

# ERF Policy Brief

## Effectiveness and Constraints of NGOs on Climate Policies in Developing Countries: The Case of Tunisia

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### About the author

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### In a nutshell

- Improvements to working conditions affects the involvement of NGOs in climate change actions.
- Making NGOs more professional has a positive effect on elaboration of climate strategies but a negative effect on participation in the COPs meetings.
- Exclusion from government law-drafting is major determinant of NGO involvement in climate change actions.
- NGOs that cooperate with the government and are funded by international organizations are more likely to be involved in climate change actions, climate negotiations and implementation of climate projects.
- NGOs working on project implementation lack the resources to undertake other activities.
- A larger budget and more funding sources are positively correlated with engagement in policy change/policy negotiations and increases the probability of implementing projects.

## Introduction

Climate change governance, one of the most significant challenges that is facing the international community, includes different actors and players. States are considered to be the most important actors while nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are assuming an increasing role and having a greater impact on climate policy and governance. The main role of NGOs in climate change policy is to achieve incorporation of long-term climate risks and promote greater equity in the relations between states and populations at both the national and local levels.

The role of NGOs in international climate negotiations has been important since the first conference of parties (COPs) in 1995. The participation and impact of NGOs in climate negotiations and climate policy implications are increasing. One year after adoption of the Paris Agreement, some 5,500 non-state organizations attended the UNFCCC meetings.

Debate is ongoing on the effectiveness of NGOs in the formulation and value of climate policy, climate negotiations and related climate actions. This debate is more pronounced in developing countries where the actions and participation of NGOs is often more limited and not supported by governments. The effectiveness of NGOs should be strengthened through continuous participation and commitment to climate governance. However, it will take more than continuous participation in climate governance to achieve this. Actions and clear goals for adaptation and mitigation of climate change are key to NGO efficacy. The in developing countries is inconclusive.

The position of NGOs and their role in climate governance are increasing in Tunisia. NGO actions, activities, efforts and involvement in mitigation of and adaptation to climate change are vital for an effective national response to climate risks. The decisive contribution and involvement of the National Dialogue Quartet of Tunisian NGOs resulted in the award of a Nobel Prize in 2015. However, NGOs face several barriers to the realization of their climate objectives and activities.

This policy brief analyzes the role of NGOs in climate policy in Tunisia, their engagement in the climate negotiation process, the barriers they face in implementing their activities and their effectiveness in lobbying at the local, national and international levels.

## The scope of NGO climate actions in Tunisia

There are four types of NGOs working in the field of climate change in Tunisia: international NGOs (such as the WWF, HBS, etc.) which have established strategies and good supply of human resources, national NGOs which are spread across the country and are reasonably well-organized and have clear mandates and strategies, and regional NGOs which tend to focus on particular areas such as water, oases, oceans) and contribute to local policies in their immediate surroundings.

NGOs in Tunisia are focused most on climate change education, development of actions and mitigation policies, water pollution and lobbying. International NGOs are also present in Tunisia and engage in climate change education, development of international cooperation, lobbying and mitigation actions.

International NGOs are involved in mitigating the effects of wildfires, floods and drought but are less involved in the effects of heat waves. National NGO activities are more dispersed, and regional and local NGOs are focused more on dealing with the consequences of storms, wildfires and drought and less on the consequences of sea level rises.

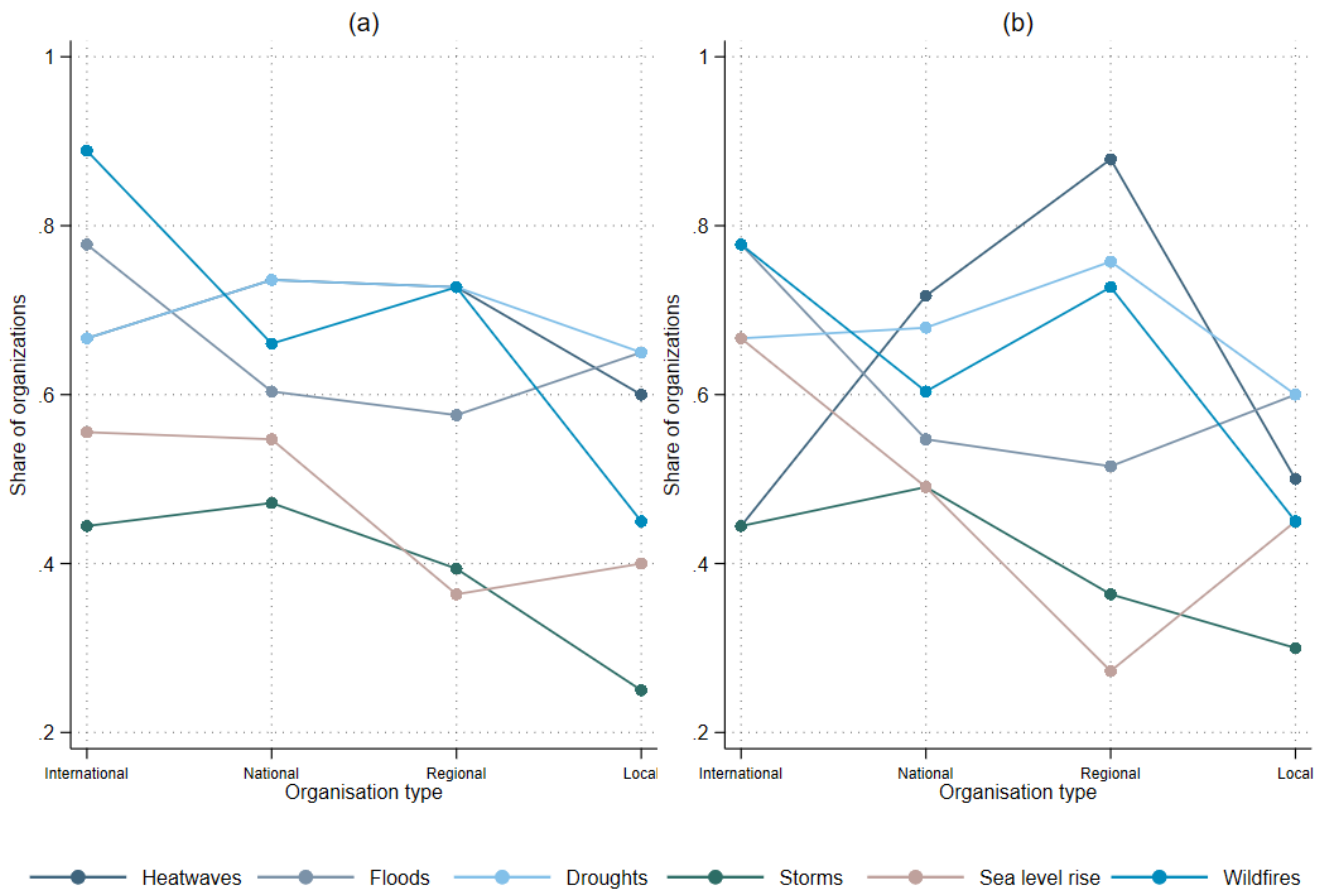
International NGO efforts are aimed at adaptation to the effects of wildfires and floods, and sea level rises and drought. While national organizations seem to be mostly involved in adapting to the effects of heatwaves and droughts, followed by wildfires and floods. Moreover, regional NGOs seem to have much more dispersed efforts but they seem to be particularly interested in adapting to the effects of heatwaves followed by droughts and wildfires, while they seem to be less interested in adapting to the effects of storms and sea level rise. Finally, local NGOs seem to be mostly interested in floods and droughts, followed by heatwaves, sea level rise and wildfires, but they seem to be less interested in heatwaves.

## Effectiveness of NGOs in climate policy making in Tunisia

It is difficult to measure the effectiveness of NGOs in climate governance. The factors determining their effectiveness differ among countries depending on the domestic political and democratic institutions. Some argue that NGOs are more efficient in countries with



Figure 1: Panel (a) plots the share of organizations by type of organization regarding the mitigation of the impacts of climate change, while panel (b) plots the share of organizations by type of organization regarding the adaptation of impacts of climate change.



stable democratic institutions since they receive better support from government.. It has been found also that in politically closed countries NGOs have limited input into climate policy, although in some countries with weak governance systems NGOs are very active and are considered crucial for many decision making processes.

The main factors that seem to determine NGO efficacy in climate governance in Tunisia are:

- Improved work conditions and greater NGO professionalism which seem to be preconditions for their involvement in climate policy. More structured activities and the existence of a physical office space seems to increase NGO effectiveness. A more professional approach has a positive impact on strategy formulation and training but a negative effect on attendance at COPs meetings. This might

be because the NGO puts different value on its time and the costs of engaging in certain activities. Participation in COPs meetings is costly and its impact is small which might be why NGOs prefer to direct their efforts to other activities.

- Cooperating with government is associated with more involvement in climate change actions, climate policy, climate negotiations and project implementation. For several years, the Tunisian authorities - especially the Ministry of Environment and Local Affairs climate change unit - have been making efforts to include NGOs in climate policy and climate dialogue. However, involvement of local NGOs in implementation of climate projects is small compared to the efforts made by national and international NGOs in these activities.
- Third, budgets and sources of funding have an influence on NGO activities. Budget increases allow coordination activities, and international

sources of funding are important. In most cases, if the main sources of funding are external donors and international organizations there is a higher probability that the NGO will be involved in climate change actions compared to funding sourced solely from NGO members. An increased number of funding sources increases the NGO's workload allowing less time for other activities such as participation in strategy formulation and ministry workshops. More sources of funding also result in more politically neutral NGOs which are less willing to contribute to public policy debates and projects. Although the number of funding sources and the influence of NGOs in Tunisia has increased more needs to be done in these directions.

### Constraints on environmental NGOs in Tunisia

Tunisian NGOs face several barriers to the realization of their climate change activities due to their level of involvement in climate actions, and climate negotiations. First, lack of financial resources is a major problem for Tunisian NGOs and those involved in project implementation lack the resources to allow them to undertake other activities. Thus, the likelihood of participating in climate policy drafting decreases. The result is a split between NGOs involved in project implementation and NGOs contributing to policy formulation.

Second, Tunisian NGOs are mostly excluded from the drafting of government laws which has a negative effect on their activities and involvement in drafting strategy documents, and participating in climate change training and workshops. Involvement in law drafting could increase the capacity to attract funding and engage in climate change activities.

Third, NGOs are non-profit organizations but in the "Tunisian culture" are associated to benevolent and non-remunerated activities. Paid staff implies more responsibilities. Most NGOs in Tunisia are not well organized and rely on one or two individuals which limits their ability to participate in policy and training.

### Conclusions and policy implications

Developing countries are being asked to implement strong climate policies and projects to mitigate the effects of climate change. NGOs could play a major role in these activities.

First, they should be involved in climate policy to allow them to contribute more positively to climate actions and negotiations. Government support will make NGOs more effective.

Second, Implementing the NDCs requires appropriate effort and commitment and transparent communication among different actors and stakeholders including NGOs.

Third, NGO skills and capacities should be strengthened to allow greater influence over climate change policy.

Fourth, control of funding sources should be put in place to preserve national sovereignty. Tunisia should provide more funding for NGOs to make them less dependent on external donors.

Fifth, stronger and better supported NGOs would attract more funding which would allow greater participation in climate projects.

Sixth, climate policy needs to be more participatory and consultative and should include NGOs.





**ERF at a Glance:** *The Economic Research Forum (ERF) is a regional network dedicated to promoting high-quality economic research for sustainable development in the Arab countries, Iran and Turkey. Established in 1993, ERF's core objectives are to build a strong research capacity in the region; to encourage the production of independent, high-quality research; and to disseminate research output to a wide and diverse audience. To achieve these objectives, ERF's portfolio of activities includes managing carefully selected regional research initiatives; providing training and mentoring to junior researchers; and disseminating the research findings through seminars, conferences and a variety of publications. The network is headquartered in Egypt but its affiliates come primarily from different countries in the region.*

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