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SOUTH ASIA REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON WOMEN'S POLITICAL LEADERSHIP 2011

16 - 18 October 2011 | Dhaka | Bangladesh



CONFERENCE REPORT



Md. Abdul Hamid Advocate, MP
Speaker, Bangladesh Parliament

Foreword

I am delighted to invite readers to this conference report on 'Power, Voice and Rights: **"South Asia Regional Conference on Women's Political Leadership"** held in Dhaka on 16 - 18 October 2011. Improving Democracy through Parliamentary Development (IPD) project sponsored by Bangladesh Parliament and UNDP accelerated this conference on the vital area of gender equality in public life especially in this countries of South Asia.

As Speaker of Bangladesh Parliament I believe that the importance of the conference theme is very much significant in the present context of the South Asian Countries. It is pertinent to Bangladesh scenario where women's political leadership has got wide acceptance.

There is no doubt that a truly democratic and representative nation calls for gender equality in its political arena. No country can ignore women population which is almost half of its total population.

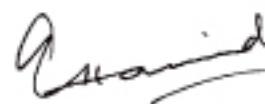
In Bangladesh, our efforts are geared towards achieving the benchmark of 30% of women representation in the Parliament. In this decade of the twenty first century our determination is to make women as significant partner in our parliamentary democracy which will pace the socio-economic development process to be stronger. Arrangement of the conference was viewed in this backdrop.

The foreign participants were from Afghanistan, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka were dedicated to identify the continuing challenges

and obstacles faced by women and men to make gender equality a part of the existing democratic institutions in their own and neighboring countries.

I am sure that the readers will get a concise view of the deliberations put forward by the participants in the conference. Declaration issued by the participants as a notable outcome of this meet has also been incorporate in this booklet.

I hope this presentation will help stakeholders to plan for a real and tangible change in the public life in order to reorganise the political leadership in the countries of the SAARC region.

**Md. Abdul Hamid Advocate, MP**

Speaker
Bangladesh Parliament



OVERVIEW

Overview

As part of its international activities the Parliament of Bangladesh in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Bangladesh Country and Asia-Pacific Regional offices hosted a two day regional conference on Women's Political Leadership that took place between 16 - 18 October 2011 in Dhaka, Bangladesh. This conference is part of the Improving Democracy through Parliamentary Development (IPD) Project. Invited parliamentarians, representatives of political parties, civil society organisations and members of youth groups and other key stakeholders from a range of organisations across the South Asia region attended this conference.

This event aimed to strengthen networks amongst key stakeholders in the region as well as produce a set of concrete policy and action oriented recommendations that can contribute to national and regional initiatives to further strengthen the position of women in public life. Themes of the

conference were based around some of the challenges and opportunities of increasing the participation of women in public life, political empowerment of women and the promotion of greater gender responsive parliaments. Effective alternative pathways into the political sphere for women were also debated during the two days.

As well as high level representatives and parliamentarians some of the world's leading gender experts presented at the conference in order to showcase central issues related to persisting barriers facing women entering into government, parliament and other areas of public life. Participants shared experiences, discussed common ground and reviewed existing and potential solutions to the current situation with a specific focus on the region. The project liaised with a number of organisations in the planning of the event including technical cooperation with the National Democratic Institute (NDI).



Women in parliament: facts and figures for the region

Equal access to the political arena is essential for men and women to articulate and shape public policy solutions to ensure diverse representation of interests in parliament, government, and decision-making.

In South Asia women have demonstrated the key political role they can play. Women are increasingly playing a more important role in the workplace and other social and political spaces as the region's economies undergo rapid transformation. As societies grow and become more diverse it is vital to ensure women play their rightful role in parliaments and participate fully in the public policy making process.

Women have made important contributions in formal political institutions such as legislatures and local governments, along with civil society activism. They have led countries, political parties and ministries and have been instrumental in leading social movements.

Despite the active role played by women in these spheres, progress on women's political representation in South Asia has not matched the international commitments made by countries. Reflecting global trends women remain underrepresented in key leadership positions in the region even in spite of numerous declarations and the adoption of international instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Millennium Declaration 2000 and the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015.

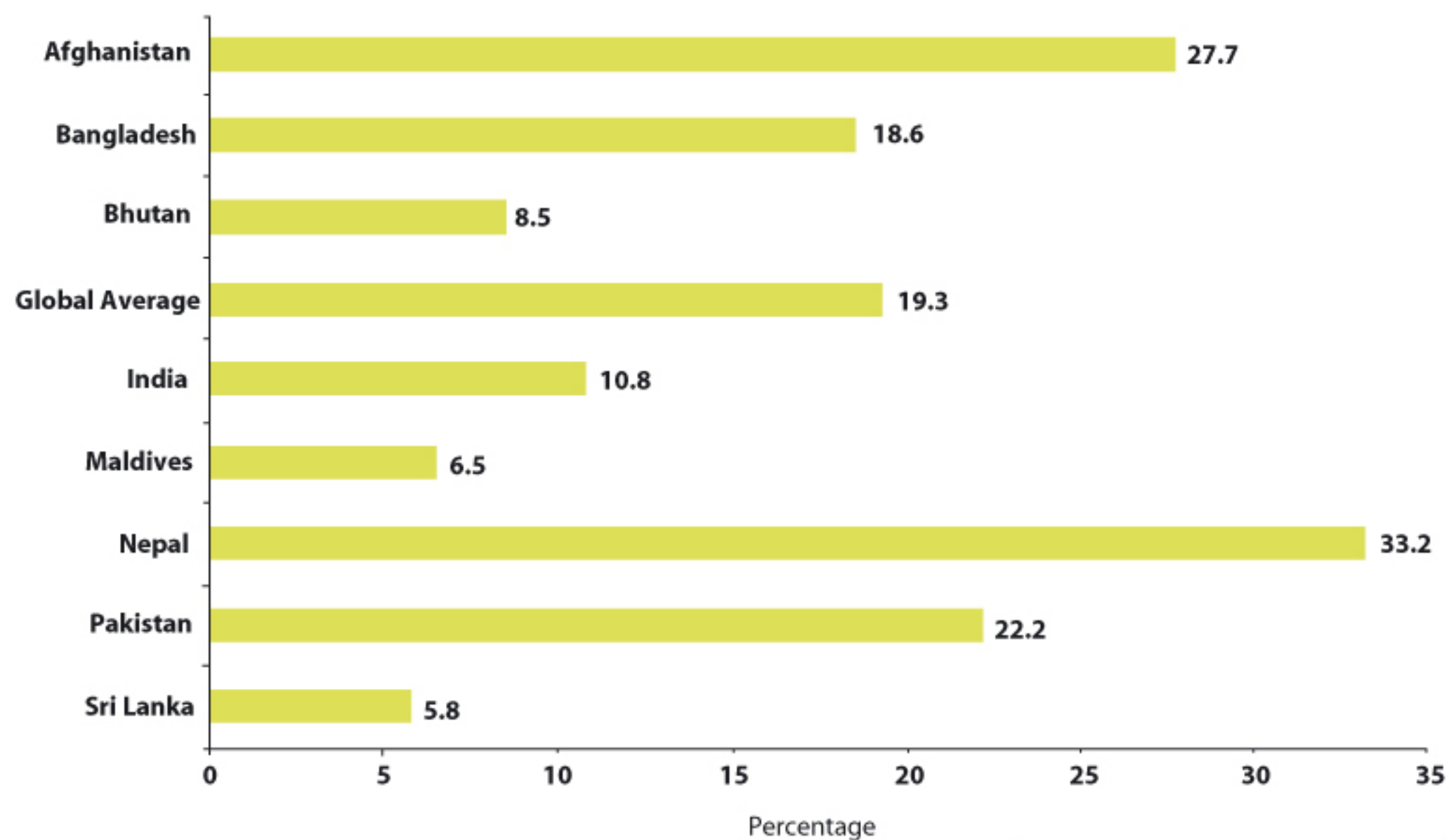
A Millennium Declaration in 2000 committed countries to eight time bound targets in the Millennium Development Goals, one of which was to Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women (MDG 3). A key target for this goal was for women to occupy at least 30% of seats in national parliaments.

The 2011 women in parliament report of the Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU) demonstrates the significant challenge of meeting this objective in South Asia. Although a significant part of society are women in the region the representation of women in parliaments lags far behind with a regional average of 18.3% of seats in lower chambers of parliaments filled by women.

These regional averages disguise some of the more extreme cases of underrepresentation and the positive impact on readdressing gender imbalances of quotas in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan who are part of over 50 countries worldwide to have adopted legislative quotas to ensure an allocation of parliamentary seats are reserved for women. In Bhutan, Maldives and Sri Lanka the percentages of women in parliament are all below 10%.

Chart 1: Representation of women in lower/single chambers of parliament in South Asia 2011

Source IPU

**Key global facts**

Women as Heads of State 6%
Women as Heads of Government 6%
Women Ministers 16%
Women Heads of Parliament 15%

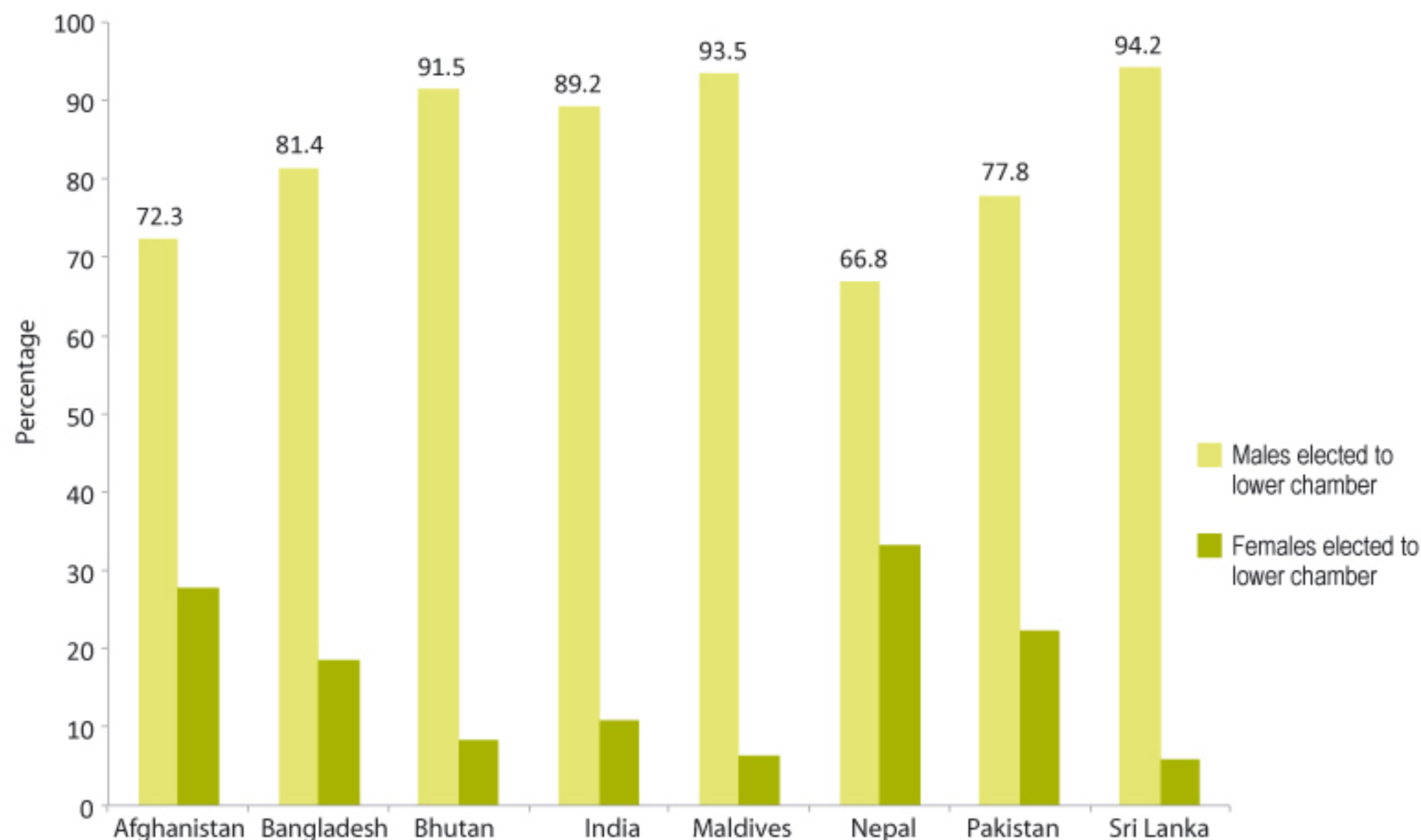
Source: Winnie Byanyima, Director, UNDP
Gender Team. Source IPU 2011.



The absence of gender equality is also extreme in executive posts with a large majority of these allocated to men in a large majority of countries worldwide. Globally only 6% of heads of state or head of a government are women, 16% of ministers are women and only 15% of heads of parliament are women. In sum, given the fact that women are nearly 50% of the population in the region of South Asia their representation in these key positions is not reflected sufficiently. As is also the case in the majority of countries across the world women remain underrepresented across elected institutions and despite some progress in some countries it remains a critical problem.

Chart 2: Gender balance and representation in lower/single chambers of parliament in South Asia in 2011

Source IPU





Themes of the Conference

Themes of the Conference

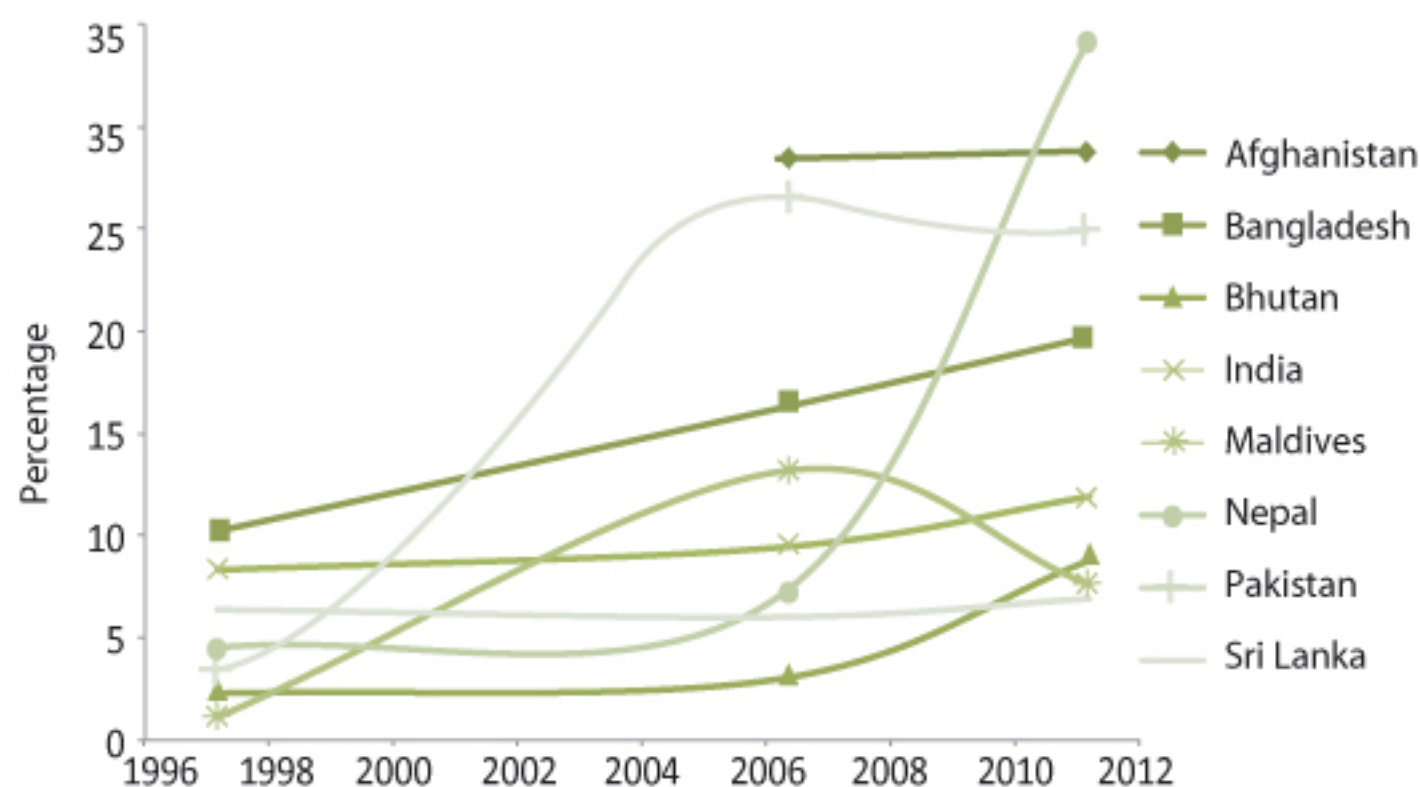
The conference was structured around plenary sessions and parallel working groups focusing on these issues both in regional and global context. Ensuring women have improved access to parliaments and decision-making positions was discussed both in respect to the obligations that countries attended have as well as regional experiences and challenges faced by women. These included areas such as the difficulties women experience in being candidates for public office and even once elected obstacles which persisted that hindered them being active members of parliament as well as the challenges of being appointed to other decision-making positions.

During the first day participants laid out some of the global challenges to increasing the representation in parliaments and decision-making positions of women. Speakers recognised the positive contributions that can be made by women and the progress, which has been achieved in moving towards more inclusive parliaments, but also stressed the need for governments and parliaments to do more. It was also highlighted that this was not simply a question of inclusive parliaments but also ensuring human rights and the individual right to represent and be represented in public life were respected.

The opportunities of creating more plural parliaments that make better and more inclusive decisions in the public interest was also raised. Instrumentalist arguments suggested there was a growing body of evidence that where women take on greater roles policy processes and decision-making has greater efficacy benefitting the entire population.

Chart 3: Changes in gender balance in lower/single chambers of parliaments in South Asia 1996-2011

Source IPU



It was also stressed that the stage of the development of a country should not be used as an argument as to why women were not better represented in parliaments and decision-making bodies. Evidence from countries suggested it was the contrary. There were a number of examples of nations, indeed those that have recently emerged from periods of conflict, which demonstrate positive moves towards gender equality in their parliaments. Nepal in this respect, led the way in the region with 33.3% of its constituent assembly, being women.

A central theme was that it was important to move beyond the present situation and provide greater support for women to both get into, and when elected, sustain positions in decision-making structures including as elected parliamentarians. This was a question of political commitment and a challenge both at the highest level of politics but also in existing parliamentary structures and political parties. And, it was, incumbent on all stakeholders to ensure gender equality becomes more engrained

within governance and decision-making bodies to accelerate the position of women in public life across the globe and region. Furthermore, an increase in the number of women in parliaments was not purely an issue of numbers and percentages; it was crucially concerned with the quality and range of positions that women had access to, and the increased material benefit and quality of processes that were inclusive of women.

Three key spheres

Over the course of the two days representatives from throughout South Asia exchanged national experiences, highlighted common challenges as well as reviewed existing initiatives aimed to increase gender equality in parliaments and government. This included presentations from parliamentarians and other stakeholders from across the region highlighting three interlinked spheres:

- Social and economic obstacles to greater participation of women were outlined in each of the countries and ideas for advancing change put forward. The central conclusions



"Political parties have made the question of power rather than that of representation a determining factor. While women are mobilised to vote by all parties when it comes to receiving the party ticket the number of women drops dramatically. Women lose out at this stage as they are considered to have less chance of winning, which is not necessarily true."

Geeta Bhukkal, Minister for Education, Women and Child Development, Haryana, India

were these conditions affect both the opportunities that women have to enter public life and elected office, but also once they are elected, equally the opportunities to fully participate in parliamentary life. Challenges persisted across countries despite some overall improvements and this goes beyond social and economic obstacles and includes access to education and cultural attitudes that disadvantage the opportunities that women have to enter public life that exist at many different levels.

- Political parties as major barriers to entry into parliaments and decision-making positions and the obstacles to effective engagement of female party members at all levels of these parties was also addressed. This focused on the significant obstacles posed by political parties to women being elected. Participants shared their experiences of working within male dominated political party structures, competing for party nominations within patriarchal party structures and when receiving these nominations challenges of being candidates in elections in societies built upon patronage.

- Once elected to public office challenges within the institutions of parliament were highlighted. This discussion emphasised the barriers and the need for effective participation of women in committees, influential policy positions and cross-party work. In this context, discussions focused on how participation can translate into improving policy making. There was also recognition that parliaments have a responsibility as workplaces to provide facilities and training initiatives for women so they were places that catered for the needs of all parliamentarians regardless of their gender.

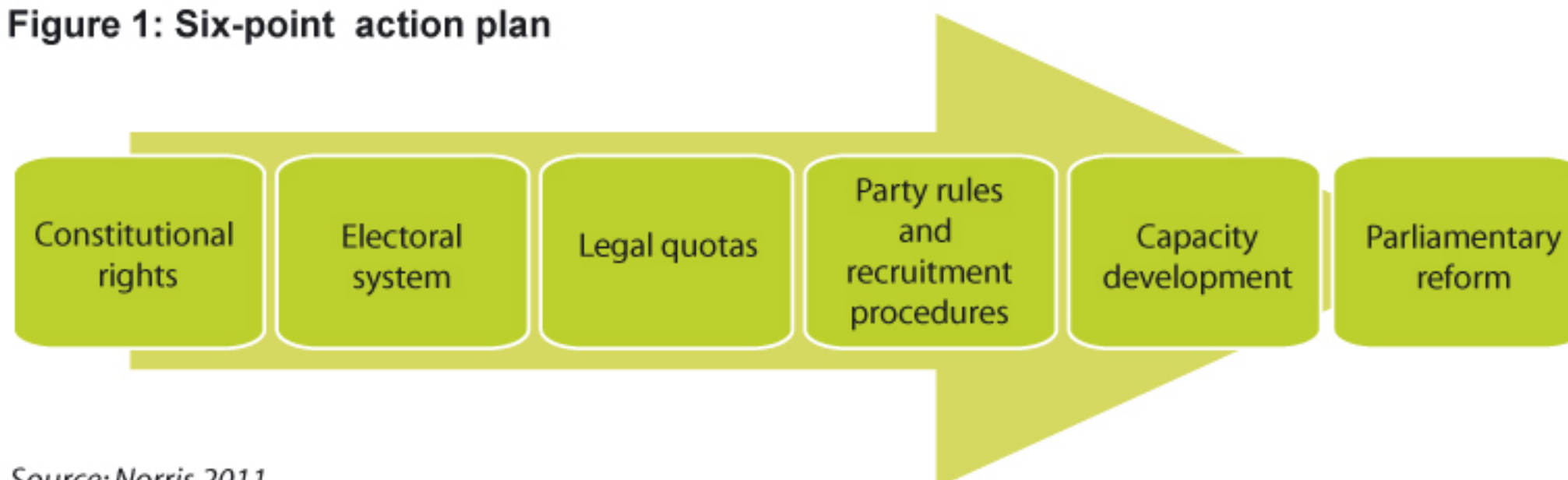
All of these sessions emphasised the importance of taking an holistic approach to identifying the persistent and entrenched obstacles to fuller participation of women in the decision-making process. By approaching the issue from a set of different but interlinked spheres it was possible to start to engage more fully to seek comprehensive and meaningful solutions to the current problem of underrepresentation of women.

Global overview and a six-point plan

Key points of discussion were drawn together in a presentation on a six-point plan devised by Professor Pippa Norris. The plan is based on the identification of 'drivers of change,' dynamics that were also identified across a wide range of examples in the national experiences shared. Major drivers of change were identified as institutional. Successful examples of bringing about institutional change agents were supported by a political commitment to change.

This six-point plan brings together a number of related spheres in order to adequately identify and combat obstacles to the equal representation of women in public life.

Action 1: The set of first principles are outlined in the constitutional sphere that requires equal rights that all other rights and obligations, negative and positive freedoms and responsibilities flow. Legislators must ensure laws grant equal treatment and opportunity and there is no discrimination in law based on gender.

Figure 1: Six-point action plan


Source: Norris 2011

Action 2: Following the constitutional sphere the plan identifies the importance of the electoral system used with some systems providing for greater opportunities, for more plural parliaments over others. Proportional and mixed systems were highlighted as ones that have produced more diverse parliaments around the globe generally. There are, however, exceptions to this as the below table illustrates in the case of Sri Lanka.

Table1: Electoral systems for national parliaments in South Asia 2011

Country	Electoral system	Percentage of seats held by women in lower houses	Quotas in lower chambers of national parliaments
Afghanistan	Single non transferable vote	27.7%	Yes
Bangladesh	First past the post	18.6%	Yes
Bhutan	First past the post	8.5%	No
India	First past the post	10.8%	No
Maldives	First past the post	6.5%	No
Nepal	Mixed system	33.2%	Yes
Pakistan	First past the post	22.2%	Yes
Sri Lanka	Proportional representation	5.8%	No

Source: Inter Parliamentary Union, International IDEA 2011

Action 3: A third component in the plan to increase the representation of women is the use of legal quotas for seats in parliament. Such tools have been demonstrated to work to increase the number of women in parliament. In countries that have greater representation of women in parliaments there is a clear correlation with legislative quotas. When quotas are in place there are very simply a greater number of women in parliaments and parliaments are more diverse.

Action 4: The fourth challenge is to ensure women have access to opportunity not only in parliaments but within the political parties' structures. This requires, according to the six-point action plan, a positive and pro-gender approach in political party structures that encourages gender equality across their own structures.

Action 5: Capacity building represents the fifth strategy. This cuts across the majority of other issues and includes

- 1) candidate training and equal opportunities;
- 2) information campaigns to raise awareness and better public understanding; and
- 3) political party activities involving women to engage as leading stakeholders on all issues.

Action 6: A final sphere identified in the plan relates to elected and parliamentary structures themselves and requires commitment to ensure that women play a central and meaningful role in parliament, on committees and in the work of parliaments such as legislative development. This includes thinking of parliaments like a workplace that should work towards accommodating the needs of men and women equally.

Central points and key priorities of the parallel sessions

Chairpersons that reported back to the plenary session convened a number of parallel sessions. The main points highlighted in the different sessions are summarised below.

Group 1: Enabling women to participate in politics and overcoming barriers to entry

Chairperson: Jacqueline Corcoran

Women are faced with profound challenges in both private and public spheres. The obstacles identified by the group started in the household and community levels but could be traced upwards through local power structures and particularly political parties and even in parliamentary structures themselves. Cultural and societal traditions within families and communities are very much built upon patronage and patriarchal power structures and these are reflected in unequal gender access to decision-making positions and parliaments across the region.

Difficulties include challenges for potential women candidates obtaining funding for their campaigns, obstacles within political parties and at times violent and humiliating assaults on women candidates when out campaigning. The absence of public funding for campaigning contributed to the lack of a level playing field in respect to campaigns as does media coverage. Design of the respective electoral system also plays a central role in opportunities afforded to women to compete in elections. The first past the post system and winner takes all culture means women struggle within political parties to be nominated to contest key seats in parliament. There is

a lack of incentives to nominate women candidates and with little recognition of the positive role, which is played by women this means within the parties women are marginalised.

Key recommendations

- Review the impact of electoral systems and how these work against increasing the representation of women in parliaments.
- The need to work against the patronage and paternalism that is endemic in the region's political and parliamentary spheres. This should include public information schemes as well as initiatives to transform cultural and institutional attitudes of leaders and decision-makers.
- Greater investment in opening up access to the political sphere for women with assistance for them through tailored education, increased access to resources as well as access to public funding to campaign.

Group 2: Effective women's leadership in political systems
Chairperson: Pippa Norris

A key problem faced by women was a lack of capacity and support. This adds to the problem of a general absence of public understanding of the need to elect more women and when it comes to voting this means voters tended not to vote for women candidates. Because women did not have access to the same level of support, resources and opportunities as male counterparts it is difficult for them to compete on a level playing field. On top of fundamental challenges the institutional frameworks work against women reaching decision-making positions: some electoral system designs, political party hierarchies and social and cultural attitudes all work against gender equality.

On a supply side it is essential to invest in training and capacity support for women to enter into politics. Once in the political arena this support should be continued throughout careers. On a demand side it is crucial for the public to access wider information about the role of women in parliaments and public life to break down misconceptions in society. It is essential to be able to support women in building capacity to overcome a variety of obstacles for them to be elected to parliaments and other decision-making bodies.

Key recommendations

- Increased investment in building the capacity of women throughout their political careers facilitated with training and other support programmes such as mentoring to enhance their role and participation in parliamentary processes.
- Greater efforts to provide public information and an increase in campaigning on issues related to the role and rights of women to represent the public in parliament and other decision-making bodies.
- A recognition by institutions that responsibility to ensure gender equality rests within these and they should make all reasonable efforts to put in place gender sensitive policies.

Group 3: Promoting a gender responsive parliament
Chairperson: Sonia Palmieri

This group focused on the institution of parliament itself and the barriers and obstacles that women faced once they are elected. These institutions do not provide services that reflect the needs of women either who worked in the secretariat or

those elected to parliamentary seats. There was a need to institutionalise gender equality principles in the workplace to provide an environment that not only met the needs of men but also women.

A further issue was that when women are elected to parliament they do not have equal access to decision-making platforms. Often they do not have the opportunity to take leading positions on committees and there are few mechanisms to ensure that once elected they receive career level training and support from these parliaments. Subsequently, without access to patronage networks it can be more challenging for women to gain access to key positions, and as a result, their work can be inhibited.

It was time that responsibility for ensuring greater access to parliaments and increased awareness as to the needs of women in parliament was placed on the institution of parliament itself. That it is a responsibility of parliaments to do more so women can access



parliament and it is incumbent on these institutions to guarantee a gender sensitive policy framework for parliaments with clear and transparent indicators put in place.

Key recommendations

- Need to change attitudes and break down cultural and social stereotypes and provide greater public information to ensure women are more fully incorporated into parliamentary cultures.
- Greater support is required for women once they are elected to parliaments including tailored induction and career pathway orientation initiatives. Parliaments should also adopt gender sensitive policies in all aspects of the workplace.
- Increase transparency and diversity in the parliamentary committee processes to guarantee women are represented as central members and gender equality is achieved.

Group 4: Youth and parliamentarians of the future
Chairperson: Bridget Welsh

Group 4 outlined issues related to future generations of parliamentarians and leaders to highlight the need to engage a new generation of youth leaders in politics. It addressed a number of points including apathy in younger generations towards politics and a reluctance to see politics as a career pathway for these groups. As the growing influence of new technology acted to empower younger people across the world discussion related to how to make politics a more attractive career destination for a new generation in the region. The group also discussed obstacles to younger groups engaging in public policy debate.

The need to channel support to a new generation of politicians was also highlighted to encourage youth engagement in parliamentary issues. This should be coupled with a more sensitive approach to diversity in parliaments to assist the younger generations in learning about parliamentary democracy. It is incumbent on all those in government to ensure diverse representation and this required active engagement of young women and men as equal citizens.

Key recommendations

- There should be greater investment in creating platforms for engagement of youth groups in public policy and political issues. Initiatives to nurture younger generations so they are better informed about civic virtue and political life should be embedded within the educational system.

- Parliaments and parliamentarians should reach out and invest more in attracting youths to parliamentary discussion using old and new media to engage with their interests. Youth organisations such as university student unions and debating societies should be encouraged to engage in the political sphere.

Alternative pathways

Bringing many of the themes together a series of alternative pathways for women to enter into political life were outlined on the final day of the conference. These were based around identifying arenas for political engagement and change presented by Bridget Welsh. Key strategies are outlined in table 2 below.

Table 2: Strategies for alternative pathways

Political engagement	Target change	Transforming political practice
Be inclusive and target men and include them in formal and informal platforms.	Work as a collective and target middle ranks to start to influence change.	Use new and traditional media as platforms.
Promote broad participation of women including in electoral processes, public spheres and across society.	Encourage change and influence new generations.	Exploit alternative financing sources.
Utilise all arenas from grassroots, local government to national level government. Include business and media in the strategy.	Lobby to contest seats against men not against other women.	Embrace policies and problems. Move from 'women' focused issues into a broader range of public policy.
Build bridges across all levels of the political sphere and society.	Promote women candidates early in the process.	Be proactive and lead the way. Engage in issues.

Source: Welsh 2011

Next steps and looking to the future

The United Nations Development Programme in collaboration with UN Women is currently developing a new innovative programme to support greater representation of women in public life in the Asia Pacific region. As part of its existing initiatives supporting women in parliaments it is planning to establish a community for women's political leadership in the near future with an aim to bring together existing networks and stakeholders in the region to address key issues in this area. The community will include a cross section of stakeholders including parliamentarians, government officials, civil society organisations and experts in this field. It will aim to develop further understanding of policy instruments that affect change, strengthen the ability of women to participate in public life and enhance their political influence.

Following the final session and the presentations of the parallel working groups a declaration was submitted

to the participants and adopted during the session. The text of the declaration is included below and it is built upon agreement of participants to:

- **Advocate:** To increase pressure for the increased participation of women in decision-making positions by sharing experience from the Asia Pacific and globally on how women candidates and voters can be supported, and how those already in leadership can sustain their participation in political life.
- **Illustrate:** The platforms and processes women can undertake to enhance the participation of women in politics at national and local levels.
- **Strengthen:** Networking and regional cooperation in the field of political participation of women, bringing together international and regional experts, representatives of civil society, parliamentarians, local councils members and government officials.



Dhaka Declaration

Dhaka Regional Conference on Women's Political Leadership Declaration

18 October 2011

The participants in this conference recognise the importance of the principles of diversity, inclusiveness and gender equality as basic human rights. Delegates from throughout South Asia attending the conference agree to the following basic principles and call on all countries to strive for greater representation of women in public life. Women are key to improving development and deepening democracy.

Acknowledging

Whilst progress has been made towards gender equality in South Asia in public life, including parliaments and other decision-making bodies, significant challenges remain.

Recognising

Equality is a key principle in the constitutions of the region and gender equality is a basic human right. Parliaments and other decision-making bodies are a democratic reflection of society and should represent all elements of our communities. Global experience demonstrates that the greater representation of women is an issue of political will and commitment, not economic development.

Calling on authorities and stakeholders

This conference calls on national and regional authorities and stakeholders to:

- Address the issue of gender inequality in parliaments and other decision-making bodies with a genuine and sustained commitment to increasing diversity through equal gender representation.
- Review and remove any structures and practices inhibiting the role of women in public life to ensure equality



of access and opportunity. This includes guaranteeing that constitutions, legal structures and electoral frameworks are inclusive and ensure gender equality.

- Reform electoral systems to make these more inclusive, including considering mixed and proportional representation systems for electing members of public office. Relevant bodies should ensure women have equal opportunity to participate in all aspects of credible and transparent elections.
- Promote affirmative action policies, including the use of candidate quotas, reserved seats and other mechanisms to achieve gender equality, as well as consider public finances for campaigning.
- Ensure political parties have constitutions, procedures and practices respecting principles of internal democracy, accountability and transparency. These should grant equal access for women as candidates and to campaign, participate and lead in significant numbers and in meaningful roles and parties should actively work towards meeting these provisions.



- Promote pluralism, tolerance and trust through initiatives that support greater understanding of the need to have women in key public positions, with particular attention to the rights and security of women from excluded groups and young people.
- Protect women from violence, intimidation and other forms of abuse, especially in exercising their political rights.
- Institutionalise gender balance and gender sensitive workplace policies to ensure a conducive working environment within parliamentary structures and other decision-making bodies. Special attention should focus on ensuring that parliamentary institutions and political parties have the capacity to address gender equality.
- Build capacity for women and young people within the political parties and parliamentary structures and other decision-making bodies.
- Invest in civic education employing a variety of new and traditional media.
- Collect, monitor and publish data on women as candidates and those elected and appointed to political office.
- Encourage networks and mentoring that advance the next generation of women leaders.
- Support youth in establishing platforms and assemblies to participate in politics.

Calling on participants to:

- Advocate for change and network within the region;
- Illustrate and share experience in the region;
- Strengthen the ability of women to contest and when elected take up public office positions.



List of participants

Name	Designation	Country
Farkhunda Naderi	Member of Parliament	Afghanistan
Nafisa Azimi	Member of Parliament	Afghanistan
Malalai Mohd Yasin	Civil society representative	Afghanistan
Masal Golam Kader	Civil society representative	Afghanistan
Mohammed Daud Shah Safari	Youth representative	Afghanistan
Nargis Qasimi	UNDP	Afghanistan
Sharmistha Dasbarwa	UNDP	Afghanistan
Md. Abdul Hamid Advocate	Speaker, Bangladesh Parliament	Bangladesh
Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury	Deputy Leader of the House, Bangladesh Parliament	Bangladesh
Vice Principal Md. Abdus Shahid	Chief Whip, Bangladesh Parliament	Bangladesh
Dr. Dipu Moni	Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Bangladesh
Prof. Gowher Rizvi	Advisor for International Affairs to the Prime Minister of Bangladesh	Bangladesh
Dr. Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury	State Minister for the Women and Children Affairs, Bangladesh	Bangladesh
Sagufta Yasmin	Whip, Bangladesh Parliament	Bangladesh
Meher Afroze Chumki	Chair, Standing Committee on Ministry of Women and Children Affairs	Bangladesh
Prof. Dr. Muhammad Serajul Akbar	Member of Parliament	Bangladesh
Prof. M A Mannan	Member of Parliament	Bangladesh
Faridun Nahar Laily	Member of Parliament	Bangladesh
Rebecca Momin	Member of Parliament	Bangladesh
Begum Sultana Tarun	Member of Parliament	Bangladesh
Hasina Ahmed	Member of Parliament	Bangladesh
Rawshan Zahan Shathi	Member of Parliament	Bangladesh
Nazma Akhter	Member of Parliament	Bangladesh
Rasheda Begum Hira	Member of Parliament	Bangladesh
Noor-E-Hasna Lily Chowdhury	Member of Parliament	Bangladesh
Fazilatunnesa Indira	Secretary for Women Affairs, Bangladesh Awami League	Bangladesh
Newaz Halima Arly	Member, Central Executive Committee and Joint Secretary Mohila Dal, Central Committee BNP	Bangladesh
Pranab Chakraborty	National Project Director, IPD & Additional Secretary, Bangladesh Parliament Secretariat	Bangladesh
Abu Al Helal	Deputy National Project Director, IPD and Deputy Secretary, Bangladesh Parliament Secretariat	Bangladesh
Dr. Amena Mohsin	Professor International Relations Department, University of Dhaka	Bangladesh
Ayesha Khanam	President, Bangladesh Mohila Parishad	Bangladesh
Samina Hossain	Leadership Fellow, Bangladesh Youth Leadership Centre	Bangladesh
Neamah Islam	Management Trainee, Bangladesh Youth Leadership Centre	Bangladesh

Name	Designation	Country
Tashi Wangmo	Member of Parliament	Bhutan
Sangay Lhamo	Political Party Representative	Bhutan
Karma Choden	Political Party Representative	Bhutan
Jigme Choden	Civil society representative	Bhutan
Gaki Wangmo	Youth representative	Bhutan
Rinzi Pem	UNDP	Bhutan
Geeta Bhukal	Minister for Education, Women and Child Development, Haryana	India
Rajendra Sharma	Private Secretary to Minister	India
Navin Kapoor	UNDP	India
Kanta Sing	UNDP	India
Subhashini Ali	Member Communist Party of India and President all India Women Democratic Association	India
Lata Guddu Bankhede	Sarpanch Gram Panchayat-Makroniya	India
Aneesa Ahmed	Civil society representative	Maldives
Hawwa Lubna	Youth representative	Maldives
Jayapuri Gharti Magar	Member of Parliament	Nepal
Ishwori Neupane	Member of Parliament	Nepal
Abhishek Pratap Shah	Member of Parliament	Nepal
Rajani Maharjan	Civil society representative	Nepal
Pragyan Basyal	UNDP	Nepal
Monica Rijal	UNDP	Nepal
Nuzhat Aamir	Member of Parliament	Pakistan
Dr. Saeeda Iqbal	Senator	Pakistan
Imran Khan	Country Coordinator, Quillam Foundation	Pakistan
Shagufta Malik	MPA, Provincial vice president	Pakistan
Muhammad Asif Bhatee	UNDP	Pakistan
Mohamed Yousuf Farook Hunais	Member of Parliament	Sri Lanka
Thuraiajah Ravikaran	Civil society representative	Sri Lanka
Selvarani Somasegarampillai	Civil society representative	Sri Lanka
Ahila Thillainathan	UNDP	Sri Lanka
Rajendrakumar Ganesarajah	UNDP	Sri Lanka
Resource persons		
Neal Walker	UN Resident Coordinator/UNDP Resident Representative, Bangladesh	United States
Jacqueline Corcoran	Senior Resident Director, National Democratic Institute	United States
Crystal Rosario	Programme Officer, National Democratic Institute	United States
Siobhan Bennett	President/CEO, Women's Campaign Fund	United States
Winnie Byanyima	Director, Global Gender Team UNDP, HQ	Uganda

Name	Designation	Country
Bridget Welsh	Associate Professor, Singapore Management University	Singapore
Prof. Pippa Norris	Lecturer in Comparative Politics, Harvard University	United Kingdom
Anne F. Stenhammer	South Asia Regional Programme Director, UN Women	Norway
Suraj Kumar	South Asia Regional Programme Director, UN Women	India
Pauline Tamesis	Democratic Governance Practice Leader UNDP Asia-Pacific Regional Centre	Philippines
Simon Finley	Global Programme for Electoral Cycle Support (GPECS), UNDP Asia Pacific Regional Centre	Australia
Kim Henderson	Gender Practice Leader, UNDP Asia-Pacific Regional Centre	Thailand
Harald Thorud	Policy Analyst, UNDP Asia-Pacific Regional Centre	Norway
Lenita Freidenvall	Committee Secretary to the Speaker's Reference Group on Gender Equality Issues, Parliament of Sweden	Sweden
Sonia Palmieri	Gender and Parliament Specialist (Parliament of Australia)	Australia
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