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Questions:

1. What are the levers of success in countries with high representation of women in politics?

In the present world, it is increasingly realised that the full and equitable participation of women in public life is essential to building and sustaining strong and vibrant democracies. Accordingly, the meaningful participation of women in national, local, and community leadership roles has become an important focus on global development policy. Still, some may ask why it matters if women become political leaders, elected policymakers, or civil society activists. Why does the world need more women involved in all aspects of the political process? Women's political participation results in tangible gains for democracy, including greater responsiveness to citizen needs, increased cooperation across party and ethnic lines, and a more sustainable future [1].

Women's participation in politics helps advance gender equality and affects both the range of policy issues that get considered and the types of solutions that are proposed. Research indicates that whether a legislator is male or female has a distinct impact on their policy priorities. There is also strong evidence that as more women are elected to office, there is a corollary increase in policy making that emphasizes quality of life and reflects the priorities of families, women, and ethnic and racial minorities [1].

Today, women's engagement is crucial. It is important to recognize that women are not a homogeneous group. Depending on whether women are young or older, educated or uneducated, live in rural or urban areas, they have very different life experiences that lead to different priorities and needs. Moreover, not every woman elected to parliament or another legislative body will place women's issues or rights at the forefront of her own agenda. Clearly, women's representation is not the only factor, but it is a critical factor for the development of inclusive, responsive, and transparent democracies [1].

Today, there is growing recognition of the untapped capacity and talents of women and women's leadership. Over the last two decades, the rate of women's representation in national parliaments globally has incrementally increased from 11.8% in the year 1998 to 17.8% in the year 2008, and to 23.5% in the year 2018. Some regions have seen particularly dramatic increases, such as Sub-Saharan Africa, where in the last 20 years the number of women in parliaments has risen from 11 to 23.6%, and the Arab States region, which has seen an increase from 3.1 to 17.5%. Total global representation is still well below the 30% benchmark often identified as the necessary level of representation to achieve a "critical mass" (a considerable minority of all legislators with significant impact, rather than a token few individuals) not to mention falling short of women's representation as half of the world's population [1].

It is pertinent to note that the demand side of political institution also plays important role in shaping women's participation in politics in several countries. *Importantly*, the demand side of political institution and is determined by the extent to which the state and civil and political institutions facilitate the representation of women and other marginal groups. These must enhance women as human resource and the capital of women. Effective public accountability contributes in building voice by creating a point of access to the state for groups of citizens. Looking at both the supply and demand side of political effectiveness allows understanding that voice does not lead to better outcomes for women because the political system may have entrenched gender biases that undermined the voice of women in politics. Political effectiveness depends on how the interests of men and women are integrated in the civil society, the political system, and the state. Civil society or women's lobby group role is to mobilize resources and public concerns to the issue of women's needs and guarantees the autonomy of the women's movement. The prospect of women advancing in the political process depends on the number and nature of parties, their ideologies and memberships, the relative importance of finance or crime or discourse of ethnic and national unity in politics [2].

- 2. More than half of countries have no temporary special measures, several of which have less than 10% of women in parliament. What can be done to ensure gender balance in politics is achieved in such countries? What role can political parties play?**
- (a) What can be done to ensure gender balance in politics is achieved in such countries?**

Male and female legislators must work together in order to solve the myriad of problems in their countries. In order to meet worldwide development goals and build strong, sustainable democracies, women must be encouraged, empowered and supported in becoming strong political and community leaders [1]. However, there are five prominent features of political barriers that restrict women's participation [2]. They are outlined below:

- a) the prevalence of the 'masculine model' of political life and of elected government bodies;
- b) lack of party support such as limited financial support for women candidates, limited access to political networks, and the more stringent standards and qualifications applied to women;
- c) lack of sustained contact and cooperation with other public organizations such as trade (labour) unions and women's groups;
- d) lack of access to well-developed education and training systems for women's leadership in general, and for orienting young women towards political life; and
- e) the nature of the electoral system, which may or may not be favourable to women candidates [2].

It is critical that parliaments reflect the composition of the population itself. When public bodies lack balanced representation of men and women, critical views and perspectives are lost, diminishing the effectiveness of policies. Gender-balanced representation is not only a matter of numbers. It is also about substantive representation: whether women are able to exercise actual influence in policy and law making and whether their views are valued as much as those of their male counterparts. Knowing where women are situated within the parliament [or within political

parties, electoral management bodies (EMBs)] or other such bodies) and what roles they occupy can also shed light on the degree to which institutions reinforce existing gender-based stereotypes, and help identify effective measures to help women advance [3].

Achieving gender-balanced representation usually requires a mixture of legislative and policy initiatives to increase the pool of women willing to enter into political or public life, and facilitating their advancement once in office. As the ‘gatekeepers’ of women’s political participation, political parties play a critical role in creating and selecting from the pool of potential women candidates for public office, and continue to influence women’s access to leadership once they are in parliament. In politically sensitive environments, voluntary measures such as voluntary quotas or targets could help advance women’s candidacy and representation and demonstrate party commitment to equality and equal representation [3].

Ensuring and achieving gender-balanced representation is, rues, significant. Following measures can be taken in order to ensure that gender balance in politics is achieved:

- a) Identifying how many women are represented in political and parliamentary bodies and what positions they occupy;
- b) Considering development of a gender- disaggregated database and conducting qualitative research on women’s political participation;
- c) Considering special measures such as (legislated or voluntary) gender quotas to increase the number of women candidates;
- d) In case of use, strengthen quota efficacy by specifying minimum thresholds, rules for positioning and sanctions for non-compliance;
- e) Adopting internal measures to support gender balanced representation of women in all decision-making bodies;
- f) Encouraging political parties to introduce internal measures to promote women’s advancement, candidacy and leadership; and
- g) Tracking women’s advancement through use of sex-disaggregated data, particularly by Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs) and statistical offices [3].

(b) What role can political parties play?

The question needing answer is: *“why does governance matter for delivering gender equality”?* Its answer lies in the statement that “there is growing global awareness that gender equality is the cornerstone of inclusive growth”. Providing equal access to public and economic opportunities to both men and women is vital to accomplishing a more sustainable economy and improving national well-being. Failing to do so means losing the human capital of approximately half the citizenry, thus heavily compromising countries’ full potential for growth and national development. Governance is key to delivering gender equality results. Meaningful changes on the ground require a coordinated, competent and powerful whole-of-government commitment, and clear and effective mechanisms in place within and across government institutions to be able to translate public policies, programmes, services and budgets into concrete benefits for men and women. All institutions and policy areas count for gender equality as they all impact men and women, and yet in a different way due to their different circumstances. This is why mainstreaming gender considerations throughout government is a fundamental commitment of

countries that aspire to eliminate gender-based discrimination across the board and realise a fully inclusive society. Fair representation and participation of women and men in public life, including in leadership positions, is crucial to realising gender equality. The composition of public institutions must reflect society if it is to be perceived as legitimate, capable of delivering just policies and upholding equality before the law. Ensuring gender balance in public decision making has been increasingly highlighted by several countries as a key governance issue related to fairness, transparency and inclusive policy outcomes. Only gender balanced and different policy-makers can have the know-how to tackle the different needs of citizens [4].

Political parties that do not comply with legislated quota provisions can be sanctioned through financial penalties. In Portugal, parties that do not comply with the legislated gender quota can lose between 25 and 80 per cent of their public funding, while in Ireland parties lose 50% of their funding if they include less than 30 per cent of either gender. In France, political parties can lose $\frac{3}{4}$ of their public funding if the gender difference among candidates is more than 2%. Likewise, in Italy, public funding to parties is reduced in proportion to the number of candidates exceeding the maximum percentage allowed for each gender; the 'premium' is then disbursed to those parties adhering to the law. With regard to efforts to ensure gender balance in parliamentary bodies, including leadership positions, in Sweden, there are informal conventions that ensure where a committee head is female, the deputy should be a male and vice-versa. In exercising its oversight powers, both Houses of the Swedish parliament must always consider gender-balance and gender equality in approving the appointment of executive positions, such as judgeships and Cabinet members. Further, in terms of measures to enable equal representation in committees, in Switzerland, parties ensure that women are represented in all parliamentary committees, groups and delegations as part of an informal practice that has become part of party culture. In France, it is convention to allocate leadership positions, such as vice-presidencies and chairs of standing committees, in the Senate as equally as possible [3].

However, much still needs to be done to equally include men and women in policy making and public governance, and to fully equip governments to effectively deliver gender fair policy outcomes. Women still lag behind men in access to decision-making and leadership positions [4]. Initiatives are needed that attempt to address following key issues [4]:

- a) How can men and women equally participate in decision making and access political and public careers?
- b) How can governments be better equipped to deliver meaningful agriculture, security, infrastructure policies for men and women?
- c) How can governments measure the gender-differentiated impact of their policy efforts on men and women?
- d) How can national statistics systematically inform gender sensitive reforms?

Political parties can play meaningful role in ensuring women's participation in political sphere. Followings are recommendations for political parties:

- a) Develop mechanisms or special measures to increase the number of women in party leadership and decision-making positions;

- b) Implement effective gender quotas with the aim of achieving equitable representation of women in elected positions,
- c) Allocate equal and adequate resources for women's political campaigns and electoral processes;
- d) Adopt clear and transparent rules to ensure internal democracy, with attention to gender equality;
- e) Provide clear rules for candidate selection to allow or meaningful input from party members in the process of selecting candidates; and
- f) Promote women's candidacies through the adoption of special training programmes, recruitment and financial incentives [5].

3. Women are under-represented in all spheres of public life, including in public administration and the judiciary. What measures do you propose to ensure women have equal representation in all public life sectors?

Women continue to experience significant discrimination related to their participation in public and political life in most domains of the public sphere and in all geographical regions. For example, The European Commission (EC) has acknowledged that *"across the EU, women are still largely outnumbered by men in positions of responsibility in all fields"*. The reasons for the under-representation of women in power and decision-making are multifaceted and complex. There are significant barriers to women's participation in public and political life that stem from economic, social and cultural issues, as well as from negative stereotypes about women and entrenched gender roles [5].

Article 21, Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: (a) *"everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives"*; and (b) *"everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country"*. One key issue, when conceptualizing gender discrimination within the public sphere, is the issue of how public and private space are differently gendered. For over two decades, feminist scholars have been working to dismantle the divide between public and private space. While at the international level, there is increasing consensus about the obligations of national governments to address the barriers to women's full and active participation in the public sphere; at the domestic level, there is still progress to be made in advancing women's equality in this domain. National legislation and constitutions adversely affect women's participation in public and political life in some states by limiting women's participation through exclusionary or discriminatory clauses, thus restricting women's ability to fully engage in the public sphere [5]. The indivisibility of women's human rights underpins women's participation in public and political life. The issue of gender equality in political and public life cannot be considered in isolation, as women aspiring to participate in political and public life continue to face complex barriers related to the attainment of their full range of human rights, such as social, economic, cultural, family, health and safety rights [5].

Importantly, public administration activities have a significant impact on daily life. They determine the way political and economic decisions made by governments are implemented and how budgets are allocated and spent. For this reason, the equal participation of women and men, especially at decision-making levels, is a necessary condition for inclusive and gender-responsive

public administration systems. However, gender equality has not always been a guiding principle of public administration reforms. Closing gender gaps in public administration remains crucial for inclusive development and democratic governance, restoring confidence in public institutions, and enhancing the sustainability and responsiveness of public policies, conditions that are now fundamental to the achievement of the global Agenda 2030 [6].

Public administration is the bedrock of government and the central instrument through which national policies and programmes are implemented. In an ideal world, public administration is guided by principles of fairness, accountability, justice, equality and non-discrimination, and serves as a model of governance for society which includes the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment in the civil service workforce. *However*, globally, this is not yet the reality. Instead of being a driving force behind the implementation of internationally-agreed goals on gender equality and human rights standards and principles, in many countries (both developed and developing countries), public administration often remains a patriarchal institution, perpetuating gender biased traditions, attitudes and practices [7].

Women do not yet participate equally in public administration, especially in leadership and decision-making roles. The target of a minimum of 30% of women in leadership positions, originally endorsed by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in 1990 and reaffirmed in the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995, is being approached in many public administrations and even surpassed in some. Nevertheless, while progress is being made in terms of total numbers of women in public administration, both glass ceilings and glass walls continue to present challenges to women's equal participation in decision-making positions. A fundamental argument for increased representation of women in public service is that when the composition of the public sector reflects the composition of the society it serves, government will be more responsive and effective. Thus, closing gender gaps in public administration is important to ensuring truly inclusive development and democratic governance and helps to restore trust and confidence in public institutions and enhance the sustainability and responsiveness of public policies. It is a critical policy issue in both developing and developed countries. Women's equal participation in public administration and decision-making and can also be viewed as a necessary condition for women's interests to be fully taken into account and properly addressed. According to the 2011 Human Development Report, analysis shows how power imbalances and gender inequalities at the national level are linked to unequal access to clean water and better sanitation, and impacts on land degradation [7].

Without a critical mass of women, public administration is not tapping into the full potential of a country's workforce, capacity and creativity. Women generally represent more than half of the population. As public administration is an important employer in many countries (and in certain cases may be the only available or "*acceptable employment*" opportunity for women) equal participation in public administration can have a significant impact on women's economic empowerment. Compelling cases have been made that greater equality and gender parity in managerial and leadership positions in politics as well as the private sector leads to superior competitiveness due to higher performance and productivity. The World Economic Forum's

Global Gender Gap Report 2013 explains how crucial it is for the competitiveness of countries and companies to develop, attract and retain the best talents, both male and female [7].

It is very important for women's political participation at all levels and representation in public administrations to be strengthened so that they can have a strong voice in the setting of development policy and priorities. To date, governance reform programmes most often have prioritized other important gender equality issues (notably women's participation in the political arena) and have tracked the status of women in political leadership positions and encouraged policies and practices that promote women's access to services. As far back as 1995, the Beijing Platform for Action of the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women urged the international community to improve knowledge gathering on women in politics and to make better use of databases and methodologies to follow women's involvement in decision-making. The same level of attention has not been paid to women in public administration; and unlike women's political participation, no global tracking mechanism exists for women's participation and leadership in public administration. The qualitative and quantitative data that does exist suggests there remains ample room for progress in gender equality in public administration. Barriers to women's advancement in public administration undermine the fundamental principles of equal opportunity and social justice in society as a whole. Multiple strategies must be developed to break these barriers down, and garner ongoing support and commitment from all stakeholders. Changing institutional and societal cultures, including attitudes of men and women that hamper progress in gender parity, is a difficult but essential task [7].

It is important to dig further into what the numbers reflect about women's actual participation in public administration. In many national contexts where numbers of women equal those of men in public administration as a whole, women tend to be clustered in junior, less prestigious and lower paying positions and in those traditionally considered to be 'soft' or feminized sectors, such as culture, education, health and tourism. In most countries, women are underrepresented, if present at all, in sectors such as security, finance and planning, which remain dominated by men [7].

Good governance, strategic state capacities and sound public management are a driving force behind the effective, impactful and sustainable implementation of gender reforms. Indeed, reforms related to gender equality and good governance collectively reinforce each other. Planning and implementation of gender equality reforms will only succeed if there are sound planning, monitoring and implementation processes for the public sector at large. A shared vision and strategy for women's empowerment are core pillars of effective gender equality reforms. In addition, strengthening alignment with regional and international gender equality standards, and ensuring implementation capacities, relevant skills and accountability measures, will be necessary to achieve full potential of gender equality reforms across the regions of the globe [8].

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End of Contribution