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# **GENDER EQUALITY & DEVELOPMENT**

## **WOMEN AS AGENTS OF CHANGE: HAVING VOICE IN SOCIETY AND INFLUENCING POLICY**

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THE WORLD BANK

*WOMEN AS AGENTS OF CHANGE:*

*HAVING VOICE IN SOCIETY & INFLUENCING POLICY*

**ABSTRACT**

The World Bank's *World Development Report on Gender Equality and Development* (WDR2012) identified women's voice, agency and participation as a key dimension of gender equality and as a major policy priority. Agency, as defined in the WDR2012, is the ability to use endowments to take advantage of opportunities to achieve desired outcomes. In particular, WDR2012 focused on five "expressions" of agency: women's access to and control over resources; freedom of movement; freedom from the risk of violence; decision-making over family formation; and having voice in society and influencing policy.

An important expression of women's agency is women's political participation and their ability to fully engage in public life. This background paper focuses on women's ability to play a public role in politics and to influence policy-making. Using the data available, it examines the current status of women in politics and makes the case for the full and equitable participation of women in public life. It reviews the direct and indirect barriers that exist to prevent women's political participation and analyzes strategies that have been used to increase it. Finally, the paper identifies the connections between the five expressions of agency and priorities for future work.

## 1. Status of Women in Politics

The modern global conversation around women's rights and political participation has been taking place for almost 40 years. Beginning in 1975 with the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), it has continued with the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and led most recently to the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals. Through the conferences, declarations and action plans, a consensus has emerged that 1) women should be able to play an equal role in politics; 2) temporary special measures, such as quotas, are an effective means to increasing women's political roles; and 3) quota legislation is insufficient on its own to achieve the full and equal participation of women in politics.

Within politics women can play a variety of roles: as voters, political party members, candidates and office holders, and members of civil society. Although the exception, laws restricting women's rights to vote and to stand for election persist in a handful of Middle Eastern countries, including Saudi Arabia<sup>1</sup> and the United Arab Emirates.<sup>2</sup> In emerging democracies, women have acquired voting rights only in the past 50 years, whereas in more established democracies, women have had the legal franchise for almost 100 years. In more than half of countries worldwide, voter registration is compulsory.<sup>3</sup> In countries where voter registration is not mandatory, measurements of the percentage of registered voters who actually voted ("voter turnout") sometimes shows a gap between the number of men and women who vote.\* For instance, a 2013 survey in Libya conducted by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) showed that while 88 percent of men voted in the 2012 GNC Elections, just 66 percent of women voted. Explanations for this gap in voting turnout range from structural or legal barriers to social or cultural norms; but the gap is evident across most demographic categories, including age, education, household income, and so forth.<sup>4</sup> Research conducted by International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) in 2002 shows that many countries have seen a gradual shrinking of the disparities in voting participation between women and men in the post-World War II era, and in some countries, such as Norway, women are outpacing their male counterparts in the voting booth.<sup>5</sup>

Women generally have the right to join a political party and seek elected office in their own right. Where data are collected, the number of women candidates for national office seems to be increasing. Research in the United States shows that the number of women who ran for Congress in 2012 reached an all-time high,<sup>6</sup> and in the United Kingdom and Afghanistan, the number of women seeking an MP position peaked in 2010.<sup>7 8</sup> Similar data are not readily available for the majority of countries, although they are expanding.<sup>9</sup> Recent data from a limited pool demonstrate that the percentage of women running for office compared with male candidates at the national level varies widely (from France with 40 percent women candidates and Vanuatu with 3 percent) and that the success rate can also vary (from 100 percent in Gambia to 0 percent in Vanuatu).

At the end of 2012, the global average of women in parliament stood at 20.3 percent, up from 19.5 percent in 2011.<sup>10</sup> Regional averages range from a low of 13.8 percent for the Arab states (although Morocco stands out with 17 percent) to a high of 42.0 percent in the Nordic countries (with Sweden at the top with 44.7 percent).<sup>11</sup> With the exception of 2007, the average annual rate of increase in recent years has been 0.5 percentage points.<sup>12</sup>

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\* Even in countries with compulsory registration, there are varying degrees of enforcement.

Percentage of women in parliaments by region:<sup>13</sup>

<u>Region</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Single/Lower House</u>	<u>Upper House/Senate</u>
Americas	24.1%	23.9%	25.0%
Asia	17.9%	18.4%	14.1%
Europe	23.2%	21.9% (w/o Nordic)	21.5%
		.0% for Nordic countries	
Middle East	13.2%	15.7%	6.8%
Pacific	15.3%	12.7%	36.0%
Sub-Saharan Africa	20.4%	20.9%	17.5%

Even in countries with high numbers of women in national office, women generally do not have high levels of participation at the local level, and particularly not in mayoral positions. Regional averages for the proportion of women among locally elected councilors in Africa for example ranged from a low of 8 percent in Northern Africa to a high of 30 percent in sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>14</sup> A 2010 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) study in the Asia-Pacific region specifically shows large variation of levels of women in local government. In terms of sub-national women's representation, India is first at almost 40 percent followed by Pakistan, Afghanistan, Australia and New Zealand, with most other Asia-Pacific countries falling below 20 percent.<sup>15</sup> In Latin America and the Caribbean, an average of 25 percent of city councilors were women in 2011.<sup>16</sup> Mexico and Costa Rica each had 38 percent, followed by Suriname, Cuba, Trinidad and Tobago, the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico, all above 30 percent.<sup>17</sup> In the United States, the level of women in state legislatures varies greatly from a high of 41.5 percent in Colorado to a low of 11.8 percent in Louisiana. In 2011, about one quarter of the United Kingdom's local councilors were women, but only 13.2 percent of elected council leaders were women.<sup>18</sup> In Mauritania, 30 percent of the seats in municipal councils are held by women.<sup>19</sup> In South Africa, 38 percent of local councilors were women after the 2011 elections, a decrease from the previous level of 40 percent in 2006.<sup>20</sup>

United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) lists the global average of women mayors at less than 5 percent; many countries including Morocco and Afghanistan have only one or two women serving in this position nationwide.<sup>21</sup> Besides Latvia (25 percent), Mauritius (40 percent), New Zealand (26 percent) and Serbia (26 percent), all of the 77 other countries or areas with available data had fewer than 20 percent women mayors.<sup>22</sup> The 2003-2008 regional averages of women as mayors compiled by the United Nations from UCLG and national sources:<sup>23</sup>

<u>Region</u>	<u>Average</u>
Caribbean	5%
Central America	9%
Europe	10%
South America	8%
South-East Asia	6%
Sub-Saharan Africa	9%
Western Asia	1%

While there has been incremental progress in the gains of women's political participation globally, the numbers of women heads of state or government has remained relatively low. Since 1950, approximately 80 women have served as heads of state, not including monarchs or those appointed by monarchs to serve as ceremonial heads of government.<sup>24</sup> Until recently, the majority of women who were able to become strong presidents did so through familial ties. In Asia, almost all women leaders have come from political dynasties.<sup>25</sup> In Latin America, women have typically come to power in the place of an assassinated husband or through other family connections.<sup>26</sup> Although it still remains a challenge, the trend seems to be slowly changing. Since 2006, nine women have come to power in Latin America, Africa and Europe, mostly without family connections. Latin America has had the most female presidents at four: Michelle Bachelet of Chile, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner of Argentina, Laura Chinchilla Miranda of Costa Rica and Dilma Rousseff of Brazil. Africa currently has two female presidents, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia and Joyce Banda of Mali, neither of whom comes from a political family, nor is President Dalia Grybauskaitė of Lithuania or Atifete Jahjaga of Kosovo. While the number of women heads of state has increased markedly in the past six years, at the end of 2012 there were still only 20 women leaders out of 193 countries (or 10 percent) in the world.

<b>Women heads of state in 2013</b>	
Argentina	Cristina Fernández de Kirchner
Bangladesh	Sheikh Hasina Wazed
Brazil	Dilma Rousseff
Costa Rica	Laura Chinchilla
Denmark	Helle Thorning-Schmidt
Germany	Angela Merkel
Jamaica	Portia Simpson-Miller
Kosovo	Atifete Jahjaga
Lithuania	Dalia Grybauskaitė
Liberia	Ellen Johnson Sirleaf
Malawi	Joyce Banda
South Korea	Park Geun-hye
San Marino	Antonella Mularoni
Slovenia	Alenka Bratušek
Switzerland	Doris Leuthard, Simonetta Sommaruga and Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf
Thailand	Yingluck Shinawatra
Trinidad and Tobago	Kamla Persad-Bissessar

Another measure of women's executive leadership is the number of cabinet or ministry positions. As a regional average, women hold between roughly 8 to 28 percent of ministerial posts, while individual countries range from 0 to 58 percent.<sup>27</sup> A number of heads of state have made women's leadership in their cabinet a priority. In Australia in April 2013, history was made as (now former) Prime Minister Julia Gillard retained four women to the 20-member cabinet and named three new women to the ministry for a record seven out of ten seats. Following his election as president of France in 2012, Francois Hollande expanded his cabinet to 34 positions and named 17 women and 17 men. Previously, cabinets with equal numbers of men and women were appointed by Chilean President Michelle Bachelet in 2006 and Spanish Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero in 2004 and 2008.

While few data are available globally on women's leadership in civil society, anecdotal evidence and NDI experience shows that women tend to be highly active in civil society organizations, yet remain underrepresented in leadership positions, except in organizations explicitly working on issues of women and gender.<sup>28</sup> For example, survey data from Lebanon by the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) shows 26 percent of women said they were members of a civil society organization. Of those, 19 percent were religious or charity groups and 5 percent were women's organizations.<sup>29</sup> Men in Lebanon were three times more likely to be members of political parties or trade unions, but women outnumbered men in all of the three civil society categories (religious, charity and women's organizations). Women

also play a role in public life by working in the government. Data from seven OECD countries show that women are a majority of civil service workers at clerical and administrative support positions, as high as 80 percent in some countries, but steadily decline in senior and executive positions.<sup>30</sup>

Peace, reconciliation and political transition processes, can provide a unique opportunity for women to participate in the formation of formal government structures, laws and constitutions; however, women's participation in peace negotiations remains ad hoc and averages less than 8 percent of the 11 peace processes for which such information is available.<sup>31</sup> Fewer than 3 percent of signatories to peace agreements are women.<sup>32</sup> No women have been appointed chief or lead peace mediators in UN-sponsored peace talks, but in some talks sponsored by the African Union or other institutions, women have joined a team of mediators. Promisingly Graça Machel, was selected as one of the three mediators for the Kenya crisis in 2008. In Yemen, the 2013 National Dialogue Conference provided a space for all factions of Yemeni society to discuss a variety of peace and governance issues before the national unity government drafts a new constitution. To ensure that the process was inclusive and representative, the Dialogue organizers included quotas for underrepresented groups: 50 percent of the seats at the conference were reserved for Yemenis from the south, 30 percent of seats were reserved for women and 20 percent were reserved for youth.

### **1.1. Public Opinion about Women in Politics**

Public opinion towards women's leadership in politics varies from region to region, including considerable variance within countries from the same region. Moreover, the correlation between the opinions about women in political leadership positions and the degree to which women serve in visible leadership roles and hold elected office in those countries is tenuous.<sup>33</sup> Overall, however, survey results demonstrate that, while some voters are resistant to supporting women in politics, the majority of citizens are open to the idea of voting for women candidates.

In a 47-nation Pew Research Poll on global attitudes towards women in leadership in 2007, researchers found that the countries of Western Europe, North America and Latin America generally include the highest proportions of respondents who rate men and women as equally good political leaders. Pew concluded that, "Opinions about women in political leadership positions are somewhat correlated with the extent to which women already play leadership roles."<sup>34</sup> The data were less favorable elsewhere, with "majorities in Mali (65 percent), the Palestinian territories (64 percent), Kuwait (62 percent), Pakistan (54 percent), Bangladesh (52 percent) and Ethiopia (51 percent) saying men make better political leaders than women, as do nearly half of Jordanians (49 percent) and Nigerians (48 percent). Russians are also divided: 44 percent say men and women make equally good leaders while 40 percent say men are better. Only in Brazil do more people say women make better political leaders than say men do: 15 percent of Brazilians say women make better political leaders and 10 percent say men are better leaders."<sup>35</sup>

Recent NDI research shows that men and women generally think women should be involved in politics but in a limited way that does not conflict with cultural gender norms. Survey research from Libya in 2013 indicated that while both men and women support women voting, lower numbers supported women as political party members, as ministers or as members of parliament. Public opinion research conducted in Iraq for NDI in 2011 showed that although there was near unanimous consent for the right of women to

vote, there was less support for women to play a more active role in the public sector, either as members of parliament or government ministers. Similarly, 2013 NDI focus group findings from Afghanistan found that while a majority of the male respondents stated that they supported women, there was more support for women in “social” rather than “political” positions.

When respondents were in favor of women in public office, they often cited female gender stereotypes as positive for the job that needed to be done. Focus groups in South Sudan in late 2011 indicated strong support for the women’s quota in government because of qualities women tend to display, such as a strong work ethic and honesty.<sup>36</sup> NDI survey data in 2012 revealed that the majority of Ukrainians perceived women as better managers than men, and that women are better equipped than men to deal with many important policy issues.<sup>37</sup>

## **2. Need for Women in Politics**

As women’s contributions toward a strong and vibrant society are increasingly well documented, understanding of why women’s meaningful participation is essential to building and sustaining democracy is growing. Women’s political participation results in tangible gains for democracy, including greater responsiveness to citizen needs, increased cooperation across party and ethnic lines and more sustainable peace.<sup>38</sup>

Women’s meaningful participation in politics affects both the range of policy issues that are considered and the types of solutions that are proposed. Research indicates that a legislator’s gender has a distinct impact on policy priorities. While women lawmakers are not a homogenous group with the same perspectives and interests, they do tend to see “women’s” issues—those that directly affect women either for biological or social reasons—more broadly as social issues, possibly as a result of the role that women have traditionally played as mothers and caregivers in their communities.<sup>39</sup> In addition, women see government as a tool to help serve underrepresented or minority groups.<sup>40</sup> In an the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) poll of members of parliament conducted between 2006 and 2008, which compiled the views of parliamentarians from 110 countries, women self-identified as being the most active in women’s issues, gender equality, social and community matters and family-related matters.<sup>41</sup> Women lawmakers, therefore, have often been perceived as more sensitive to community concerns and more responsive to constituency needs.

According to the same IPU survey, female parliamentarians tend to prioritize social issues such as childcare, equal pay, parental leave and pensions; physical concerns such as reproductive rights, physical safety and gender-based violence; and development matters such as poverty alleviation and service delivery.<sup>42</sup> In places such as Rwanda and South Africa, an increase in the number of female lawmakers led to legislation related to land inheritance and reproductive rights.<sup>43</sup> Only five years after the women’s suffrage movement achieved the rights of women to vote and run for office in Kuwait, newly elected female legislators introduced new labor laws that would give working mothers mandatory nursing breaks and provide onsite childcare for companies with more than 200 employees. A study from Stockholm University showed an increase in the budget for education expenditures as the number of women in the Swedish Parliament increased.<sup>44</sup> As more women reach leadership positions within their political parties, these parties tend to prioritize issues that impact health, education and other quality of life issues. Strong

evidence suggests that as more women are elected to office, policy-making that reflects the priorities of families, women, and ethnic and racial minorities also increases

Given this attention to a broader range of policy issues, it is not surprising that when women are empowered as political leaders, countries often experience higher standards of living with positive developments in education, infrastructure and health, and concrete steps to help make democracy deliver. Using data from 19 member countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), researchers found that an increase in the number of women legislators results in an increase in total educational spending.<sup>45</sup> In India, research showed that West Bengal villages with greater representation of women in local councils saw an investment in drinking water facilities double that of villages with low levels of elected women, with roads that were almost twice as likely to be in good condition. The study also revealed that the presence of a woman council leader reduces the gender gap in school attendance by 13 percentage points.<sup>46</sup>

In addition to bringing a gender perspective to policy-making, women's leadership and conflict resolution styles often embody democratic ideals in that women have tended to work in a less hierarchical, more participatory and more collaborative way than male colleagues.<sup>47</sup> Women are also more likely to work across party lines, even in highly partisan environments. Since assuming 56 percent of the seats in the Rwandan parliament in 2008, women have been responsible for forming the first cross-party caucus to work on controversial issues such as land rights and food security. They have also formed the only tripartite partnership among civil society and executive and legislative bodies to coordinate responsive legislation and ensure that basic services are delivered.<sup>48</sup>

Around the world, women lawmakers are often perceived as more honest and more responsive than their male counterparts, qualities that encourage confidence in democratic and representative institutions. In a study of 31 democratic countries, the presence of more women in legislatures is positively correlated with enhanced perceptions of government legitimacy among both men and women.<sup>49</sup>

Finally, research also shows that women tend to be deeply committed to peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction and have a unique and powerful perspective to bring to the negotiating table. Women often suffer disproportionately during armed conflict and often advocate most strongly for stabilization, reconstruction and the prevention of further conflict.<sup>50</sup> Peace agreements, post-conflict reconstruction and governance have a better chance of long-term success when women are involved.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, establishing sustainable peace requires transforming power relationships, including achieving more equitable gender relations.<sup>52</sup>

### **3. Conditions for Women's Participation**

Despite these positive indicators and gains, considerable challenges remain to women's meaningful political participation. While no ideal environment currently exists to jumpstart the advancement of women's political engagement, certain conditions make it easier: access to political processes, transparency, gender awareness, capacity and financial resources.



First, women must have reasonable access to positions of power. Power in democracies is often built on familial, communal, or economic relationships that have existed for many years. In countries where women's public roles are only beginning to develop, women's absence from this history can present significant barriers. For women to be able to compete, structural changes must be made to provide new opportunities to attain positions of political power. When properly implemented, voluntary or legislated structural interventions, such as quotas, can ensure women's entry into decision-making positions rather than leaving this to the good faith of political party leaders or candidate nomination committees. Of the countries that currently have some form of gender quota, 61 percent have voluntary party quotas (often in combination with the other types), 38 percent have legislated candidate quotas and 20 percent have reserved seats.<sup>53</sup> On average, female representation among legislators stands at 22 percent among countries with any type of gender quota versus 13 percent in countries without a quota.<sup>54</sup>

The lack of openness in political decision-making and undemocratic internal processes poses a challenge for all newcomers, but particularly for women as they tend to lack insider knowledge or political networks. The complex hierarchies in political parties and legislatures, often maintained by long-established relationships and organized by informal rules, represent a barrier to many women who enter politics.<sup>55</sup> In particular, it is important for parties to incorporate rules that guarantee women's representation. If an institution or party's internal organization is weak and the rules for recruitment are unclear, decisions tend to be made by a limited number of elites, usually men. When this commitment is unwritten and informal, it is much more difficult to devise strategies for women to break into the inner circle of power and harder to hold the institutions accountable when the commitment is not realized.<sup>56</sup> Without internal democracy and transparency in political and legislative processes, it is more challenging for women to voice concerns, influence policy formation and the legislative agenda and rise to other levels of political leadership.

Among politicians and citizens alike, an increased awareness of gender inequality and a willingness to accept new ideas about gender roles are essential conditions for women's meaningful political participation. Women throughout the world face many social or cultural constraints to political empowerment and many are discouraged from engaging in public decision-making processes altogether. Patriarchal structures continue to exclude women from aspects of political life and women often encounter prejudice based on assumptions that women lack "masculine" traits, such as leadership and levelheadedness, necessary to succeed in politics.<sup>57</sup> These stereotypical gender biases and roles often lead women away from work in the public sphere and reinforce the cultural norm of women as caregivers. Moreover, for women working outside of the private sphere, the largely female phenomenon of the double burden of professional and family life can keep women from playing a greater role in politics and leadership. Time constraints are a challenge for any elected official or activist, but these disproportionately impact women who are implicitly or explicitly tasked with home and family care obligations in addition to professional or political commitments. These informal and formal barriers to women's participation in politics must be acknowledged and addressed by legislators, party members and citizens in order for women to succeed in politics. Male champions of women's political participation, especially those who are in leadership positions, are vital to the creation of a more inclusive and gender equal political environment.

To succeed as political candidates, women must be able to demonstrate that they are qualified to serve in elected office. Some political party leaders have argued that there is a shortage of willing and trained women candidates with the requisite confidence and experience to stand for election. This may be especially pronounced in post-conflict states where women tend to be sidelined from transitional processes unless political parties actively recruit women members to their ranks. Where a man is absent from formal politics, he may be able to campaign more effectively outside the party structure because he is more likely to be linked to business and professional networks which can provide financial resources and expertise. Women's historic absence from political and public spaces may mean that their qualifications and connections differ from those of a traditional political candidate. However, it is common throughout the world to see women activists supporting democratic activities at the grassroots level, cultivating relevant experience outside of the formal political system. The most meaningful strategies to increase women's participation combine reforms to political institutions with the provision of targeted support to women party activists, candidates, and elected officials. Interventions have thus far focused on building women's confidence in their ability to serve in public life, enhancing their capacity in campaign skills and communications and building relationships within political networks.

The ability of women to attain financial autonomy or access to economic resources is also necessary for their greater participation in political life. Worldwide, women's lower economic status, relative poverty, limited business networks and discriminatory legal frameworks are substantial hurdles to be overcome. When women do have access to discretionary funds, they are more likely to spend it on household needs<sup>58</sup> or donate it to charity instead of politics.<sup>59</sup> With less financial control and access to economic resources, women are often unable to pay the costs associated with gaining a party's nomination and standing for election. Survey research of 300 members of parliament by IPU found that access to funding is one of the most significant deterrents to women interested in politics.<sup>60</sup> Funding challenges can be overcome through a variety of interventions, including the establishment independent funding networks, the creation of an internal political party fund to support women candidates' campaign activities or training costs, a limit on nomination and campaign expenditures, or the implementation of incentives or penalties through public funding. For example, electoral or political party laws may offer parties incentives such as free or subsidized broadcast time or additional public funding contingent on whether they reach a target percentage of women among their candidates as is the case in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burkina Faso, France, and Haiti.<sup>61</sup>

### **3.1. Institutional Structures**

To increase women's political participation, it is necessary to look at the institutional structures that define the context in which women participate and the strategies that can be used within the given structures. For the sake of this paper, institutional structures are defined as the country's constitution, the electoral system and the legal special measures (such as a gender quota, if they exist). In most cases, altering these structures to be more gender-informed would be preferable and the affect would be more far-reaching, but it may not be feasible within a given political context.

A country's constitution provides its governing framework and can have a profound impact on a woman's ability to participate in public life. It often defines nationality, rights and citizenship and the benefits that accompany citizenship. According to UN Women's compilation of gender provisions contained in

constitutions around the world, 186 countries out of 195 surveyed have equality or "equal before the law" provisions enshrined in their constitutions. In addition, the constitutions of 39 countries include explicit provisions on the rights of women.<sup>62</sup> However, other constitutional provisions discriminate against women by restricting a woman's capacity to maintain her citizenship and to pass it onto her children. Without citizenship, a woman might be restricted from further political activities such as voting or seeking elective office. And when constitutions are based on religious doctrine, the understanding of women's rights may be determined by specific religious leaders or current interpretation of texts rather than the content of the constitution or international standards.

The electoral system in which a female candidate seeks office can impact the results of women's political participation. Research has indicated that list proportional representation (PR) systems are not only the best systems for enforcing special temporary measures such as quotas, but also outperform other electoral systems in the representation of women.<sup>63</sup> The district and party magnitude (the average number of successful candidates from the same party in the same electoral district) is an important factor in determining who will be elected. If only one candidate from a party is elected in a district, the desire to reinforce past political dynamics can be higher. If two or more individuals are elected per district, there is more flexibility and less risk in new players representing a party, making it likely that balanced tickets\* may be encouraged and more women and more candidates from minorities will be successful.<sup>64</sup> In 2012, women accounted for 25 percent of members of parliament in PR systems in contrast to 14 percent in first-past-the-post and 17.5 percent in mixed PR and first-past-the-post systems.<sup>65</sup> In countries with comparable political environments such as Germany and Australia, PR systems resulted in the election of three to four times more women.<sup>66</sup>

The existence of special temporary measures, such as quotas, also plays a large role in women's political participation. As noted by the CEDAW committee in 1997, temporary special measures are an essential prerequisite to women's equality in political life, though the movement to pass this type of legislation is fairly recent. Between 1930 and 1980, only 10 countries established gender quotas followed by 12 additional states in the 1980s. In the 1990s, with a new push brought about by a rise in activism, international conferences and corresponding documents supporting women's political engagement, quotas were adopted by more than 50 countries with at least 40 more passing similar legislation since 2000.<sup>67</sup> As of early 2013, 111 countries had passed some form of gender quota law.<sup>68</sup>

International IDEA, Stockholm University and IPU maintain a collection of [global information](#) on the various types of quotas in existence today, detailing the percentages and targets in countries where they are applicable. Several types of quota systems exist:

- Quotas for candidates—A system of reserved seats, such as those in Morocco, Rwanda and Uganda, guarantees that women candidates will be elected and achieve a specified level of representation in the targeted political institution, such as a parliament. Comparable attempts have been made by parties in Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom to require that women candidates be designated within *winnable* constituencies. Meanwhile, a quota

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\*A "balanced ticket" denotes a slate of candidates chosen to appeal to a wide range of voters, especially by including members of diverse social, regional, ethnic or religious groups.

that targets party lists, such as in Mexico, does not guarantee the election of women candidates, as it depends on the placement of women candidates in relation to the percentage of votes that the party receives.

- Quotas for representative institutions and multiple levels of government—This system mandates women’s representation in the national legislature, locally elected bodies, the executive branch (cabinet appointments), the judiciary and political parties. The 2010 Kenyan constitution prohibits either gender from constituting more than two-thirds of any elected body, which means women must make up at least one-third of all elective public bodies. The Kenyan Political Parties Act of 2011 further extended the two-thirds rule to parties’ membership lists and governing bodies.<sup>69</sup> In Bangladesh and Pakistan, a 10 percent quota for women is required to be met when recruiting for civil service positions.<sup>70</sup> In 1993, a constitutional amendment made it mandatory for Indian states to set aside one third of all positions in local government councils for women. Since then more than a million women have been elected into the reserved positions in these *panchayats*.
- Internal party quotas for candidates and for governing boards—A number of political parties have internal quotas for women for all or some of their governing boards. These quotas ensure that women’s voices are present as the party makes internal decisions regarding its strategy and platform. In El Salvador, the Farabundo Marti Front for National Liberation (FMLN) included gender equality in its early mission statement and ethics code. Later, the FMLN further institutionalized the role of women by passing an internal quota for all party activities as well as party boards, committees and other structures.<sup>71</sup>

Key criteria needed for quotas to be effective are placement and enforcement. First, women will benefit from a quota only if they are placed in winnable positions on a party list, i.e. every second or third place on the list, and not buried at the bottom with little chance of being elected. This is referred to as a “zipper” or “zebra” system. Second, legislated candidate quotas are more effective when they carry with them sanctions for non-compliance. The most effective means of enforcing party quotas is to empower the party’s executive committee and candidate selection committee to reject any party list or internal recruitment process that does not adhere to quota rules. Where the electoral management body (electoral commission) oversees quota implementation, it is important that it has the power and means to ensure adherence to the law in practice. In several countries in Latin America and other regions, the electoral management body will reject the registration of candidate lists submitted by parties until the lists are in compliance with the requirements of the law.

#### **4. Strategies for Increasing Women’s Participation**

While creating the ideal conditions and institutional structures for women’s participation can be difficult and take time, concrete strategies can be implemented in the short term that can contribute to greater numbers of women in public life. Support is needed from both international and local groups to encourage women’s participation in politics as well as to continue to pressure political institutions to reform or implement policies that remove roadblocks to women’s leadership.

Individual citizens or civil society organizations can play a key role in increasing women's political participation by supporting women candidates and those that support women’s rights, advocating for

legislation that increases equality and holding their elected leaders accountable for their campaign promises and good governance. Organizations have helped women candidates through public education campaigns, the training of women candidates and financial support. In Haiti, for example, the “Elect Haitian Women” television and radio campaign was run by a local women’s group throughout Haiti in 2010 to encourage voters to support women candidates, showcasing local women leaders and using slogans such as, “If we can run our families, we can run our country.” Campaign workshops hosted by international organizations bring together potential candidates with women who have run for office successfully elsewhere. EMILY’s List in the United States does a combination of all three supporting activities by recruiting and training women candidates, introducing them to key donors and the media and helping them raise funds for their campaigns. Citizens and civic organizations can also support women in political parties and elected office by creating partnerships that can help advance a common agenda. Without much institutional support, women in office need the information that issue-focused groups already have and the public support that membership-based groups can rally. In return, those that support women’s rights can introduce legislation and raise the profile of issues that might not be otherwise addressed. The KPPI was founded in Indonesia in 2000 and includes representatives from 17 major political parties including women members of the National Assembly, as well as non-partisan representatives from civil society groups and academic institutions. A major achievement of the group was the enactment of a law that institutionalized a 30 percent quota for women candidates on party lists for the national, provincial and district legislatures. By helping build networks of women, developing relationships and sustaining communication between citizens and government officials at the grassroots level, a cycle can be created that both empowers citizens and makes democracy deliver for all of the population.

Strategies for working with political parties focus on building the skills and capacity of women party activists and potential candidates, as well as reinforcing among party leaders the value of women as voters, party leaders and candidates. Training workshops focus on campaign skills such as public speaking and organizing voters through social media. Multiparty and/or single party programs assess the parties’ strengths and weaknesses in recruiting, retaining and promoting women; help parties reform their internal policies and practices to be more transparent and inclusive; and create effective strategies that attract, retain and promote women as members and voters. In Mexico, a coalition of women’s organizations advocated for the “2 Percent Law” that mandates that at least 2 percent of the public funding of political parties be used specifically for programs aimed at the training, promotion and development of women’s political leadership.<sup>72</sup> In 2012, NDI and UNDP published *Empowering Women for Stronger Political Parties: A Good Practices Guide to Promote Women’s Political Participation*, looking at a variety of strategies political parties can use throughout the electoral cycle to increase women’s political participation.

Strategies to promote and support the participation of women in all stages of the electoral process are also important, particularly supporting women as they register and vote, work as poll watchers and serve as part of local electoral observers. Recognizing that women face particular barriers in electoral processes, programs have been developed and implemented that specifically target specialized needs of women and gaps in women’s electoral participation. For Burkina Faso’s last election in 2010, only 3 million of the country’s 6 million eligible citizens registered. The requirement that citizens obtain a birth certificate prior to voter registration resulted in a formidable obstacle for women in particular, as many lacked birth

certificates due to regional conflict and cultural norms.<sup>73</sup> Strategies to overcome this particular barrier included the creation of a birth certificate registration “drive,” bringing the registration officials and paperwork out into communities to make it easier for women to obtain this foundational document. In electoral observation groups, women are often underrepresented and may face threats to their physical security in post-conflict election situations. There have been cases where women-designated polling stations were targeted for fraudulent activity, including ballot box stuffing, since these polling places were perceived to have weak oversight.<sup>74</sup> In addition to these challenges, women’s groups may have extensive legal or advocacy backgrounds but lack direct electoral observation experience, making them “unqualified” to be partners in domestic observation coalitions where prior participation is regularly required. One strategy to consider is to review nomination or recruitment processes to ensure that the partnership criteria do not automatically disqualify valuable groups from the outset. To monitor gender as a crosscutting issue in the Ugandan electoral process, NDI provided technical support to the Democracy Monitoring Group (DEMG) as they developed questions about women’s participation in checklists and reporting templates for its observers, conducted focus groups and analyzed public opinion and voter register data. They produced a comprehensive gender analysis on the 2011 elections and recommendations to promote women’s political participation in Uganda.

Having attained political office, women may need additional skills, knowledge and self-confidence to perform their jobs effectively. Elected women often have little or no opportunity to develop the type of specialized skills necessary to succeed in public office, and many women cite a lack of confidence as a barrier to their full participation in political activities. Parliamentary caucuses have helped harness the power of women legislators to increase their influence, add a gender perspective into the policy development process and introduce legislation that address priority issues necessary for the achievement of gender equality. These groups frequently represent a unique space within legislatures for multi-partisan debate, and as such, the ability of the women’s caucuses to be effective has reverberations on larger legislative, civic and political processes. In Macedonia, the Women’s Parliamentary Club is a multi-ethnic group of legislators that works across party lines on quality of life issues. The Club has championed measures to improve conditions for women in the workplace that included guaranteeing the right to maternity leave, passed an amendment to Macedonia’s Health Care Law mandating free mammograms and presented a legislative initiative to strengthen the Law on Domestic Violence.<sup>75</sup> IPU has studied gender-sensitive reforms to political institutions, including parliaments, that increase the likelihood that the women who are elected will be able to succeed and seek reelection.

There are several issues that cut across the sectors previously mentioned. Using technology to share information about women’s experiences as legislators, party members, or civil society leaders around the world is a current strategy to ensuring women’s effective participation in politics. The online resource [iKNOW Politics](#) is a virtual forum in English, Spanish, French and Arabic that provides opportunities for women to share their skills, access resources and strategies, and build a supportive online community to promote women’s political participation. Social websites, such as Facebook, are also being used to share news, research and resources.

Recently, with the awareness of the “youth bulge” in the Middle East and Africa, a strategy growing in practice is that of bringing young men and women together as activists and party members. As they gain skills and experience, both groups become accustomed to working side by side as equals. The longer-

term focus of these efforts may help to transform broader cultural norms and customs about gender roles. For example, in Yemen, youth councils were established that encouraged young citizens to engage their district councils and tribal leaders, and provided conflict prevention training to school students. Young women comprised half of the council members and chaired some of the councils and, with their male counterparts, received extensive training in conflict resolution, advocacy, fundraising, peer mediation and team-building. By gaining critical conflict prevention and mitigation skills, young Yemeni women and men were able to work together to resolve community disputes and advocate for local youth issues.<sup>76</sup>The other expressions of agency within this report, including access to resources, freedom of movement, family formation and violence against women, all directly or indirectly have an impact on women's ability to have voice in society and influence policy. However, an increase in women's political participation and decision-making would have a positive effect on all of the others. Through advocacy, legislation and long-term changes in public opinion, women having voice in society and influencing policy could make the changes necessary to increase gender equality.

## **5. Priorities for Future Work**

Based on an analysis of current trends and research on women's political participation, four main priorities for future work stand out:

- Reform political parties;
- Gather relevant data;
- Increase the use of technology by women; and
- Enlarge the number of women serving in local office.

Political parties are the primary and most direct vehicle through which women can access elected office and political leadership.<sup>77</sup> By changing the way political parties function and increasing women's leadership in them, many of the barriers previously mentioned would be addressed simultaneously. While political parties serve as gatekeepers for potential women candidates, they also play a pivotal role in the larger political scene. Within parliaments and other legislative bodies, ministries and election management bodies, political party leaders could both provide opportunities for women to lead as well as prepare them for those roles through skills building and practical experience. In addition to giving individual women the chance to lead, political parties could help change both the issues discussed during political campaigns and how these issues are discussed. Political leaders, especially during campaign time, often use aspirational language that could literally change the way citizens talk about the issues that affect women's lives. Finally, political parties could give value to women's votes. By using its resources to reach out to women voters and mobilizing them to vote for their candidates (and measuring the impact), political parties could show the importance of women in public life even apart from those seeking elective office. The current heads of political parties are generally unwilling to give up their own power and have not yet been convinced that the participation of women may help their parties win more seats.

As referenced earlier, a need exists for relevant data on women in political life. While evaluating impact is important for all democracy programs, it is particularly important for women's political participation since there is insufficient baseline data showing the progress and impact of women in politics. Many gaps exist in new and developing democracies which makes it difficult to compare women across regions as

well as to track changes in the same country over time. Political statistics on almost everything except the number of women elected at the national level are not readily available. Collection of the following statistics would help us to better understand existing gaps and better target policy responses:

- the share of women registered to vote;
- the share of women and men who vote (voter turnout);
- the share of women as political party members and leaders;
- the number of women who seek or are nominated to political office; and
- the share of women who hold elective office at the sub-national level, including mayor.

Public opinion data on how men *and* women feel about women in leadership, politics and decision-making roles also would be useful. The 2007 Pew research included here would be quite valuable over time, providing both quantitative and qualitative information on the topic. Additional information about the impact of women in elective office at the national level including budget expenditures, the amount and types of legislation introduced and passed, and changes in economic, development and social policies during women's tenure would also help us better understand the impacts of women's representation. Additional data on civil society would be beneficial, specifically the number of women as civil society members versus leaders; the roles women play in service delivery organizations versus those in issue-focused advocacy groups; and the percentage of women civil society organization leaders compared to organizations' budgets.<sup>†</sup>

Despite the rapid adoption of information and communications technologies (ICTs) for political use, little research exists that examines the way women access and use the Internet, mobile phones, social media and other new technologies specifically for political engagement. The available research shows that in many emerging democracies, women lag behind in access, use and ability to communicate online and via mobile devices. A 2012 Intel report found that 200 million— nearly 25 percent—fewer women have access to the Internet than their male counterparts.<sup>78</sup> That number increases to 43 percent in Sub-Saharan Africa, 34 percent in the Middle East and 33 percent in South Asia. In terms of mobile technology, a 2010 Global Association of Mobile Operators (GSMA) Development Fund report found that a woman is 21 percent less likely to own a mobile phone than a man globally.<sup>79</sup> Again, that number increases to 23 percent in Africa, 24 percent in the Middle East and 37 percent in South Asia. Despite these barriers, many organizations and governments have examined how the effective use of ICTs increases women's participation in economic development, health and human services and humanitarian documentation and relief. Yet no comprehensive information exists on the way that women have been using technology as civic leaders, political actors or elected officials. While technology can be an effective resource in political engagement, it is important to understand that the clear gender gap in the use of technology can impede women's ability to fully participate in politics, and in fact may exacerbate inequities if left unaddressed.

Finally, there is the need to better understand and increase women's political participation at the local level. Existing research on women's representation in sub-national or local government is scarce, especially studies that are comprehensive or comparative across countries.<sup>80</sup> From policies impacting

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<sup>†</sup> In June 2013, UN Women introduced the idea of a “transformative stand-alone goal” on gender equality for post-2015 that would include indicators such as the proportion of seats held by women in local governments and the proportion of managers of civil society institutions who are women. ([www.unwomen.org/focus-areas/post-2015](http://www.unwomen.org/focus-areas/post-2015))



schools to street lights to access to clean drinking water, many women are attracted to local office as the issues decided at the regional or local level are often be more salient for women's daily lives. Generally, women feel more comfortable seeking these positions as local offices are seen as less "professional" and more attainable, while the qualifications needed to hold local office seem broader so more women see themselves as qualified to serve. In addition, it may be easier for a woman to balance her family and political responsibilities when the district or constituency is geographically closer to home, but this assumption lacks empirical grounding in the existing research.<sup>81</sup> Women's participation at the local level is important as many believe that that if more women serve at the local level, the number elected at the national level will increase because the "pool" of qualified and willing candidates will also increase. Research in the United States has demonstrated that women often begin their political careers at the municipal level and then progress to state or sometimes congressional office.<sup>82</sup> However, this "pipeline" argument hasn't proven effective in a number of countries, and women's participation continues to lag behind at the local level across the globe. Special measures, such as quotas, also often do not include regional or local office. Without better data and analysis, it is difficult to understand how women's participation at the local level impacts policy and national politics.

Moreover, the extent to which barriers that women who seek to be involved in politics face are the same or different at the various levels of government has not been examined sufficiently. For instance, most political parties do not have the strength of leadership at the branch level that they have at the national level. Might this be an entry point for potential party leaders and candidates? And what role could special temporary measures such as quotas have for women outside the capital? Countries with sub-national quota laws<sup>83</sup> should be studied to gauge their impact on women's political participation and societal views about women leaders.

## 6. Conclusion

It is NDI's hope that this background paper in advance of the World Bank Group's upcoming global report and will contribute to the understanding and current standing of women in politics and decision-making while making the important connections between political and economic development. Increasing women's voice in society will ultimately help sustain a local commitment to health, education and economic development. It is not coincidental that the countries which espouse these fundamental issues as part of the national agenda—where electoral laws are effectively enforced—are also countries where women enjoy a greater political voice. Empowering women politically will help countries develop key democratic institutions that can then begin to successfully address issues related to security, jobs, human rights, physical well-being and human development.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/09/25/saudi-king-women-idUSL5E7KP0IB20110925>

<sup>2</sup> For the September 2011 elections, the UAE government hand-picked 129,000 voters to elect 20 of the 40 members of the Federal National Council (FNC), an advisory assembly with very limited parliamentary powers.

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/09/21/uae-nationals-ask-why-ca\\_n\\_973656.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/09/21/uae-nationals-ask-why-ca_n_973656.html)

<sup>3</sup> [http://aceproject.org/epic-en/CDChart?question=VR008&questions=all&set\\_language=en](http://aceproject.org/epic-en/CDChart?question=VR008&questions=all&set_language=en)

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.idea.int/publications/vt/loader.cfm?csmodule=security/getfile&pageid=4500>

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/fast\\_facts/elections/documents/can\\_histsum.pdf](http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/fast_facts/elections/documents/can_histsum.pdf)

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- <sup>7</sup> <http://www.ukpolitical.info/FemaleMPs.htm>
- <sup>8</sup> <http://www.usip.org/files/resources/SR309.pdf>
- <sup>9</sup> <http://www.ipu.org/PDF/publications/WIP2012E.pdf>
- <sup>10</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>11</sup> Ibid
- <sup>12</sup> <http://www.ipu.org/PDF/publications/WIP2012E.pdf>
- <sup>13</sup> <http://www.ipu.org/PDF/publications/WIP2012E.pdf>
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- <sup>19</sup> <http://www.ndi.org/mauritania-women-advocate>
- <sup>20</sup> South Africa: Women's Representation Quotas. EISA. 2006. Available from : <http://www.eisa.org.za/WEP/souquotas.htm>.
- <sup>21</sup> <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/feb/24/afghanistan-first-female-mayor>, <http://globalvoicesonline.org/2009/06/29/morocco-celebrating-the-first-female-mayor-of-marrakesh/>, <http://articles.latimes.com/2009/mar/08/world/fg-egypt-mayor8>
- <sup>22</sup> United Nations Statistics Division. *World's Women 2010: Trends and Statistics*. 2010. p. 120.
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>24</sup> The Multimedia Encyclopedia of Women in Today's World, eds., Mary Zeiss Stange and Carol K. Oyster (New York: Sage Publications). 2011. p. 667.
- <sup>25</sup> Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga of Sri Lanka, Megawati Sukarnoputri of Indonesia, Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan and Yingluck Shinawatra of Thailand. Park Geun-hye is the first woman to be elected President of South Korea, she took office in February 2013. Her father, Park Chung-hee, served as President of South Korea from 1963-1979.
- <sup>26</sup> More currently, Michelle Bachelet of Chile had a father who served in the government previous to Pinochet's dictatorial regime but was killed years before she started her career. Cristina Fernández de Kirchner of Argentina was elected president of Argentina after her husband Nestor Kirchner had served a term as president; however, she had built a political career in her own right, serving as a long-time senator, and the two were a political team.
- <sup>27</sup> [http://www.unifem.org/gender\\_issues/democratic\\_governance/facts\\_figures.html](http://www.unifem.org/gender_issues/democratic_governance/facts_figures.html)
- <sup>28</sup> [http://www.un.org/womenwatch/feature/women\\_leadership/Online\\_discussion\\_report\\_Women\\_in\\_Leadership\\_Roles.pdf](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/feature/women_leadership/Online_discussion_report_Women_in_Leadership_Roles.pdf)
- <sup>29</sup> IWPR. Lebanon Case Study, Civic and Political Engagement. 2011.
- <sup>30</sup> <http://www.oecd.org/governance/pem/1910699.pdf>
- <sup>31</sup> <http://www.womenwarpeace.org/>
- <sup>32</sup> <http://www.womenwarpeace.org/>
- <sup>33</sup> <http://www.pewglobal.org/2007/12/05/how-the-world-rates-women-as-leaders/>
- <sup>34</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>35</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>36</sup> <http://www.ndi.org/files/Focus-group-governing-South-Sudan.pdf>
- <sup>37</sup> <http://www.ndi.org/ukraine-women-survey-story>
- <sup>38</sup> Democracy and the Challenge of Change
- <sup>39</sup> O'Connor, K. (Undated) "Do Women in Local, State, and National Legislative Bodies Matter?" The Women and Politics Institute, American University; Ballington, Julie. IPU. Equality in Politics: A Survey of Women and Men in Parliaments. 2008. Available from: <http://www.ipu.org/pdf/publications/equality08-e.pdf>; Lovenduski, Joni and Azza Karam. "Women in Parliament: Making a Difference". International IDEA, 2002, Women in Parliament, Stockholm. Available from: [http://www.idea.int/publications/wip/upload/4%20\\_Karam.pdf](http://www.idea.int/publications/wip/upload/4%20_Karam.pdf). [<http://www.oklahomawomensnetwork.com/doc/Why%20Women%20Matter%20paper.doc>].

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- <sup>41</sup> Equality in Politics: A Survey of Women and Men in Parliaments, IPU, p 44  
<http://www.ipu.org/PDF/publications/equality08-e.pdf>
- <sup>42</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Union. *Equality in Politics: A Survey of Men and Women in Parliaments*. Geneva, 2008. Available from: <http://www.ipu.org/pdf/publications/equality08-e.pdf>
- <sup>43</sup> Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers,  
<http://www.idea.int/publications/wip2/loader.cfm?csmodule=security/getfile&pageid=14128>
- <sup>44</sup> <https://docs.google.com/a/ndi.org/file/d/0B6Gvc1Wz7P39aWVIdVRLWENNQOE/edit>
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