the fruit of the collaborative effort of the working team who chose to bring together the various possible sources and research fields, believing that this collective writing must reflect the diversity of backgrounds. At the same time, we hope that this booklet will inspire researchers to integrate the intersectional approach into their work.

As for the application of intersectionality in daily activist practices, the working team aimed to document many testimonies to consider the lived experiences of actors, both within organizations and associations and within organized groups outside conventional frameworks. This research highlighted the needs of each group/association/organization from a theoretical perspective. Moreover it endeavored to translate these needs into effective tools capable of enhancing various forms of activism. Particularly, the main contradiction we noticed in formulating this booklet on intersectionality in Tunisia was as follows: many practices appear to be intersectional in their general form without explicitly adopting intersectionality as a theory. Perhaps this makes the practice a precursor to the concept. Based on this, the working team created a training guide targeting all actors within the Tunisian civil society, including associations, organizations, groups and socio-political movements. Through this

training we seek to accompany and assist those who wish to incorporate intersectionality into their daily work and activities.

This work and the resulting tools can serve as a valuable starting point and an example of the importance of dismantling intersecting categories of discrimination, exploitation, oppression and violence. They also offer suggestions on how to change a range of practices to become more intersectional. Like many who have written about intersectionality, we are also aware that using the concept/practice may not be easy. However, we hope that the available tools and accompanying exercises offer added value and turn our concerns into intersectional projects.

You can implement intersectionality in your daily life by realizing how your privileges impact those around you and by dismantling the complex and multifaceted relationships of domination as an important step towards creating a more inclusive and just human space that is open for everyone. You can make room and integrate those who are at the crossroads of multi-layered oppression and complex marginalization. Intersectional thinking helps broaden our perspective and allows us to be attentive to other identities and experiences without erasing or overlooking the existing differences between us and without harming any individual or group.


Intersectionality is a multifaceted approach to influence and change the world, encompassing theoretical and practical aspects. We live in an extremely complex world where increasingly intricate and intersecting forms of discrimination and inequality exist. Therefore, it is essential that we develop our strategies and practices to match this complexity.

To finish, we would like to extend our utmost gratitude and appreciation to all those who provided us with their testimonials and/or directly or indirectly assisted us, enabling us to enrich this work, which we hope will serve as a starting point for discussions and interactions about intersectionality in Tunisia.









You can implement intersectionality in your daily life by realizing how your privileges impact those around you and by dismantling the complex and multifaceted relationships of domination as an important step towards creating a more inclusive and just human space that is open for everyone. You can make room and integrate those who are at the crossroads of multi-layered oppression and complex marginalization. Intersectional thinking helps broaden our perspective and allows us to be attentive to other identities and experiences without erasing or overlooking the existing differences between us and without harming any individual or group.

Intersectionality is a multifaceted approach to influence and change the world, encompassing theoretical and practical aspects. We live in an extremely complex world where increasingly intricate and intersecting forms of discrimination and inequality exist. Therefore, it is essential that we develop our strategies and practices to match this complexity.