



# Equality in Politics:

## A Survey of Women and Men in Parliaments



Inter-Parliamentary Union

2008





Created in 1889, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) is the international organization that brings together the representatives of parliaments of sovereign States. The IPU is the focal point for worldwide parliamentary dialogue and works for peace and cooperation among peoples with a view to strengthening representative institutions.

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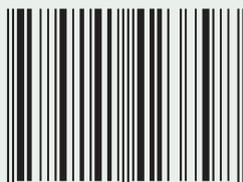
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by Julie Ballington

# Foreword

**A** strong and vibrant democracy is possible only when parliament is fully inclusive of the population it represents. Parliaments cannot consider themselves inclusive, however, until they can boast the full participation of women. Ever since the first United Nations World Conference on Women was held in Mexico City in 1975, the international community has paid great attention to women's representation in, and impact on, political decision-making structures. Despite this international focus, however, women's access to parliament has been frustratingly slow and very often disappointing. In 1975, women held 10.9 percent of all parliamentary seats worldwide. After more than 30 years of pledges, prescriptions and persuasion, women occupy less than 18 percent of all parliamentary seats in 2008.

For the past decade, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) has based its work on a clear principle: that there is a fundamental link between democracy and a genuine partnership between men and women in the management of public affairs. One of our core aims is to improve women's access to, and participation in, parliament and to build real political partnerships between men and women. Our efforts in this regard are underpinned by the collection and analysis of data on the subject. This report is our most recent contribution to the ongoing discussion about how to achieve full partnership between men and women in parliament. The report collates the views and experiences of parliamentarians drawn from all regions of the world gathered through survey research.

While it is important to increase the number of women in parliaments around the world, it is also necessary for women, once in parliament, to use their positions of influence to make a difference in decision-making processes. Women parliamentarians are changing politics and redefining political priorities to include women's views and concerns. The report highlights some of the ways in which women are also working to mainstream a gender perspective in parliamentary work, such as through parliamentary committees and women's parliamentary caucuses.

But these tasks are not for women alone. Forty percent of the survey respondents were male, providing a unique perspective of both men and women on the question of gender equality in politics. True gender equality can only result from including the views and experiences of both men and women. The report shows that while some men in parliament raise issues of concern to women in their work, much more must be done to forge constructive partnerships between men and women.

In many ways, this study attests to the unfortunate fact that gender equality in parliaments remains an ideal, not a reality. Women parliamentarians continue to face difficulties in their work, perhaps none greater than operating in political structures and political parties dominated by men. The inclusion of women in political decision making is not just about women's right to equality and participation in the conduct of public affairs; it is also about using women's resources and potential to determine political and development priorities that benefit societies and the global community. In other words, it is not just a matter of right but getting it right.

We sincerely thank the parliamentarians who gave their time to take part in this survey—your views have shaped the findings in this report. We hope that you find this study both informative and provocative, and that it provides inspiration for efforts to strengthen gender equality in parliaments. ■



Anders B. Johansson  
Secretary General  
Inter-Parliamentary Union



# Acknowledgements

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# Executive Summary

Parliament is the place where a country's policy direction is set. A democratic parliament reflects the views and interests of the society from which it is drawn and allows those perspectives to shape the society's social, political and economic future. When women are involved in all aspects of political life, including as members of parliament, societies are more equitable and democracy is both strengthened and enhanced.

Women have historically been sidelined from the structures of state that determine political and legislative priorities. Although the number of women in parliaments around the world has been increasing steadily over the past decade, in 2008 women still occupy less than 18 percent of all parliamentary seats.

For more than 30 years, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) has conducted research on women in politics. This research is crucial as it forms the basis of national, regional and international policies and strategies to promote balanced participation of men and women in politics. The IPU last conducted a global survey of women parliamentarians in 1999–2000. The results of that survey, in which 180 women politicians reflected on their experiences working in male-dominated parliaments, are published in the 2000 IPU book *Politics: Women's Insight*.

The research collected for this report builds on previous work in this field. The survey, conducted between 2006 and 2008, was designed to collect insights from both men and women in parliament into what shapes decision making. The research aimed to elicit concrete examples of how parliamentarians are working to attain gender equality in politics at the national level. The IPU received responses from 272 parliamentarians in 110 countries in every region of the world and held personal interviews with 20 parliamentarians. Unlike previous IPU research, 40 percent of the respondents were men.

The survey finds that different factors affect the entry of women and men into politics (**Chapter 2**). Some factors provide more of a deterrent than others. For men, perceived lack of support from the electorate, for example, can discourage their entry into politics, while for women domestic responsibilities are seen as the single most important deterrent. In addition, women face different obstacles to winning a seat in parliament. Overall, respondents believe prejudice and cultural perceptions about the role of women, together with a lack of financial resources, to be among the most influential obstacles. More needs to be done to address the obstacles faced by women, and respondents identified the adoption of electoral quotas and the implementation of sensitization programmes as important mechanisms.

It is clear from the responses to the survey that women and men have different interests in and perspectives on life (**Chapter 3**). While not a homogenous group, women parliamentarians share certain general interests and concerns. Men also believe that women's political priorities are different from theirs. Indeed, more than 90 percent of all respondents agreed that women bring different views, talents and perspectives to politics. Women parliamentarians tend to emphasize social issues, such as childcare, equal pay, parental leave and pensions; physical concerns, including reproductive rights, physical safety and gender-based violence; and development, which includes human development, the alleviation of poverty and delivery of services.

While most women parliamentarians feel that they have a responsibility to represent women, some emphasize that women should advocate not only on behalf of women, but also on behalf of the wider community. Others believe it is important to move beyond what is perceived as a women's agenda and to show that women are contributing to a broad range of political discussions.

Democracy requires that the interests of different groups in society, including those of women, are reflected in decision-making processes. Some men in parliament raise issues of concern to women in their work. But half the women respondents made it clear that they do not think men can sufficiently represent the interests of women in politics.

The survey finds that women parliamentarians are the most ardent supporters of women and have redefined legislative priorities to include women's concerns and perspectives (**Chapter 4**). In particular, women in parliaments in all regions of the world are at the forefront of efforts to combat gender-based violence, which is endemic in many societies. Women have been instrumental in ensuring that issues such as parental leave and childcare, pensions, gender-equality laws and electoral reforms that enhance women's access to parliaments appear on the legislative agenda.

While most women identify themselves as being active on women's issues, gender equality, community matters and family-related issues, many are also becoming involved in areas traditionally thought of as men's domain, such as fiscal policy and foreign affairs. Nonetheless, the study shows that, owing to a range of factors such as the low number of women in parliaments which limits their availability to participate in committee work, women have the least influence on legislation concerning finance, foreign affairs, national security and defence.

The study also shows that the policies of political parties are key determinants of legislative priorities and agendas. The decision-making bodies of political parties, such as executive committees, are highly influential; yet women have been, and continue to be, under-represented in these groups. Less than 20 percent of respondents believe that women are "very well represented" in the policy-making organs of their political parties. While some political parties have created women's wings, more often than not these bodies serve only as a meeting place for women, rather than active and effective arms of the party that contribute to decision making.

Does the number of women in parliament matter? The study shows that numbers do matter because, at the very least, the more women there are in parliament, the easier it is to address women's issues and to change the gender dynamics in the chamber. Eighty-six percent of respondents agreed that greater numbers of women in parliaments would increase women's influence on political policies and priorities.

Since there are no systematic strategies for gender mainstreaming in parliaments, women's progress in parliament has been patchy. Indeed, more than half the respondents to the survey believe that gender equality is only "occasionally" or "rarely mainstreamed" in parliament (**Chapter 5**). Just one-third of respondents think that gender equality is "regularly mainstreamed".

Respondents identify four factors that are most influential in creating a more gender-sensitive parliament. These are: the support of the ruling party in parliament; the work of parliamentary committees; the work of women's parliamentary caucuses, which are cross-party networks of women; and the rules that govern the functioning of parliament. However, by a more than two-to-one margin over their male counterparts, women believe that parliament is still dominated by a gentleman's club or old boys network. Only eight percent of respondents believe there have been substantial changes in the rules and practices of parliament because of the presence of women. Small but noticeable changes have been noted in parliamentary language and behaviour, which are seen as having become less aggressive since women began taking up parliamentary seats.

The survey also finds that women remain concentrated in committees that deal with social issues, education, health and family affairs. While these committees are important, and oversee a large share of public expenditure, women are often absent from the debate on other issues, such as finance and foreign affairs. This lack of women's participation in committees that deal with the economy, finance and the budget means that women have a lesser say in determining financial priorities and shaping national agendas. Such concentration is also true at the executive level. Women held 1,022 ministerial portfolios in January 2008, but only six women held a defence portfolio.

In many ways, this study attests to the fact that gender equality in parliaments remains an ideal, not a reality (**Chapter 6**). Women parliamentarians continue to face difficulties in their work, perhaps none greater than in changing the political structures that were developed by, and remain dominated by, men. Not all

political parties promote gender equality or uphold their manifesto pledges in practice, and few women hold top decision-making positions in their ranks. Yet this survey finds that the support of the ruling party is one of the most important factors in introducing and enacting gender-related legislation.

Respondents identify several structural changes that could help to promote women's access to and full participation in parliament. These include strengthening existing committees on gender equality or caucuses of women parliamentarians; changing parliamentary processes and facilities to make them more family-friendly (more than half the women respondents and more than 40 percent of the men have difficulty balancing their family and political obligations, and more than two-thirds of all respondents said that there had been no real changes in parliamentary sitting times that could help them balance their responsibilities); conducting more research and training to make parliaments more sensitive to the needs of women and men; and providing parliaments with more funding for support services and outreach work.

In one-third of all the parliaments in the world, less than 10 percent of the members are women. That level of women's representation amounts to a deficit in democracy. It is clear that it is women and not men who have been instrumental in placing such issues as gender-based violence, trafficking of women and children, equal pay, childcare and parental leave on the political agenda. Greater participation by women in parliament would ensure that these concerns, and many others that might be overlooked or not given priority by men, are addressed.

Real change requires political will and partnership. Women and men must acknowledge that the equal participation of women in parliamentary processes not only benefits society, but is required in legitimize democracies. ■



# Chapter 1

## Introduction

“ We believe that true equality between the sexes can only be achieved if both women and men pull forces together to break the barriers of age-old belief that women and men have different roles to play and therefore have an unequal stand in society. . . . A man of quality should not fear women who seek equality.

Mr. Mosé Tjitendero, Chair of the IPU Gender Partnership Group (2000-2002) and Speaker of the National Assembly of Namibia (1990-2004)

### A Partnership for Democracy

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) strengthens democracy through the institution of parliament. The attainment of gender equality and the full participation of women in decision making are key indicators of democracy. The involvement of women in all aspects of political life produces more equitable societies and delivers a stronger and more representative democracy.

Parliaments remain the peak legislative structures the world over, the place where a country's policy direction is set. A truly democratic parliament reflects the views and interests of the society from which it is drawn, in its composition and its agenda setting and policy direction. A representative parliament also allows the different experiences of men and women to affect the social, political and economic future of society.

In 1997, the IPU consolidated its views and experience of women's political participation in the Universal Declaration of Democracy, Article 4 of which explicitly endorses the link between democracy and “a genuine partnership between men and women in the management of public affairs”. This principle has informed the work of the IPU for the past decade. The IPU aims to increase understanding of the factors affecting women's access to parliaments, identify ways to enhance their effectiveness by sup-

porting and strengthening women's input to parliament and help parliaments to mainstream gender equality in their work.

As part of its ongoing efforts to foster a political partnership between men and women, the IPU collects and analyses data on women's political participation and their experience of public life and, based on the results of such studies, raises awareness of the work still to be done. This study forms the most recent contribution to that effort.

The work of the IPU in this area over the past 30 years has been underpinned by a greater prominence of gender equality issues on the international agenda. Since the first United Nations World Conference on Women in Mexico City in 1975, there has been an increasing focus on women's representation in, and impact on, decision-making structures. This focus, however, has not seen an accompanying increase in the representation of women in parliaments—in 1975 women accounted for 10.9 percent of parliamentarians worldwide; by the Second World Conference on Women in Nairobi in 1985 the proportion was 11.9 percent. The Nairobi conference saw the beginning of more sustained action towards equality in decision-making structures as governments and parliaments pledged to promote gender equality in all areas of political life.<sup>1</sup>

The commitments and pledges of states to promote gender equality were solidified in the Beijing Plan of Action that was adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995. States were called on to increase women's capacity to participate in decision making and leadership, and to take concrete steps and implement special measures to ensure women's access to and full participation in power structures such as parliaments.

The commitment to ensuring the equal participation of women and men in political life also finds expression in the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which has received near universal endorsement. In 2000, the United Nations also recognized the central role of women in development in the Millennium Development Goals, which has the empowerment of women as one of its measurable goals. The proportion of seats held by women in parliament is one of the key indicators in measuring progress in this regard.<sup>2</sup>

## Redefining the Political Agenda

Historically, women have been sidelined from the structures of governance that determine political and legislative priorities. The legitimacy of political agendas that do not include the views of those affected, however, must be questioned. Although women's access has increased steadily in the past decade, in 2008 they occupy less than 18 percent of parliamentary seats worldwide.

The advancement of women goes hand in hand with the overall development of society and contributes to better and more effective governance. A stronger presence of women in parliament will allow new concerns to be highlighted on political agendas; and new priorities to be put into practice through the adoption and implementation of policies and laws. The inclusion of the perspectives and interests of women is a prerequisite for democracy and contributes to good governance.

Ultimately, parliaments and their members must become gender-sensitive; and defining and implementing a common platform for gender equality can only be done through a partnership between men and women. Widespread acceptance that parliaments must include the views of both women

and men makes it appropriate to consider women's experiences in parliaments and to examine where and how women are making their presence felt. At the same time, attention must be paid to the factors that influence the participation of women, and to identifying and removing any barriers to their full participation in these institutions.

## About this Report

Research and data on women in politics are crucial because they provide the basis for national, regional, and international policies and strategies designed to promote balanced participation in politics by men and women. For more than 30 years, the IPU has been conducting research on women in politics, and has earned international recognition for the data gathered and handbooks produced in this field.

The last global survey of women parliamentarians was conducted in 1999–2000. The results are published in *Politics: Women's Insight* (IPU, 2000). The results were collated from responses to a questionnaire completed by 180 women politicians, which focused on women's political experiences and their contributions to the democratic process. The respondents reflected on their experiences of working in primarily male-dominated environments in parliament.

Several themes were identified in that report, including the fact that principles of parity and democracy are often thwarted by established rules and practices that were developed in the absence of women. The survey results also attested to the continued difficulties confronted by women parliamentarians in establishing partnerships with men, and the continued segregation of interests and parliamentary activities among men and women.

This research builds and expands on the previous work in this field. Between 2006 and 2008, the IPU undertook survey research designed to bring the perspectives and experiences of parliamentarians to the fore and for the first time includes the views of men on these issues. The survey was designed to collect insights into the factors that shape decision making and to collate concrete examples of how parliamentarians are contributing to attaining gender equality in politics at the national level. It also sought to identify how parliaments can become more gender-sensitized by collating specific initia-

tives that have been implemented to create such an environment.

This report brings together the results and analysis of that research. It is global in its scope, including the views and perspectives of parliamentarians drawn from all regions of the world. The IPU received responses from 272 parliamentarians in 110 countries. The report shares those results across countries, providing a global overview of trends rather than regional analyses. In addition to the information collected through the questionnaire, face-to-face interviews were held with 20 parliamentarians.

This is primarily a report of the survey findings, which highlights the direct responses of the parliamentarians. While other comparative research studies and existing IPU datasets were also consulted, the report does not attempt to synthesize or analyse the wealth of existing literature on gender equality and political participation. The list of countries and parliaments from which respondents were drawn is provided in Annex 1. Further information about the methodology is provided in Annex 2.

This report is not a manual or handbook, and does not seek to make prescriptive recommendations for change. Instead, the IPU offers the findings in this report as a contribution to the debate on how to achieve the full participation of women in parliaments and work in partnership with men to achieve more equitable societies. The strength of this report lies in the fact that it brings together the perspectives and lived experiences of both men and women parliamentarians from all regions of the world, and their testimonies form the basis for the conclusions.

## Outline of the Report

An understanding of the variables that affect the participation of women, and men, in parliament is central to developing strategies to enhance their input and ability to affect the political agenda. With this in mind the report has three main aims:

- To provide an overview of the current status of women and men in parliament, and to highlight the opportunities and obstacles encountered in accessing parliaments;
- To assess whether the political priorities of women and men differ, and identify the ways in

which women are making their presence felt in parliament and how men and women are working together to achieve policy change;

- To highlight the different mechanisms used to promote gender equality in parliament and the initiatives to gender-sensitize parliamentary institutions.

The report is structured around addressing these aims, mainly by presenting the aggregate views of parliamentarians and their personal experiences of the questions under consideration. In order to examine how women are making their presence felt in parliament, it examines the obstacles that women face in accessing parliaments and some of the strategies that have been employed, with varying levels of success, to overcome them.

**Chapter 2** provides an overview of the quantitative representation of women and men in politics, and assesses the main challenges identified by participants in accessing parliaments. These broadly fall into two main categories: political and socio-cultural obstacles, such as traditional perceptions about the role of women in society or the domestic responsibilities of women; and institutional factors, such as the effects of electoral and political party systems. This chapter focuses on access to parliament, highlighting the challenges in gaining entry and the strategies that can be used to overcome them.

While raising the numbers of women in parliament is a primary concern, it is equally important that once in parliament women develop and use their positions of influence to participate substantively in decision making. **Chapter 3** examines the interests, perspectives and priorities of women and men in parliament. It shows that women make a specific contribution to politics, and that they are contributing to the shaping of a new political agenda. It also explores the views of men on equality issues, and assesses whether men and women together are allies in shaping a gender equality agenda.

**Chapter 4** examines some of the policy initiatives of women and men in parliament. It identifies some of the specific policy areas that parliamentarians have focused on and highlights examples of how women and men are working together for gender equality. It addresses some of the constraints that women may come up against in broadening the political agenda, such as the role of political parties and the levels of representation of women in parliament. It also as-

esses whether the number of women in parliament really matters and if the numerical representation of women is linked to their substantive representation.

**Chapter 5** examines the extent to which parliaments are becoming more gender-sensitive by creating new rules, practices and structures that respond to the needs of women and men. It focuses on the institution of parliament—the organization, the rules, the processes and the structures through which politics is done. Male dominance in parliaments creates another set of potential challenges for women, but challenges that they have already begun to confront. The chapter examines some of the procedural changes, such as changes to sitting times in parliament; and the institutional changes, such as the establishment of committees on gender equality, which are helping to develop a more gender-sensitive parliamentary environment.

Despite the fact that there are no specific indicators for measuring the impact of women, it is clear that their presence has brought about significant changes to politics. However, it is also apparent that much remains to be done. **Chapter 6** concludes by providing some suggestions for a future agenda for parliamentary action for gender equality. It identifies the views of parliamentarians on the next steps needed to promote gender equality in parliaments.

Ultimately, a gender equality perspective can only result from the inclusion of the views and experiences of both men and women and by considering the effects of laws and policies on both halves of the population. Parliaments and their members must become gender-sensitive; and defining and implementing a common platform for gender equality can only be done through a partnership between men and women. It is hoped that this report will contribute to fostering such a partnership.

## Parliamentary Profiling: About the Respondents

### Numbers and Origin of Respondents

Between 2006 and 2008, the IPU collected survey responses from 272 respondents from 110 countries and conducted interviews with a further 20 parliamentarians. The countries and parliaments from which the respondents were drawn are listed in Annex 1. Forty percent of the survey respondents

are male, making this report a reflection of the perspectives of both men and women on the question of gender equality in politics. This was one of the principal aims of this research project.

The respondents were drawn from all regions of the world, with the highest representation from Europe, at 38 percent; followed by Africa, 25 percent; Asia and the Pacific, 15 percent; the Americas, 12 percent; and the Arab States, 10 percent. This section provides an overview of the respondents: who they are and where they come from. It also provides a snapshot of parliamentarians around the world.

### Age of Parliamentarians

The aggregate responses to the survey confirm the common belief that parliamentarians tend to be older than middle age. Nearly 60 percent of respondents were over 50 years of age, with no significant variations between men and women. However, of the three percent of parliamentarians between 70 and 80 years of age, all were male. Just over 10 percent of respondents were aged between 30 and 40 years, and less than one percent were aged between 20 and 30 years. This may suggest that parliamentary politics holds little interest for young people, or perhaps that they encounter many obstacles to winning a parliamentary seat.

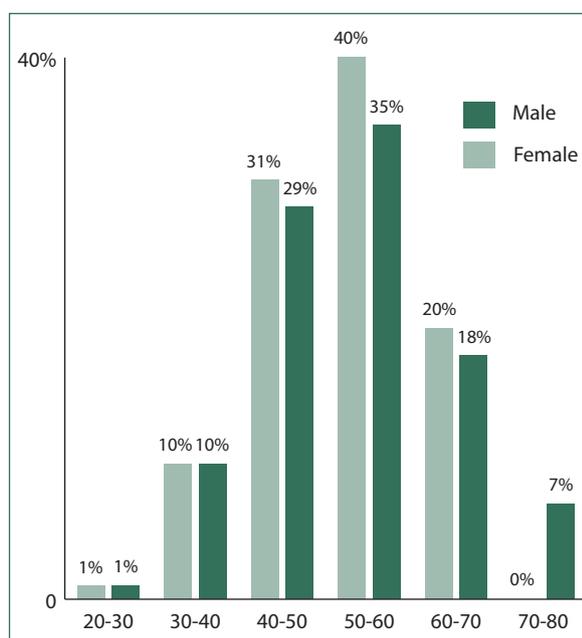


Figure 1.1: The Age of Parliamentarians

### Civil Status

The vast majority of the parliamentarians are married or cohabiting: 68 percent of women respond-

ents were in this category and 87 percent of men. Overall, 12 percent of respondents were divorced, widowed or separated and 12 percent single. There are obvious differences between men and women in these categories (see Figure 1.2). Women are more than twice as likely to be divorced, widowed or separated: 16 percent of women respondents as opposed to 6 percent of men. In addition, women are more than twice as likely to be single: 15 percent of women respondents as opposed to 7 percent of men.

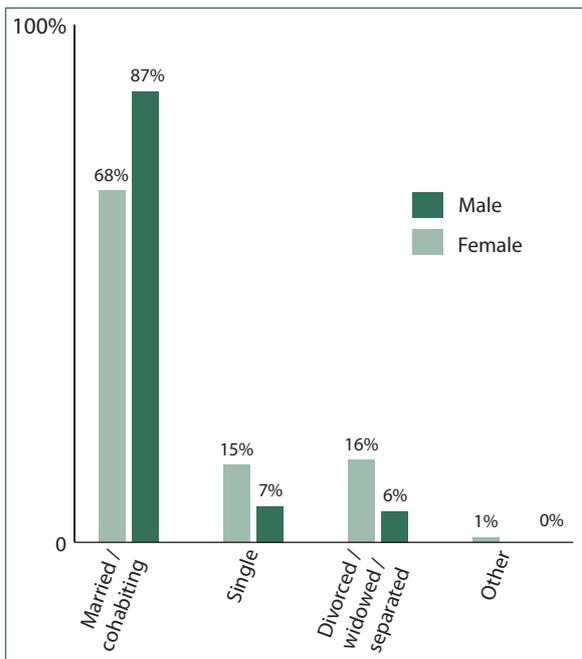


Figure 1.2: The Civil Status of Parliamentarians

### Dependents

Thirty percent of the parliamentarians indicated that they have five or more dependents, with the highest concentration among parliamentarians from Africa and the Arab States. Only two percent of respondents from Europe have five or more dependents. It is also more likely that men will have this number of dependents: 35 percent of men as opposed to 27 percent of women.

Overall, 17 percent of the parliamentarians have three or four dependents, and 22 percent have two, with no significant variations between the sexes. Thirteen percent of respondents indicated that they have one dependent: 19 percent of men and 8 percent of women. However, a noticeable variation emerges between women and men in the no dependent category. While 19 percent of parliamentarians have no dependents, this is far more common among women: 28 percent of women as opposed to 6 percent of men.

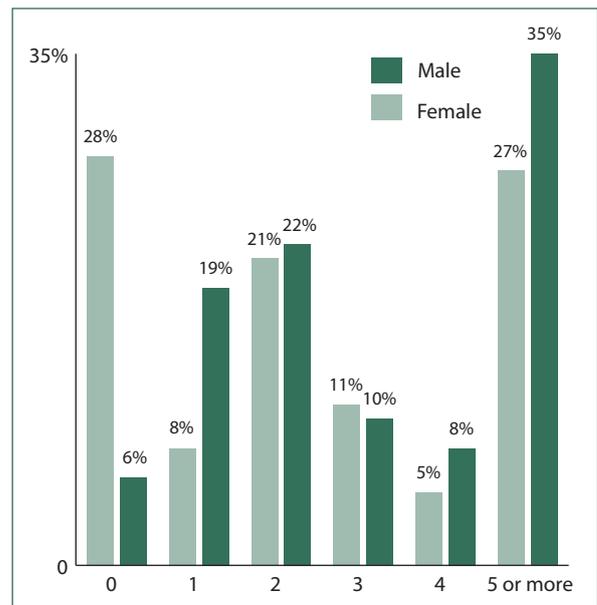


Figure 1.3: The Number of Dependents of Parliamentarians

In sum, nearly one-third of women parliamentarians surveyed have no dependents, and they are four times more likely to have no dependents than men. When taken together with the finding that women are more than twice as likely to be single than men, this may suggest that parliamentary careers tend to hold greater appeal to single women or women with no families, or that their children are beyond dependency age. Put differently, it suggests that women with family responsibilities may be less likely to pursue a parliamentary career.

### Levels of Educational Attainment

Nearly half of all the parliamentarians surveyed have a postgraduate university degree. A further one-third have a university or polytechnic degree, while 13 percent have completed other forms of higher education and just five percent of respondents have only a secondary school education.

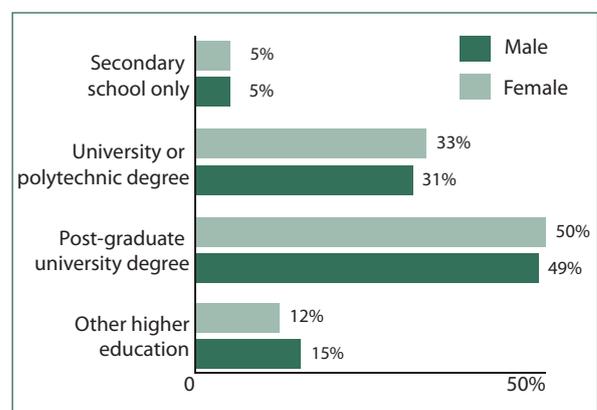


Figure 1.4: Educational Attainment Among Respondents

Respondents from the Americas reported the highest levels of education, with 66 percent holding a postgraduate degree. Respondents from the Pacific reported the lowest percentage of university degrees, and the highest proportion of parliamentarians educated to secondary school level only, at 25 percent. No major variations between women and men were reported. This suggests that among this sample of parliamentarians women are as qualified as men in terms of educational attainment.

### Occupational Background

The survey asked respondents about their occupation prior to their entry into parliament. The most common background reported was the education profession at 22 percent, followed by the civil service and local authority administration, 17 percent; and the legal profession, 15 percent. Thirteen percent of respondents reported political party official as their previous occupation, 12 percent were from the business or private sectors and eight percent were involved in civil society activity. Less than ten percent had previously worked in the medical sector, and less than five percent came from the following occupations: broadcasting, social work, trade union activity and home-maker/care-provider.

There were some differences between women and men. Men scored higher in civil service and local authority administration, the legal profession, the business and private sector and the medical sector, while women reported slightly higher levels in education, civil society activity and social work. A background of employment by political parties was evenly split between men and women. Nearly one-third of respondents reported that they continue to practice their profession during the parliamentary term.

### Parliamentary Mandates

On average, 45 percent of the respondents reported being elected from a political party list, while 37 percent were elected in constituency elections. Eight percent gained their mandates through an indirect election or nomination, and six percent were appointed by the head of state or government. Nearly half the women respondents were elected from a party list and one-third in constituency elections, while equal numbers of men were elected in constituency elections and from political party lists.

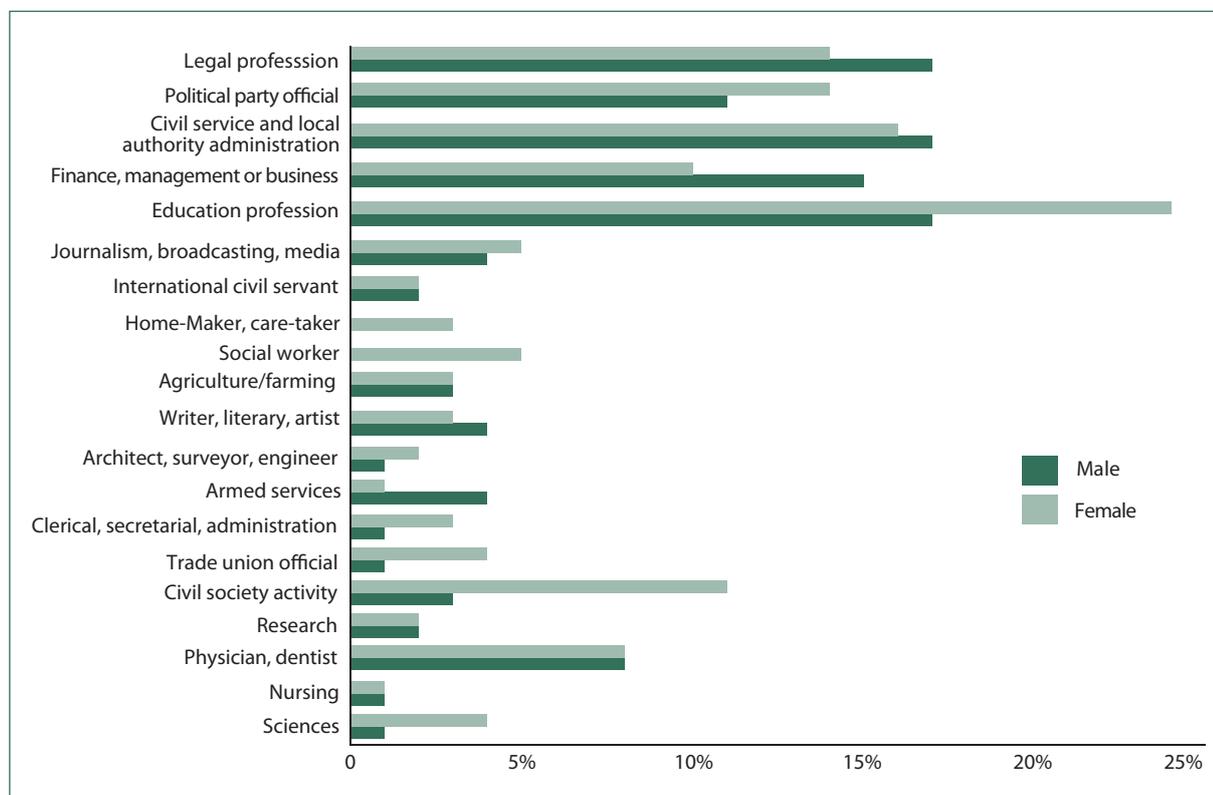


Figure 1.5: Occupation of Parliamentarians Prior to Election

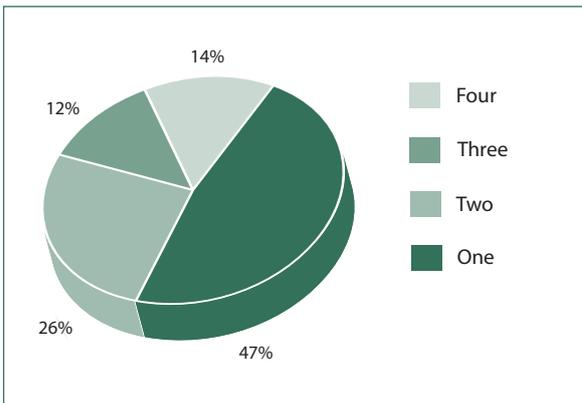


Figure 1.6: Number of Mandates Served in Parliament

Just over 50 percent of respondents reported having been a member of the bureau of the parliament or a senior member of a committee. Ten percent of respondents self-identified as belonging to an ethnic or minority group in their country. The majority of respondents reported that their political party was affiliated to one of the main party international groups: Socialist International, Liberal International, Centrist Democrat International or International Democrat Union.

Nearly half of the respondents had been elected to parliament once or were serving their first term. Twenty-six percent of respondents had held two parliamentary mandates, while 12 percent had served three and 14 percent four or more terms. Slightly more women than men were in parliament for the first time: 53 percent for women and 39 percent for men. ■

## Endnotes

1. Sonia Palmieri and Kareen Jabre, 2005. "Promoting Partnership Between Men and Women in Parliament: The Experience of the Inter-Parliamentary Union", in Julie Ballington and Azza Karam (eds), *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers*, International IDEA, Stockholm, p. 215.
2. *Idem.*



# Chapter 2

## The Road to Parliament: Less Travelled by Women

“Prevailing cultural, social and economic conditions continue to act as barriers to greater political participation of women. Moreover, there is a passive attitude by the electorate, and women lack the necessary financial resources for election campaigns.”

Ms. Syada Greiss, Member of Parliament, Egypt

Women have struggled for political rights for centuries. Although there are no legal barriers to women voting or standing for election, it is clear that significant challenges to women's participation persist. Women comprise more than 50 percent of the pool of those eligible to stand for election and hold political office in most countries, but that proportion is not reflected in the composition of decision-making bodies. In 2008, less than 18 percent of all the legislators in parliaments around the world are women. A decade earlier, in 1997, women held less than 12 percent of parliamentary seats worldwide. At this slow rate of change parity between men and women in parliaments remains a long way off.

This chapter provides an overview of the quantitative representation of women and men in parliaments the world over. It presents data on the status of parliamentary representation historically and regionally, and on the executive level of government. The chapter examines the factors that motivate women and men to enter—and deter them from entering—parliaments, and highlights the challenges that parliamentarians face in being elected, such as party support and the impact of finance on electoral campaigns. Finally, it identifies some of the mechanisms that are being introduced to promote more equal representation of women and men in parliaments, such as electoral quotas for women.

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### Key questions include:

- What is the status of the representation of women and men in parliaments around the world?
  - What factors might deter those who are considering entering parliament, and what challenges do parliamentarians face in being elected?
  - What mechanisms are being introduced to achieve more gender balanced parliaments?
- 

### Women's Access to Parliaments

The trend in terms of women's access to parliaments in recent decades has been one of gradual but steady progress. In 1975, at the time of the First World Conference on Women held in Mexico City, women accounted for nearly 11 percent of representatives in unicameral or lower houses of parliament worldwide (Table 2.1). A decade later, women's representation had increased by only one percentage point. By 1995, the proportion of women parliamentarians had actually decreased slightly. A new impetus for women's participation in decision-making cir-

**Table 2.1: Women in Parliament, 1945–2008**

	1945	1965	1975	1985	1995	2000	2008
Number of parliaments	26	94	115	136	176	177	189
Percentage of Women representatives (lower house or unicameral)	3.0	8.1	10.9	12.0	11.6	13.4	17.9
Percentage of Women representatives (upper house)	2.2	9.3	10.5	12.7	9.4	10.7	16.7

cles found expression, however, at the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, and the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action, which highlighted special measures that states could implement to increase the participation of women in politics, including setting targets with a view to achieving equal participation of men and women.<sup>1</sup>

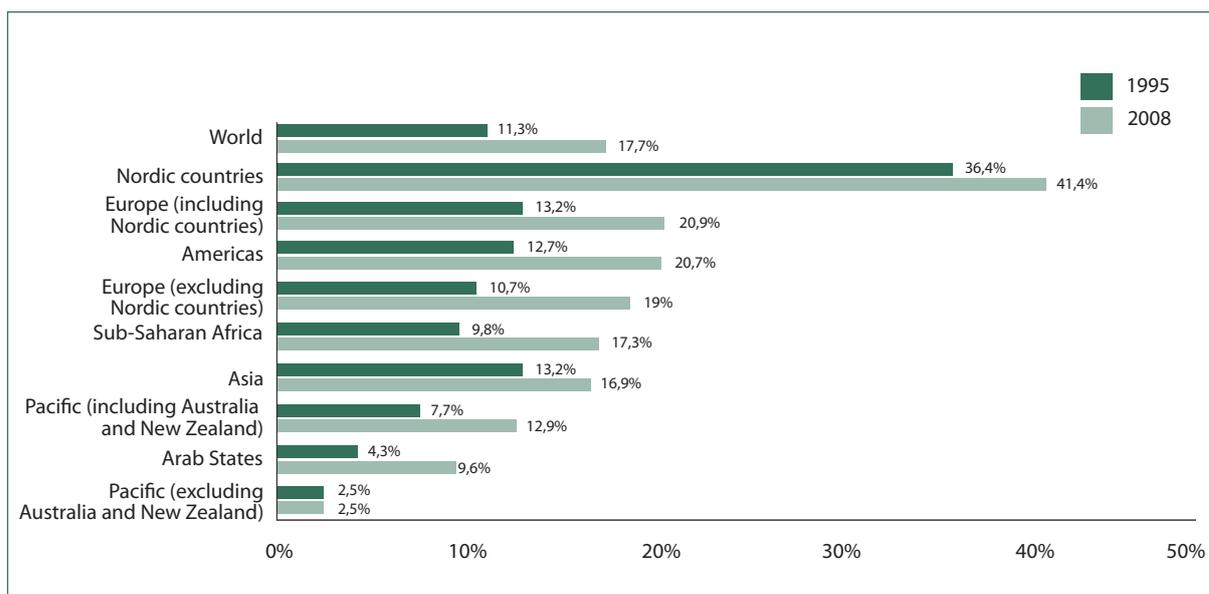
By 2000, the proportion of women parliamentarians had increased to 13.4 percent in the lower or unicameral houses of parliament, and it reached a high of nearly 18 percent at the beginning of 2008. The highest rate of increase in women’s representation has been registered in the past decade. The global figures conceal some interesting national and regional nuances, however. While some states have made significant progress, others have remained static or even regressed.

At the regional level (Figure 2.1), the Nordic countries have consistently maintained the highest overall average during the past decade. In 2008, more than 41 percent of parliamentary seats were held by women in that region. Significant strides have been made in the Americas and in Europe, too, where women’s representation hovers around 20 percent

on average in each region, up eight points from a decade before. Progress has continued in Africa and in Asia, and overall representation hovers around 17 percent in the two regions. The Arab States have seen parliaments more receptive to the participation of women, even though the overall average is less than 10 percent for women members. Progress has been slow in the Pacific, in particular in the Pacific Island States, where women’s participation in parliaments is the exception rather than the rule. Several states have no women members at all.

There are 20 countries where women hold 30 percent or more of the seats in lower or single chambers, four of which have at least 40 percent women members. Rwanda continues to top the rankings with nearly 49 percent women members, followed by Sweden, 47 percent; Finland, 41.5 percent; and Argentina, 40 percent. Of those countries above the 30 percent mark, half are developing countries and more than three-quarters have an electoral quota for women in place. At the other end of the scale, one-third of parliaments have less than 10 percent women members, including 17 parliaments with less than three per cent and seven with no women at all in the legislature.<sup>2</sup>

Figure 2.1: World and Regional Averages of Women in Parliaments, 1995–2008<sup>3</sup>



### Women in Government

At the executive level, progress has also been patchy. Overall, 16 percent of ministerial portfolios are held by women in 2008. In three countries, Finland, Grenada and Norway, women hold more than 50 percent of the ministerial posts. There are 22 countries in which women hold 30 percent or more of the ministerial posts. These are found in Europe and the Americas. Progress has been most marked in the Nordic region and in the Americas, mirroring the pattern of increased access by women to parliaments in the past decade. At the bottom end of the scale, eight countries have less than five percent women ministers, and 13 countries have no women at all in cabinet positions.<sup>4</sup> Women are a minority in the highest positions of the State. Of the 150 Heads of State at the start of 2008, only seven (4.7%) were women. Only eight of the world's 192 governments (4.2%) were headed by women.

The numbers highlighted above are the result of decades of struggle for increased access by women to politics. While there has been some notable progress, particularly in the past decade, politics remains in the hands of men. It is apparent that women still face barriers in accessing politics, and increasing the numbers of women in decision-making bodies is just the first step in ensuring that the political agenda is decided jointly by men and women. It is necessary to consider the barriers that parliamentarians perceive

to be in place for those attempting to gain access to parliaments, and parliamentarians' perspectives on how these might be overcome. Identifying the channels through which respondents entered parliaments, and their motivations for going into politics, provides a useful backdrop.

## Entering the Realm of Parliament

Women comprise more than 50 percent of the pool of those eligible to stand for election and hold political office in most countries. However, only a small proportion of those eligible consider putting themselves forward for election to parliaments. There are many factors that affect a potential candidate's decision to contest an election and enter parliament, including motivational factors, personal ambition, financial commitment, the likelihood of winning and access to political power. Calculations are affected by a potential candidate's perception of whether there are substantial openings for new candidates, by how friendly the political environment is to their candidacy and by an estimation of the resources needed to contest an election.<sup>5</sup> By way of background, this section examines the motivations, channels of entry and perceived deterrents to becoming a parliamentarian identified by the respondents.

## Motivation for becoming a Parliamentary Candidate

The survey asked respondents about their motivations for becoming parliamentary candidates (Table 2.2). Overall, the strongest motivation for both women and men was that they wanted to serve their country. For women, the next strongest motivation was to improve the lives of women, followed closely by improving the lives of the community in which they live, and being involved in the decisions that affect their lives. For men, the second strongest motivation was to improve the community in which they live. Improving the lives of men and the lives of women scored equally among male respondents, together with wanting to be involved in the decisions that affect their lives. For both the women and the men respondents, being asked to stand by their political parties or encouragement by their family, friends or community scored the lowest.

## Channel of Entry into Politics

Parliamentarians were then asked about their main channel of entry into politics. Nearly two-thirds of parliamentarians highlighted political party activity as their main channel of entry, as might be expected. However, it is a stronger variable for men than women, with two-thirds of male respondents citing it as the main channel as opposed to just over half of female respondents. Women are finding other

avenues into politics than the traditional political party route.

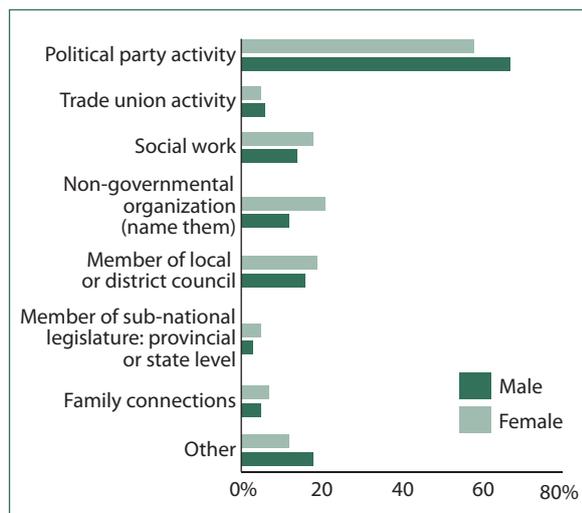


Figure 2.2: Channel of Entry into Politics

The next most cited channels into politics were membership of a local or district council, 18 percent; working with non-governmental organizations, 17 percent; and social work, 16 percent. Nearly twice as many women (20% as opposed to 11%) as men entered politics through civil society and non-governmental organization (NGO) activity. The main organizations cited by female respondents include those focusing on women's and children's rights or human rights, suggesting that women's activism in

Table 2.2: Motivation for becoming a Parliamentary Candidate

Among Women Respondents		Among Male Respondents	
I wanted to serve my country	3.7	I wanted to serve my country	3.8
I wanted to improve the lives of women	3.6	I wanted to improve the community where I live	3.3
I wanted to improve the community where I live	3.4	I wanted to improve the lives of men	3.0
I wanted to be involved in the decisions that affect my life	3.3	I wanted to improve the lives of women	3.0
I wanted to improve the lives of men.	3.2	I wanted to be involved in the decisions that affect my life	3.0
I was encouraged by my family, friends or community	3.0	I was asked to stand by my political party	2.9
I was asked to stand by my political party	2.9	I was encouraged by my family, friends or community	2.8

civil society and leadership in non-governmental organizations provides an important avenue, and even training ground, for women to enter into politics, which is consistent with previous survey research.<sup>6</sup> Few parliamentarians, however, identified entering national politics from the sub-national, provincial or local level, which suggests that these channels have not really served as a training ground for politics at the national level. Few identified trade union activity or family connections as their route into parliament.

### **Deterrents to Entering Politics**

The decision to enter politics is influenced by a range of factors and a number of deterrents are perceived by potential candidates. Respondents were asked to identify the factors they considered to be the largest deterrent to entering politics. Different answers were provided by male and female respondents (Table 2.3). Overall, respondents identified lack of support from the electorate as the single most important deterrent for men. This was followed by a lack of financial resources, a lack of support from political parties and a lack of experience of representative functions such as public speaking or constituency relations.

Overall, respondents identified domestic responsibilities as most important deterrent for women. This supports conventional thinking that women find it more difficult to balance their family lives with political responsibilities, and that they may often embark on a political career at a later stage in their lives (see also Chapter 1). A women parliamentarian from Greece remarked that:

*Women are obliged to start their activities from a different point than men. They arrive at the starting point exhausted, because of other activities, such as family responsibilities.*

Acknowledging these different starting points, one male respondent from Equatorial Guinea remarked:

*The majority of parliamentarians are men, with women accounting for no more than 20 percent. Most of them are over the age of 45 and therefore usually do not have to deal with small children.*

These perceptions are consistent with the findings in Chapter 1 that one-third of the women parlia-

mentarians had no dependents and were more than twice as likely to be single than men. It was suggested that women with family responsibilities may be less likely to pursue a parliamentary career.

The emphasis placed on women's responsibilities in the domestic sphere is reinforced by the prevailing cultural attitude regarding the roles of women in society, which was the second most significant factor perceived to deter women from entering politics. This was closely followed by lack of support from family and a perceived lack of confidence. In many societies, an overwhelming challenge is the prominence of patriarchal and hierarchical norms that see women's greatest social contribution being made within the domestic sphere. These norms infiltrate politics where women are not generally viewed as being legitimate political players or capable leaders. This in turn reinforces the idea that politics should remain in the hands of men. A woman parliamentarian from Uganda noted that: "Deeply rooted cultural attitudes regarding the roles of women leave them totally un-empowered socially and economically and thus politically." Not surprisingly, prevailing cultural attitudes were identified by male respondents as one of the least important deterrent factors.

Respondents also identified lack of financial support, lack of support from political parties and family and a lack of experience with representative functions as potential deterrents to entering politics. For both women and men, security concerns and religion were scored as among the least important deterrent factors to entering politics.

The responses highlight that there are distinctive perceived differences between women and men regarding deterrents to entering politics. In addition, the degree to which women and men perceive these obstacles differs, with women perceiving them much more strongly than men. For example, the degree to which women perceive domestic responsibilities as an obstacle is acute, being scored as a great deal, while for men, lack of support from the electorate (identified as the biggest deterrent) was scored merely as having only a fair amount of influence. This pattern is reflected throughout all the categories. This may suggest that either men play down perceived deterrents to entering politics, or they are genuinely not perceived as significant. Either way, these findings support the idea that for men politics is, on the whole, a largely accessible profession while for women, it still is not.

**Table 2.3: Influence of the Different Factors that Deter Men and Women from Entering Politics**

Deterrents for Women	Aggregate Score	Deterrents for Men	Aggregate Score
Domestic responsibilities	3.4	Lack of support from the electorate	2.9
Prevailing cultural attitudes regarding the roles of women in society	3.3	Lack of finances	2.7
Lack of support from family	3.2	Lack of support of political parties	2.7
Lack of confidence	3.2	Lack of experience in "representative functions": public speaking, constituency relations	2.7
Lack of finances	3.1	Lack of confidence	2.6
Lack of support of political parties	3.1	Lack of education	2.5
Lack of experience in "representative functions": public speaking, constituency relations	3.1	Politics seen as "dirty" or corrupt	2.5
Lack of support from the electorate	3.0	Lack of support from family	2.4
Lack of support from men	3.0	Lack of support from other men	2.3
Lack of support from other women	2.9	Lack of support from women	2.1
Politics seen as "dirty" or corrupt	2.9	Domestic responsibilities	2.1
Lack of education	2.8	Security concerns	2.1
Security concerns	2.5	Prevailing cultural attitudes regarding the roles of men in society	2.0
Religion	2.3	Religion	1.8

## Facilitating Women's Access to Parliament

Once women decide to run for political office, several factors can impede their chances of success. There has been much research into the different factors that influence the election of women to parliament. The low number of women in parliaments is explained by a range of factors which favour or hinder their participation in the electoral process, most of which are identified in the above section. There are both socio-cultural and institutional factors at play. Discriminatory or patriarchal norms about the role of women place a high value on women's contributions in the domestic sphere and in the household. Institutions matter too, be they the electoral regime, political party organization or legislative structures, as they contain inherent gender biases.

Respondents were asked to identify some of the factors that need to be addressed if women are to be elected to parliament in greater numbers. Both women and men provided their insights into what they see as the best way to promote women's access. These centred on addressing the cultural prejudices against women, providing funding support to women candidates, reforming electoral systems and implementing quotas, working with political parties, and providing training and mentoring.

### The Socio-cultural Context

Several studies have highlighted that social and cultural factors are among the main causes of the under-representation of women in political decision making. These are demonstrated in arguments that women are "not suited" to decision making, and gender roles that define what women and men do, effectively excluding women from decision making.<sup>7</sup> Several respondents noted that men often have a dominant role in society and therefore in politics, and women are banished to the domestic sphere which limits them to their reproductive role. As a woman parliamentarian from Burkina Faso explained:

*The fact of being a woman is already an impediment in itself, in addition to lack of self-esteem and socio-cultural pressures, especially the patriarchal system. In the home, their calling is to get married one day (the sooner the better) and to leave their home; in their husband's home,*

*they are considered to be from somewhere else. Women are not viewed as leaders.*

An additional constraint is that women tend to be viewed in different terms to men. Stereotypes about women are perpetuated through the media and contribute to overall societal stigmas about women. As a woman parliamentarian from Saint Lucia highlighted:

*Female candidates are faced with a peculiar problem in that there is a tendency to concentrate on their looks and their personal lives instead of what they can offer the electorate. I found that people were more concerned with the kind of person they perceived me to be instead of the message which I was taking to them. They questioned why it was that I was going into politics when I should be looking for a husband and starting a family. Stigmatization of the role of women is a major obstacle, coupled with lack of support from the political party, whether financially or in terms of canvassing.*

In order to begin to address the cultural biases against women, one-third of respondents highlighted the key role of sensitization, education and public awareness raising programmes. Several respondents noted that there needs to be a change in public perceptions about the role of women in societies and politics, and that for this to happen, sensitization campaigns and civics education are required. The general population needs to be convinced that women make as effective legislators as men. Additionally, for women to be better able to balance their domestic responsibilities with the time needed to take part in political activity, different support mechanisms may be considered, such as introducing childcare facilities to ease the workload for women.

### Financial Constraints

Both male and female respondents agreed that one of the biggest obstacles was financial; nearly a quarter of respondents noted that they faced funding challenges in contesting and winning an election, as a male parliamentarian from Uruguay noted, "the principal obstacle is the high (and growing) cost of election campaigns". Moreover, in the battle for re-election, simply performing representative functions and visiting constituents can prove costly. As a male parliamentarian from the Solomon Islands noted:

## Box 2.1: Obstacles to Women Accessing Parliaments

The obstacles for women are: 1. Lack of finances. 2. Balancing domestic responsibilities and political life. 3. Lack of confidence.

Woman parliamentarian, Canada

Voting is usually a clan activity and that kind of vote therefore excludes women completely. Money plays a key role in elections and women do not have money. For a long time, elections exclusively benefited men. They thereby gained bastions which are easy to hold on to. The networks of solidarity and "back scratching" exist exclusively among men. Women politicians experience many forms of discrimination, and ambitious women are frowned on.

Woman parliamentarian, Morocco

1. Parties must have the political will. 2. Women must use their strength to force that political will, failing which, they must form women's political parties. 3. Those who make it should be positive role models and encourage and provide space for others. 4. One must start at the local level where women are more active, then the regional, national and international.

Woman parliamentarian, Namibia

As a rural representative, it is the sheer distance that must be travelled in order to campaign. This is particularly difficult for women with children. Access to motor vehicles, accommodation and finance is sometimes prohibitive. In addition, there are entrenched views that the «job» is too big for a woman to handle. A candidate must also have enough supporters to hand out election material on election day.

Woman parliamentarian, Australia

There is little visibility given to women within political parties, there is a lack of financial resources and women face problems balancing political life and family life.

Woman parliamentarian, Chile

Balancing family life with professional life. Women have a double or triple responsibility: family, work and politics. Equal pay is still not a reality. Promotion and support within party (only concerns conventional parties). Less media focus on women. Lack of encouragement.

Woman parliamentarian, Switzerland

In Austria you can only be a candidate if you are on a party list. Therefore, it depends on your position on the list and the chances your party has in a certain constituency.

Woman parliamentarian, Austria

In Sri Lanka, the electoral system is based on a proportional representation system which requires a candidate to campaign in the whole district. This consumes time, energy and finances. In a developing country, this makes it difficult for prospective candidates to enter the political arena. This has become the primary obstacle to winning a seat.

Woman parliamentarian, Sri Lanka

Cultural attitudes. Lack of finance. Lack of support from political groups. Lack of experience in running campaigns. These are all obstacles.

Woman parliamentarian, Bahrain

*Inadequate funding to ensure adequate visits to the constituency or constituents is an obstacle. Finance is important in this consideration due to the fact that my constituency is a rural constituency, and travel costs in these scattered islands are quite discouraging.*

Women, however, have particular obstacles relating to finances because they effectively have to start from scratch. Women have to prove themselves as worthy candidates, build name recognition, canvass and be selected, yet they typically have access to less power and fewer resources than men. As a woman parliamentarian from Liberia explained:

*The main obstacle is financial; if you do not have money to run your election, then you will not be elected, unless the people in your constituency know what you have been doing for them, then they will help you in everything you undertake.*

It is not surprising then that women find it difficult to break this barrier. As another woman from Kenya argued: “Raising campaign finance is an obstacle. Politics is run by finance. If one cannot raise money to finance a campaign, then one should not enter politics.”

Several of the respondents suggested that more needed to be done to level the playing field, not only between women and men, but also between political parties. As is highlighted in the case study Women Candidates Get Short Changed, different options for reform have been proposed. These include limiting or capping campaign expenditure and implementing funding mechanisms to support women’s candidacies. A report of an IPU parliamentary conference on financing for gender equality found that grants and loans can also be provided to assist women with prohibitive campaign costs, and a portion of the funding allocated to political parties could be earmarked for capacity-building programmes for women.<sup>8</sup>

### **Electoral Systems and Political Parties**

In addition to the socio-cultural and financial barriers that inhibit women’s access to politics, institutional factors, such as electoral and party systems, have an important influence on women’s chances of election. Women have tended to be elected in greater numbers in systems of proportional representation than in constituency-based systems. An

analysis of the results of elections held in 2007 found that women gained more seats in parliamentary chambers elected using a proportional electoral system—18.3 percent on average, compared to 13.8 percent for those elected using a majority or plurality electoral system.<sup>9</sup>

Proportional systems tend to elect more women because they allow parties to nominate a list of candidates rather than an individual candidate, as is the case in majority/plurality systems. Moreover, proportional systems provide greater opportunities for increasing women’s representation by introducing specific measures. For example, political parties can introduce a provision that a certain proportion of candidates on the party’s electoral list should be women. For these reasons, there is a greater likelihood that women will be elected under proportional systems, as is explained in the case study on Electoral Systems, Political Parties, and Women’s Representation.

Political parties maintain firm control over the selection of candidates to contest elections, and are therefore the gatekeepers to parliaments. A male parliamentarian from Tunisia explained that:

*The electoral system in Tunisia is based on party lists, so you first have to be selected by your party to be placed on the list submitted for elections. In my view, that is the first obstacle, especially since a party cannot just go out on a limb to present an unknown candidate to voters, someone who has not proven themselves in their constituency as a dynamic politician.*

Political parties determine the ranking order of candidates on the electoral ballot. Where candidates are positioned on party lists is therefore a key factor in gaining access to parliaments. A male parliamentarian from the Netherlands explains that “an obstacle is the strong competition between many candidates in one party. It is difficult to get a high place on the national party list.” While competition between candidates for placement on a party lists is fierce, women are at a particular disadvantage because here too they face bias, as a woman parliamentarian from Algeria explains: “Regarding women in particular, prejudices, clichés and stereotypes remain the greatest hurdle to their being placed in an eligible position on the lists.”

## Case Study: Women Candidates Get Short Changed

*Case study provided by the Women's Environment and Development Organization*

One of the obstacles to women's participation in political and electoral processes is the lack of economic resources. Research shows that women do not receive or raise the same amounts of money as their male counterparts, even when running in the same region. Finding ways to increase access to funding is central to achieving gender equality in decision making.

A report by the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), based on the results of a meeting of experts in December 2007, highlights the obstacles that women candidates face with regard to campaign finance. Women have less money than men and less access to powerful and moneyed networks. Men are more likely to become money donors to campaigns, while women are more likely to donate their time—largely owing to women's generally lower levels of income. While public funding can promote women's candidacies, public funding alone may not be sufficient to promote women since they often have less power in their political parties, which control the allocation of funds.

Research has also shown that the vast majority of large donors to political campaigns are men. Female candidates generally depend on female donors for financial viability and only win monetary support from men once their chances of election approach certainty.

So what can be done to level the playing field? According to some experts, providing women with "early money" (the initial funds a candidate requires to launch a campaign to win a party nomination) is key to increasing their potential to raise more money in electoral campaigns and thereby increase their chances of winning election.

Where public funding of political parties is available, legislation could establish incentives to support women candidates. For example, the amount of funding available for election campaign expenses could be linked to the percentage of women candidates put forward by each political party. In countries where public funding is provided to parliamentary political groups, an additional premium could be provided that is linked to the proportion of women elected.

Adopting legislation that provides specific measures on campaign finance for women and gender equality in the electoral process is another measure. For example, electoral registration fees could be lowered for political parties that have a certain share of women candidates. Women may also benefit if costs such as childcare and dependant care were deemed legitimate campaign expenses. Some countries have provided training for women candidates on how to engage in fundraising and manage their campaign resources.

Many women have called for limits on campaign contributions and campaign spending as well as increased transparency to ensure more democratic elections. A lack of transparency and accountability regarding campaign finances can have a negative impact on women and lead to more funds being directed towards men. Some countries have taken measures to improve transparency and accountability, and adopted campaign funding reporting mechanisms, including public reporting of accounts by candidates and where the sources of funding for political committees and parties are disclosed.

Further information is available at WEDO, *Report on Women Candidates and Campaign Finance*, available online at <http://www.wedo.org/library.aspx?ResourceID=245>.

## Case Study: Electoral Systems, Political Parties, and Women's Representation

*Richard Matland, Professor and Rigali Chair, Department of Political Science, Loyola University, Chicago*

Electoral systems are the rules by which votes cast in an election are translated into seats won by candidates and parties. Electoral systems primarily fall into three broad categories: majority/plurality, proportional and mixed systems. Majority/plurality electoral systems are used in 46 percent of countries. The most common variant is first-past-the-post, where candidates run in a district or constituency and the one receiving the most votes is declared the winner. Majority/plurality systems are distinguished by the fact that in most cases only one representative is elected per district.

Proportional representation systems, used in 36 percent of countries, are distinguished by votes being translated into seats in a way that ensures parliamentary representation is largely proportional to the party's share of the overall votes. Voters generally choose between the lists of candidates put forward by political parties and campaigns tend to centre around political parties. Districts are usually multi-member, meaning that more than one candidate is elected per constituency. Another crucial factor is whether party lists are closed, where the party determines the rank-ordering of candidates, or open, where the voters are able to influence which of the party's candidates are elected by personal voting. Finally, around 15 percent of countries use some type of mixed system, which includes directly elected representatives who are elected in individual districts along with a proportion of the legislature that is elected using a party list system at a regional or national level.

A direct link between electoral systems and women's representation has been consistently found in research. For example, the overwhelming majority of the top 20 placed countries in the world in terms of women's representation use proportional representation. Furthermore, the average level of women's representation is significantly higher in countries with proportional representation electoral systems than in countries with majority/plurality systems.

Electoral systems have important implications for women because strategically they affect how political parties are likely to view the nomination of women as candidates for political office. Political parties view the nomination of candidates quite differently in proportional systems and majority/plurality systems. In majority/plurality systems, where a party nominates only one candidate, party leaders are concerned about presenting a candidate who can appeal to the majority of voters in the district. If the party is concerned a woman candidate may face discrimination, they may be hesitant to nominate her—especially because such elections tend to be more candidate-centred.

In proportional systems, the party's calculus changes. First, campaigns tend to emphasize national leaders and parties rather than local candidates, leading to less emphasis on the individual candidates. Second, because the party is putting together a slate of several candidates, parties often think in terms of providing representation for various constituencies within the party and list construction is seen as an opportunity to appeal to different voter blocks. Third, because the party expects to elect several representatives from a district, the potential costs of nominating a woman, where some portion of the electorate may be biased against women, are not as great. Furthermore, there can be genuine benefits from nominating women, which can be used as evidence that the party cares about women and women's issues. Even if the party has not strongly promoted women in the past, they may nominate women as a strategic move to avoid being seen as unsympathetic to women.

Finally, electoral systems are important because they affect the adoption and effectiveness of gender quotas. Quotas, either via national laws or through party statutes, are relatively easy to adopt in proportional representation systems. When a political party nominates several candidates it is relatively easy to guarantee that a certain number are women, and that they occupy winnable positions on a list such as every second or every third place. In majority/plurality systems, however, the process is complicated because it is not possible to split a single seat or nomination among men and women. As an alternative, reserved seats in parliament for women are sometimes established.

For further information see Richard Matland, 2005. "Enhancing Women's Political Participation: Legislative Recruitment and Electoral Systems" in Julie Ballington and Azza Karam (eds), *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers*, IDEA, Stockholm; and Andrew Reynolds, Ben Reilly and Andrew Ellis, 2005. *Electoral System Design: The New International IDEA Handbook*, IDEA, Stockholm.

Several respondents highlighted the fact that obtaining a winnable position on a party list is a particular challenge. Political parties are typically closed entities and many maintain "old boys' networks" that make it difficult for women to infiltrate the party leadership. Many parties operate without clear rules for candidate selection and are dominated by male leaders, hampering women's access to legislatures. This is aptly described by a woman parliamentarian from Sao Tome:

*For the future we must fight for more women in parliament. In my opinion, the big problem lies with the political parties when they draw up their lists for parliament because they always put the names of men before the women's. So during elections, if the political parties do not win with a majority, the women are either alternates or are not in the picture at all. There are parties that put only men on their lists, not even a single woman. That makes it difficult to have women in parliament. But that does not mean that there are no competent women out there who can be politicians. There are women, very dynamic, active women, who really know what politics is about. Political parties have to be sensitized because that is where the problem begins.<sup>10</sup>*

How candidates are selected by political parties is important. If party rules for the selection of candidates are not clear, decisions can be made by party elites, typically men. Respondents were asked to identify how much influence different groups had on the selection of candidates within political par-

ties. National party leaders were identified as the most influential group. The party nomination committee, district and regional officers and local party members were also considered important, although less so than national party leaders. The women's wing and minority groups scored the lowest. Although few women hold leadership positions in political parties, the presence of a few vocal women can highlight the importance of nominating women. The openness of parties to women and their perception of women as a legitimate constituency are more likely to result when women are organised effectively and make the increased representation of women in the legislature and the party an explicit goal.<sup>11</sup>

Several respondents recommended working more concertedly with political parties to sensitize them about the role they play in promoting women's participation in politics, such as by adopting voluntary party quotas, or placing women in winnable positions on party lists. Others noted that parties need to do more to recruit women into their ranks and support their candidacies, including through providing financial support. A male parliamentarian from Namibia noted that: "Women should be encouraged to participate in the political activities of their branches, sections and regional structures, which would be a good move for them to be seen and being elected to national level."

### **Electoral Quotas for Women**

The slow increase in women's access to parliament in recent decades demonstrates that women face persistent challenges to their political participation. Given the uneven access by women to parliaments, and to compensate for the obstacles they face, spe-

## Case Study: Gender Quotas - A Fast Track to Enhancing Women's Representation under the Right Conditions

*Drude Dahlerup, Professor of Political Science, Stockholm University, Sweden*

Although controversial, gender quotas have been introduced with amazing speed around the world in the past two decades. Women's under-representation in politics is a worldwide phenomenon, but today we are witnessing a growing impatience with the very slow rate of change.

The Beijing Platform for Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, represented a discursive shift in understanding of the problem of women's under-representation. The problem is not primarily women's lack of resources, but "discriminatory attitudes and practices". The goal is not just an indefinite "more women in politics," but a demand for equal participation and equitable distribution of power and decision making at all levels. Consequently, special measures and the use of specific targets were recommended. Gender quotas are one such measure.

In 2008, around 40 countries have introduced legal candidate quotas for parliamentary, regional or local elections in their constitution or in their electoral law or party law. In another 50 countries, major political parties have introduced gender quotas when compiling their party lists for election, so-called *voluntary party candidate quotas*. Candidate quotas imply that a minimum, of say 30 or 40 percent, of the candidates for election must be women. Such rules may also be gender neutral, for instance requiring no less than 40 percent and no more than 60 percent of candidates from either sex. The most common proportion is 30 percent women, although some are set at 50 percent.

*Are legal or voluntary candidate quotas best?* Legal quotas have the advantage that they are binding for all political parties, and legal sanctions or penalties for non-compliance can be enforced. The most efficient sanction is where a country's electoral authority has the power, and uses it, to reject political party lists that do not comply with the quota regulations. Without rules about the rank order of candidates or sanctions for non-compliance, even a legal quota may have little effect. Voluntary party quotas, on the other hand, may be easier to introduce to begin with. All it takes is the introduction of voluntary quotas by one political party, and then the other parties may follow suit, or a legal quota could be adopted by parliament.

Quota regulations must work with the electoral system in place or they will have little or no effect. It is important to choose a type of quota system that works. Quotas have tended to work best in proportional representation electoral systems. In general, it is difficult to implement a quota system in a single member constituency electoral system, however. In Tanzania and Uganda, this problem is solved by reserving a proportion of the seats in parliament for women.

Candidate quota systems, be they legal or voluntary, only provide women with a chance to stand for election—they do not guarantee the election of women. The final result is up to the voters. In contrast, *reserved seat quota systems* set a fixed minimum number or percentage of women to be elected. There are about 20 countries that have a reserved seat system for women, sometimes—but not always—alongside reserved seats for ethnic groups or religious minorities. Reserved seats come in many forms, but they are all part and parcel of the electoral system. Some define a special electorate which will elect a certain number of women parliamentarians, as in Uganda and Rwanda. Others give an additional vote to the voters for an all-women list, as in Morocco, or reserve certain constituencies for women candidates, as in India at the local level.

Gender quotas do not solve all the problems for women in politics. However, constructed correctly and properly implemented, quotas may lead to historic leaps in women's representation.

For further information see Drude Dahlerup (ed.), 2006. *Women, Quotas and Politics*, Routledge, Oxon; International IDEA and Stockholm University, *Global Database of Quotas for Women*, available at [www.quotaproject.org](http://www.quotaproject.org).

cial measures, or specific quotas, have been implemented all over the world. These provide a fast track for women to access parliament. Introducing quotas signifies a shift from formal equality in the political sphere to substantive equality. By implementing specific measures it is possible to ensure that women gain access to the decision-making positions that they have not been able to access for the different reasons highlighted above.

Gender quotas have become an important policy tool for increasing women's access to decision-making bodies. When properly implemented, they ensure women entry to parliaments rather than leaving it to the good faith of political parties and voters. An estimated 40 percent of countries around the world have implemented some form of quotas for women. The different types of quotas are explained in the case study on Gender Quotas. In those countries with quotas, the average representation of women stands at 22 percent. In those countries without quotas, the average drops to 14 percent. The effects of electoral quotas can also be gauged by examining the electoral results from 2007. In those countries that used some type of quota, the average representation of women was nearly 20 percent, as opposed to nearly 15 percent in those countries without quotas.<sup>11</sup> This trend is confirmed by the best performing countries, which have reached 30 percent or more women in parliament. More than 80 percent of those countries use quotas. The positive effect of quotas in electing women to parliament is now well documented.

When respondents were asked about the most effective way to increase women's access to parliaments, nearly half stated that they would implement electoral quotas for women. A woman parliamentarian from Cambodia noted that:

*The most effective way to increase the number of women in parliament is the quota system. The party should put women at the top of the party*

*election list or alternating system by putting women in the top five places of the candidate list.*

Men also believe that quotas are an important mechanism for increasing women's presence in parliament, as a male parliamentarian from Zambia noted:

*Parliamentary quota systems are needed. Women everywhere face more challenges and impediments to participating in politics than men. Traditional practices and the customary leadership hierarchy have been in favour of men in many societies, and this has a negative influence against women.*

Several suggestions were made regarding the provisions of such measures. Some noted that quotas should be legislated for, while others believed that they should be implemented on a voluntary basis by political parties. Several respondents highlighted the importance of enforcement mechanisms to ensure that quotas worked in practice, and others believed that they should be implemented only temporarily.

Some respondents highlighted that quotas are not the only mechanism for supporting women's participation. Quotas may provide a fast track to women's representation, but they should not deflect attention from the societal changes that are needed regarding equality. A male parliamentarian from Algeria noted that:

*It is true that proactive measures, such as quotas, are sometimes needed to shake up dyed-in-the-wool habits and attitudes, but they should not serve to divert attention from the ultimate objective of moving society towards a naturally egalitarian structure. Indeed, the greatest progress is made in the spirit.*

Quotas can also be complemented by other special measures, such as skills enhancement for women. In some countries, political appointments offer an alternate way of promoting women, illustrating that the political will of leaders is an important factor in advancing women. There is no single solution, and progress results from a combination of national and international efforts to promote the participation of women in politics.

## Knowing the Rules: Training and Campaigning

In terms of electoral preparation and training, respondents were asked what preparation they found most valuable and would like to have more of in the future. Half of all respondents identified activities related to techniques for electoral campaigning, communication and outreach with constituencies as the most important to support their electoral candidacies. A woman parliamentarian from Belarus explained that: “election campaigning, signature collecting and population outreach were the most valuable pre-election activities as they allow me to best learn people’s opinions on various issues to influence decision making in the region.”

Several others noted the usefulness of training activities provided by international organizations and peers from “sister parties” in other countries. A woman parliamentarian from the Czech Republic noted that “I have taken part in a training session held by experts from the Social Democratic Parties of Sweden, Austria and the United Kingdom. These seminars I consider the best and most valuable—very intensive preparation for the campaign and political life.” A woman parliamentarian from Bosnia and Herzegovina agreed, noting that “from my professional experience, I know that international professional training for candidates is very useful [but] we never have enough of it.”

Other activities were also identified, such as providing training on the working methods of parliaments, on how to raise campaign finance, and on liaising with the media and developing election materials. However, several respondents pointed out that successes result from a combination of activities and efforts which are all important in terms of electoral preparation. This is succinctly captured by a woman respondent from Cambodia:

The most valuable preparations for an election are:

1. Knowing the number of voters who will vote for my party;
2. Setting up volunteer groups and networks to find new members and potential voters for my party;
3. Preparing my electoral campaign strategy;
4. Strengthening the structure of the party and of the election campaign network;
5. Advocating for funding support for election campaigning from relevant stakeholders;
6. Developing useful and attractive posters and campaign materials;
7. Using the media as part of my election campaign; and
8. Preparing a list of the candidates.

## Summary

The findings of this chapter highlight the confluence of challenges relating women’s access to parliament. As the obstacles to parliamentary access differ, so too do the solutions. Respondents have identified different measures that may be taken in order to address women’s under-representation in parliament. Several have emphasized that electoral quotas are an important mechanism. However, such quotas can usefully be supplemented by other measures, including awareness-raising and training for women candidates. In addition, women often lack the financial resources required to contest an election and providing support in this regard is important. As political parties are important in parliamentary politics, it is at the party level that the principle of equality must be put into practice. Political parties remain the gatekeepers to the advancement of women in politics. A woman from Romania notes the importance of a combined effect:

*Quotas, on a temporary basis, are needed. Women need solidarity. Women need to vote for women. We need to campaign for a change in mentalities. We need to convince the mass media to talk about women who are not only elegant and good-looking. Men need to be involved in all these projects.*

Finally, the importance of international, regional and local organizations cannot be overstated. They have supported actors on the ground through the provision of information and tools for reform, by

working directly with political parties, by providing training to women candidates seeking election or those already in parliament, and through technical assistance projects. In addition, as a woman parliamentarian from Congo explained:

*International organizations can bring a lot of pressure to bear on governments and parliaments regarding the consideration they give to gender equality, and implementation of ratified international instruments, resolutions and recommendations issued by inter-parliamentary conferences.*

International organizations should be encouraged not only to continue in this work, but also to promote women's participation in their own ranks. A woman parliamentarian from Cyprus noted that "It is necessary to initiate a systematic effort that includes institutional and practical measures for the promotion of equality and the cultivation of the right perceptions regarding the gender roles. Also, time should be made available for women in order to deal with public issues. Equality issues are important . . . and [should] be considered a priority and not as marginal issues." ■

## Endnotes

1. Additional information is available in Sonia Palmieri and Kareen Jabre, 2005. "Promoting Partnership Between Men and Women in Parliament: The Experience of the Inter-Parliamentary Union" in Julie Ballington and Azza Karam (eds), *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers*, International IDEA, Stockholm, p. 215.
2. Idem.
3. Situation for all chambers of Parliament combined. The percentages do not take into account countries for which data was not available. For more information see IPU, *Women in National Parliaments*, available online at <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm>
4. IPU and UN Division for the Advancement of Women, 2008. *Women in Politics: 2008*, poster. Available online at <http://www.ipu.org/english/surveys.htm#MAP2008>
5. Richard E. Matland and Kathleen A. Montgomery, 2003. "Recruiting Women to National Legislatures: A General Framework with Applications to Post-Communist Democracies" in Richard E. Matland and Kathleen A. Montgomery (eds.), *Women's Access to Political Power in Post-Communist Europe*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, p. 21.
6. For example, in the 2000 IPU report, *Politics: Women's Insight*, 24 percent of respondents highlighted that they had received encouragement from NGOs to enter politics. It also identified social work and the global women's movement as important channels into politics.
7. See for example Lowe Morna, Colleen (ed.), 2004. *Ring Up the Changes: Gender in Southern African Politics*, Gender Links, Johannesburg, Chapter 2.
8. IPU, 2008. *The Role of Parliaments in Financing for Gender Equality*, Report of a parliamentary event organized by the IPU and the UN Division for the Advancement of Women, New York.
9. Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2008. *Women in Parliament in 2007: The Year in Perspective*, IPU, Geneva, Switzerland.
10. Personal interview, Ms. Maria das Neves Sousa (Member of Parliament, Sao Tome), Geneva, October 2007.
11. Julie Ballington and Richard Matland, 2004. "Political Parties and Special Measures: Enhancing Women's Participation in Electoral Processes", Presented at UN Expert Meeting: Enhancing Women's Participation in Electoral Processes in Post-conflict Countries, Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI) and Department of Political Affairs Expert Group Meeting, New York
12. Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2008. *Women in Parliament in 2007: The Year in Perspective*, IPU, Geneva, Switzerland.

# Chapter 3

## Women and Men in Parliament: Competing Concerns or Complementary Agendas?

“Men and women live different lives. Thus they bring different experiences to the table. But one cannot separate women and men into various subject groups. It is very important that both men and women are involved in all matters.”

Ms. Kirsten Brosbol, Member of Parliament, Denmark

Chapter 2 focused on women’s access to parliament, highlighting both the challenges they face in gaining access to the political domain and the strategies that can be used to overcome them. While increasing the numbers is a priority concern, it is equally important that once in parliament women develop and use their positions of influence to participate substantively in decision making. A commitment to democracy and respect for the right of all citizens to participate in governance is at the heart of calls for gender-sensitive parliaments. As demonstrated below, a gender equality perspective results from the inclusion of the views and experiences of both men and women and an understanding of the effect that laws and policies have on all citizens. Defining and implementing a platform for gender equality, then, requires the participation of both men and women.

This chapter examines the interests, perspectives and priorities of women and men in parliament. It reports on the perceptions of parliamentarians about whether women bring different perspectives, values and styles, and if indeed they are shaping a new political agenda. A common claim is that by simply being present, women make a difference and shatter the myth that only men can walk the corridors of power.<sup>1</sup> This chapter builds on this idea by bringing to the fore the views and perspectives

of parliamentarians about the specific contributions women bring to politics. It also explores, for the first time in a comprehensive way, the views of men on these issues, and whether men and women together are allies in shaping a gender equality agenda.

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### Key questions include:

- Is there a difference in interests, perspectives and styles between men and women in parliament? Do women bring different priorities and agendas to governance?
- Has the growing presence of women in parliament resulted in new priorities and issues being highlighted and addressed on the parliamentary agenda? Are men becoming allies in the struggle for gender equality?

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### A Question of Interests

The representation and participation of women in politics is a much debated topic. The questions that are posed relate to women’s specific contribution to decision making—do women in politics make a difference, and if so how? Do women have markedly

different interests and priorities to men? There has been a great deal of empirical research dedicated to this issue, which seeks to quantify and qualify the input of women in parliaments by scrutinizing legislative initiatives, votes on legislation and the content of parliamentary and committee debates.<sup>2</sup> The international community, regional and national organizations, the parliamentary community, scholars and activists have devised strategies on how best to increase the number of women in politics, and to ensure they contribute effectively to the work of parliament once there.

This section brings the perspectives of parliamentarians on these questions to the fore by drawing on the qualitative and quantitative data collected through the survey. It seeks to identify whether women's perspectives and interests differ from men's and whether women's presence in parliament has led to a redefining of political priorities. Is there a difference in interests, perspectives and styles between men and women in parliament?

In Box 3.1 several parliamentarians identify why and how interests may differ between women and men. A common thread throughout the responses is the belief that women and men have different life experiences and therefore different interests and perspectives. In the words of one Canadian parliamentarian, "We have been mothers, daughters, aunts. We have not been fathers, sons and uncles. Our life experiences are different. I respect those differences." The fact of having lived one's life as a woman or man, of growing up in a particular country at a particular time, with different cultures, classes and ethnicity, shapes one's outlook and influences one's interests and priorities. Women and men will have different perspectives and interests by virtue of their own lived experience.<sup>3</sup>

Similarly, not all women will have the same or shared perspectives and interests, any more than all men will. Women are not a homogenous group and there are obvious differences that will result from age, ethnicity and class, for example. The literature on women's identity and group representation explores the dynamics at play. While women may not all speak with one voice on political matters, the fact of living as female citizens means that women have the potential to share commonalities and to bring different interests and perspectives to politics than men.<sup>4</sup>

### Box 3.1: Those Who Live it, Feel it

One can express a view far more cogently and with more confidence if you speak with a whole life experience behind you. So a woman can speak about women's issues and women's repression far more effectively than a man can.

Male parliamentarian, South Africa

Each person brings their own perspective through knowledge, experience and personal interest. On some issues, such as reproductive rights, women and men have different experiences.

Woman parliamentarian, Australia

Sometimes women and men differ significantly on some priorities because of their past background involvement in social activities. For instance, women focus more decisively on gender issues and rights of women than men. Women are more sensitive than men on gender issues because of the prior discriminatory approach of rulers.

Male parliamentarian, Ethiopia

At times women and men differ. Additionally, until women entered parliament, issues that were traditionally of concern to women and occasionally to men were not raised. The fact is that society is made up of both men and women, and the responses formulated in policies or legislation have to be satisfactory to both.

Woman parliamentarian, Spain

## A Matter of Priorities

Some respondents believe that the political priorities of women and men are the same, or at a minimum that they coincide. Many acknowledge that men and women have a common agenda, which is to act in the best interests of the country and its citizens. Box 3.2 highlights the views of parliamentarians that emphasized the commonalities between men and women. They point to experience that shows that on some issues women and men appear to share political priorities.

### Box 3.2: More of the Same

Men and women parliamentarians have almost the same, if not identical, political priorities and perspectives.

Woman parliamentarian, Ghana

I believe that men and women in our parliament have the same interest in the people of Ireland, regardless of their gender. Often, issues of family, women and caring are raised more by women in the chambers. But many, including myself, raise issues which affect all in society and champion common causes.

Woman parliamentarian, Ireland

Almost every issue and problem in Bosnia and Herzegovina is equally important for men and women and there are really few issues which would exclusively be priorities for females. The majority of problems should be solved together with men.

Woman parliamentarian,  
Bosnia and Herzegovina

As a rule, men and women have the same political outlook and priorities. However, women and men politicians attach priority to different topics (women politicians give priority to subjects more closely related to the women themselves).

Male parliamentarian, Uruguay

There is an integrated view of the matter; those that identify with this important issue will not get entrenched in an individual position, but rather in the need for equality as something to work towards.

Woman parliamentarian, Cuba

I have not noticed a clear difference. What I have noticed, however, is that when it comes to certain questions relating basically to social affairs, gender violence and equal opportunities for men and women, the public, the citizens see a positive impact.

Woman parliamentarian, Spain

On national issues, the genders think alike, but on gender issues both sexes usually differ.

Male parliamentarian, Pakistan

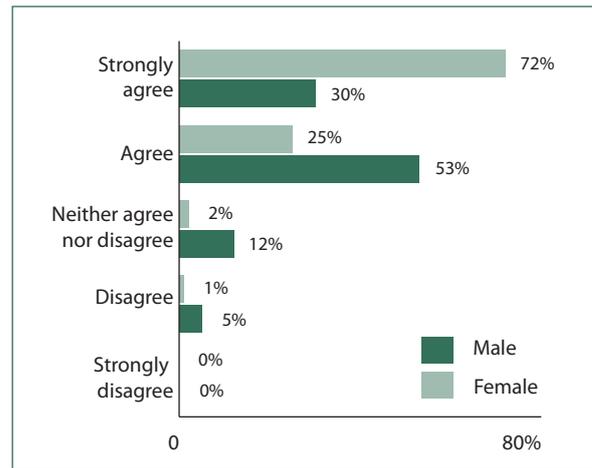


Figure 3.1: Women Bring Different Views, Perspectives and Talents to Politics

However, many more respondents believe that the political priorities of women and men differ. When respondents were asked if they agreed or disagreed with the statement that women bring different views, perspectives and talents to politics, overall 90 percent ‘strongly agreed’ or ‘agreed’. Women felt this way more strongly than men, however. More than two-thirds of women ‘strongly agreed’ as opposed to 30 percent of men. One-quarter of women and half of men ‘agreed’ with the statement. Respondents from the Americas and Africa were more likely to ‘strongly agree’ than respondents from other regions.

For the majority of respondents, women’s and men’s concerns and priorities do differ on most basic issues. But is there agreement among women about which issues to prioritize? A women parliamentarian from Ireland notes:

*Not all women have the same perspective. I would only support a woman whose political views I support. We need more women to build up a critical mass of perspectives from females. Our democracy is unfinished when women are absent from policy making. Politics needs to be “feminized” by a more equal representation of men and women. All issues are women’s issues.*

Here, a distinction between women’s perspectives, women’s concerns and a gender perspective needs to be drawn. A woman’s perspective is her view on all political matters, ranging from economic and labour issues through to national security, which will be shaped by her personal background and lived experience. Women’s issues or women’s concerns are

### Box 3.3: Women and Men have Diverging Priorities

I do believe that the perspectives and political priorities of women differ significantly from those of men in my country because women live very close to the family and community, so women know a lot about the needs of the family. Community, society and women can contribute their ideas to the development of the country. Sometimes women can play a better role in decision making and they prove they have the same qualities as men if they have the same opportunities as men.

Woman parliamentarian, Cambodia

Because of their role in society, women have a different perspective on and approach to problems. In addition, thanks to the small but growing number of women participating in politics, women who have managed to rise to seats of authority in administrative bodies have opted to present budgets or initiatives that claim women's rights in society. Men may have taken part in politics for many years, but they did not do this.

Woman parliamentarian, Colombia

Women think more about the social and health aspects and try to think of the future generations, not just in this moment.

Woman parliamentarian, Finland

In social development matters women are more sensitive than men to issues concerning the development of women. Regarding the development of child-related matters, they also focus more on the need for nurseries, kindergartens, entertainment and general requirements for balanced growth. In terms of poverty alleviation, women can offer sensitive, practical and knowledgeable policy orientations. They are equal, I believe in political matters although men seem to me to be more involved.

Woman parliamentarian, Jordan

On general issues, such as the economy and the environment, we have the same responses, but on women's concerns (social issues, education, etc.) we tend to have different perspectives.

Woman parliamentarian, Spain

issues that mainly affect women, such as physical concerns like reproductive rights and maternal health; social concerns resulting from their reproductive role, such as childcare or parental leave policies, or discrimination on the basis of their sex.<sup>5</sup> A *gender perspective* includes a consideration of the needs and experiences of both women and men and awareness that a policy decision may have a different impact on women and men.

Yet, it is apparent that there are certain shared experiences and concerns among women which they tend to prioritize. Women's concerns are those that have a direct impact on women, and include childcare, equality, domestic violence, equal pay, parental leave, pensions, reproductive rights, abortion, health, work/life balance and other issues which emanate from the private sphere.<sup>6</sup> In addition, one school of thought emphasizes the caring attributes that women can bring to politics. Several studies have highlighted that women are more acutely aware than men of the needs of other people and thus more likely to take into account in their work the needs of other people and thus more likely to take into account in their work the needs and rights of women, children, the elderly, the disabled, minorities and disadvantaged. Women are also more likely to advocate measures in the areas of health and reproduction, childcare, education, welfare and the environment, and are generally less militaristic and more supportive of non-violence and peace.<sup>7</sup>

A Member of Parliament in Austria supported this claim:

*I think that women not only in Austria but all over the world bring a very special experience. Men tend to be very theoretical; women bring in what we call in Austria *hausverstand*—an experience of daily life and of what people really need. So we do not always need to talk about technical items; we try to improve the situation of women and men in the country, in their jobs, in their quality of life, in the environment, in education.<sup>8</sup>*

The views of politicians in this research show that women have concerns that are different to men's. These concerns stem from a range of experiences shared by women and which they tend to prioritize: "It's the women in politics who put women's rights and violence against women and children

### Box 3.4: Priority Differences between Women and Men

The [priorities of women] differ because women still have a different role in society, although with respect to gender equality there have been positive changes over the years. Women do have different experiences in everyday life, especially with regard to family and children. In addition, the way women act (for example in conflict resolution) is different to men.

Woman Member of the European Parliament

I think that women are more concerned about issues such as more help for families and carers, equal pay and human rights. They also want to see women represented more equally in all areas of life, not least in politics.

Male parliamentarian, United Kingdom

Women's perspectives and political priorities emphasize social matters such as education, culture, food security and health care.

Woman parliamentarian,  
Lao People's Democratic Republic

My experience is that women tend to concern themselves with problems of development, population (health, education, safety), whereas men concentrate on the interplay of power and protest. Their attendance rates differ depending on the law to be adopted: the men are present when the subject concerns a matter of harsh debate; the women are present for almost any law concerning the life of society and development.

Woman parliamentarian, Madagascar

Men and women come out in favour of priorities such as the fight against poverty, illiteracy and the right to health. But women have a more developed social sense and a feeling for reality, because they are the ones who manage everyday family affairs and they are more sensitive to the plight of other women and the genuine hardships of families. In a word, they are more strongly motivated to achieve these priority objectives.

Woman parliamentarian, Morocco

Women and men are equal but different. Women are more family-oriented. They want running water, food and security. Men will focus more on transport, roads, communications, sports and war!

Woman parliamentarian, Kenya

I believe women have a better grasp of the issues that affect them directly and indirectly and of the social issues that affect their children.

Woman parliamentarian, Egypt

Women's perspectives are commonly short-term, strongly influenced by innate desire to secure the immediate well-being of their families and to avoid challenges perceived as highly divisive and conflict-based.

Male parliamentarian, Uganda

Women's priorities are mostly related to solving education, cultural, family and social issues.

Woman parliamentarian, Lithuania

Women give birth and have a more deeply ingrained instinct to preserve life; their perspective and political priorities are therefore above all to improve the living conditions of their families and especially to provide a better future for their children. The perspectives and political priorities of men, on the other hand, are first and foremost their personal interests (power, honour, wealth).

Woman parliamentarian, Congo

I believe because women by nature are nurturers and give birth to children that their priorities are peace, stability, and preservation of life, social needs and prosperity.

Woman parliamentarian, Liberia

I believe that the men are concerned mainly with trade, business and finance. Although women are also concerned with these matters, they see the social issues as being key to the maintenance of stability and to ensuring that these areas are allowed to thrive. Social change, and support for families, children and the disadvantaged ensure that there is a reduction in crime and delinquency, and increased employment thereby allowing for promotion of industry.

Woman parliamentarian, Saint Lucia

It's the women in politics who put women's rights, violence against women and children on the political agenda.

Woman parliamentarian, Switzerland

on the political agenda” and “women are normally more focused on women, family and social welfare issues and men more focused on the economy and the sciences”. There is also a strong sense that “very often women take a family and community perspective compared to men who normally take a broader national view.”<sup>9</sup> Although it is women who are predominantly responsible for highlighting women's concerns, this does not mean that they are their only concerns. Indeed, several women highlighted how they make a point to be active in all political matters.

The concerns identified in this research as being those that women tend to prioritize include:

- Social issues: childcare, equal pay, parental leave and pensions
- Physical concerns: reproductive rights, physical safety and gender-based violence
- Development: human development, poverty alleviation and service delivery.

## A Question of Identity: Who Represents Whom?

Democracy is premised on the assumption that members of parliament act for the groups they represent. This is not a straightforward exercise, however, as most members of parliament may act for, or

in the interests of, many different groups, such as a political party, a constituency, a region, a clan, the national interest or the interests of a particular sex. This creates a multi-dimensional nature of representation.<sup>10</sup> As a Ugandan parliamentarian noted when explaining the seats that are reserved for women in the parliament:<sup>11</sup>

*Although a woman may be called a woman representative, she does not represent only women. She is a woman representative who represents a district, the entire district. I represent everyone: the children, the men, the women and the youth.*<sup>12</sup>

A parliamentarian from the United Arab Emirates shared this sentiment:

*Parliamentarians, men and women, are responsible for community issues. As women we are not only concerned about the women in society, but everything regarding the community.*<sup>13</sup>

However, if women and men believe that, in general, women's concerns and interests differ from those of men, those interests need to be represented substantively in all decision-making bodies. But do women believe that they have a responsibility to represent the interests of women? The IPU report *Politics: Women's Insight* found that nearly 90 percent of the female parliamentarians surveyed believed that they had a special responsibility to represent the needs and in-

## Case Study: Women's Presence in Parliament in the United Kingdom

*Baroness Uddin, member of the House of Lords, United Kingdom, highlights how women's priorities in politics differ from men's and what the presence of women in parliament means for politics and democracy.*

I believe that unless women are in place where key decisions are made, unless they are in the fabrics of all our institutions including parliament, we cannot claim pride in our democracy, nor can our governments be credible. Frankly, in the twenty-first century we cannot make any further excuses for the lack of women's engagement in the political arena and real decision making, women in the western world cannot remain on the periphery while we are imploring gender equality elsewhere in the world.

With regard to equality between men and women, the disparity in the economy is plain for us to see, and in the arenas of health, education, employment and public life – we all have a long way to catch up our Nordic sisters. Do women bring a different perspective to social policies, political platforms and war and peace? Yes, I believe where women are prominent in institutions, we have seen dramatic changes and fairer legislation dealing with social, economic and political issues. Women and men will bring different political perspectives and priorities depending on which political party they stand for. But essentially global politics remains male-dominated, and I believe that is why many global conflicts persist to plague our world today.

I also believe that having women in the decision-making process would significantly alter some of the priorities of government. It may enhance equalities between men and women to ensure that social, national and international policies add importance to childcare, exploitation of children, lack of education and access to training and caring for the elderly and the disabled. And just as a bonus more women at the heart of governments may actually mean less war and conflict. You may think this idealistic—this may be so but so little has progressed for the vast majority of women of the world that thinking alternatively is the only way forward, and given that we have for so long had a male-only political environment, things can only get better from where we are.

It is often said that men's concerns are business and power first and yes we have also had some women leaders in particular being accused of the same; in order to fit in some women may have had to appear to be the same. I believe that one of the explanations is simple and that there are not enough women on the world stage or in high-ranking positions from where they feel that the current positions are challengeable. This is why a dramatic increase in numbers would definitely be an advantage to normalize women's participation, be it in the market place, social or political platforms. You can see the fantastic example of social attitudes and practical outcomes of the Danish and Swedish social and political structures, where women are leading in significant numbers and in turn changing the way society as a whole has benefited.

Increasing the number of women in parliament is absolutely critical to having a more balanced society. I believe we are beginning to understand this in the United Kingdom where the influx of women into parliament after the 1997 election has meant that we are looking at equality issues with an intensity and understanding hitherto missing from the legislative framework and in social attitudes. We are making progress, painfully slow but we are on the way. Once the numbers of women are significant we can then tackle the real issue of evaluating what impact the women are making and how to improve their impact.

(Edited excerpt from interview, Geneva, 6 December 2007)

terests of women, although also acknowledging that their mandate included the interests of men and children too. Other studies have found that women representatives believe that they have a responsibility to represent the interests of women.<sup>14</sup> This survey reveals some interesting findings, particularly as it also takes into account the perspectives of men.

Asked whether they agree or disagree with the statement that women parliamentarians have a responsibility to represent the interests of women in society at large, over 85 percent of women either ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ with the statement, as opposed to 60 percent of men. Twenty percent of men disagreed with the statement as opposed to just four percent of women.

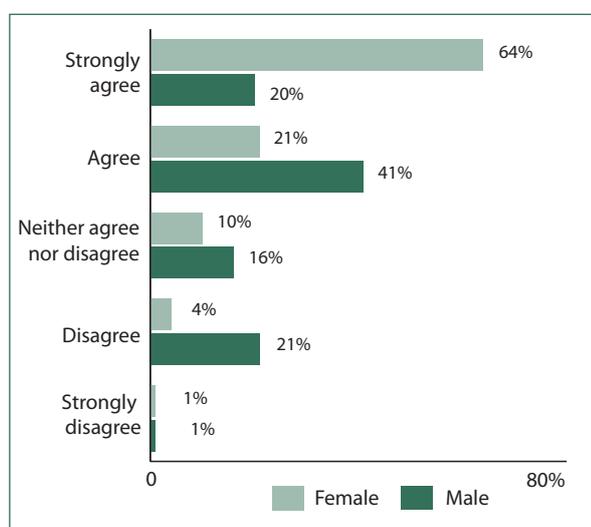


Figure 3.2: Women Parliamentarians have a Responsibility to Represent the Interests of Women

Some women parliamentarians noted the inherent political difficulty in *only* representing women’s interests and concerns, however, as a woman from Cambodia noted:

*I think it is good and necessary to push women’s issues but women cannot become buried in a women’s ghetto. I do not want to be limited to so-called women’s issues, soft sectors, the sectors men think are not priorities and that are not prestigious. I too can talk about the environment, carbon dioxide emissions, carbon footprints and monetary issues. A women-specific approach is valid for all the hard sectors.*<sup>15</sup>

When the respondents were asked if they agreed with the statement “men can sufficiently represent the interests of women in politics”, half of women

‘disagreed’ or ‘strongly disagreed’ with the statement as opposed to one-third of men. Forty-three percent of men ‘agreed’ with the statement as opposed to 30 percent of women.

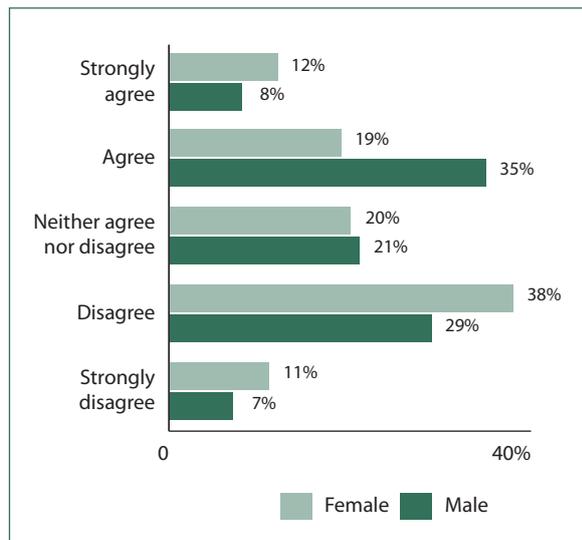


Figure 3.3: Men can Sufficiently Represent the Interests of Women in Politics

When respondents were asked whether male parliamentarians have a responsibility to represent the interests of men, 42 percent of men ‘disagreed’ or ‘strongly disagreed’ with the statement, as opposed to just 30 percent who ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’. Women were far more likely to ‘strongly agree’ with the statement.

This raises an interesting point regarding how the respondents view their representative functions in relation to members of their own sex. Women are far more likely to believe that men have a specific responsibility to represent the interests of their sex, whereas men are more likely to disagree.

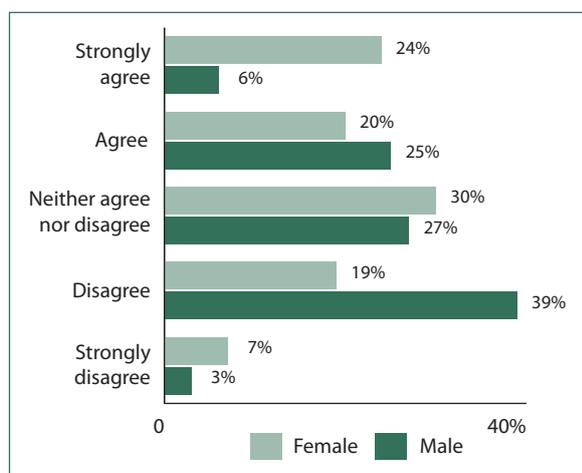


Figure 3.4: Male Parliamentarians Have a Responsibility to Represent the Interests of Men

This may suggest that for male parliamentarians, the mainstream is still the “male stream”, and that in consequence they consider their interests already represented in decision making. In addition, men’s numbers are far greater than women’s in parliament. Women may, therefore, believe that they have a responsibility to represent and promote the interests of women whom, in male-dominated environments, have not always been viewed as part of the mainstream. This finding is consistent with that of *Politics: Women’s Insight* in which many women noted that their decision to advocate for women’s

concerns was based on the fact that fewer women than men were represented in their parliament. In addition, some women claimed that they defended women in parliament because of the many obstacles faced by women in obtaining a political mandate and from a sense of solidarity.<sup>16</sup> In the case study of Burundi, one parliamentarian highlights the particular need that she feels to represent the needs and interests of women in a post-conflict parliament. As the political agenda must be completely redrawn in post-conflict states, it becomes particularly relevant for women’s voices to be heard at all stages.<sup>17</sup>

### Case Study: Representing Women in Post-Conflict Burundi

*Ms. Victoire Ndikumana, Member of Parliament in Burundi, and Vice-president of the Committee on political and administrative affairs and external relations, discusses the importance of including women’s concerns in post-conflict parliaments.*

In developing countries or countries that are just emerging from a crisis such as Burundi, there are common problems. These have to do in particular with the emergence from the crisis, such as restoring peace and maintaining peace, reconciliation within the population and attempting to find policies to combat poverty. This is a first step that is needed in all such countries.

But then there is another aspect, what I would call the “women’s aspect” whereby women in different situations find themselves at the bottom of the ladder. Women want their rights to be recognized in a sustainable way while at the same time ensuring that there is lasting peace. Therein lies the role of women parliamentarians.

I believe that, as women, we have a double responsibility. First of all, we have a responsibility to represent people in our constituencies, in rural areas. I come from a rural area so I know what the living conditions are like. But at the same time, as women, we have another responsibility: to ensure that the children we raise have better living and working conditions than we did. We need to act to ensure that things change.

The second thing is that we realize that when women have a certain amount of power, even within the family, the family thrives and does better because women look after its well-being. It is another perspective that is different from a man’s perspective. I was lucky enough to travel to many places and when I visited the Nordic countries, for example, Sweden and Finland, and I saw how they differ. Why is this? Because in those countries there are many women in parliament, in government, and as a result they have driven social security laws that are much more humane than those in other countries.

I think that women have a more humane perspective. Of course there should be a balance between women and men, but if there are many more women, then I believe we can pass more humane laws that really put people at the centre.

(Edited excerpt from interview, Geneva, December 2007)

### Box 3.5: A Different Style and Approach to Politics

I think that, generally speaking, women engage in politics in ways that differ from men: they want to act and they are very close to their electors whose living conditions are of concern to them. They keep their promises. In general, women occupy positions of power in order to act. I think this often explains why they hesitate to make light promises.

Woman parliamentarian, Burkina Faso

Since men are immersed in a male political environment, most are tainted by the drive for personal success, career development and a materialistic view of politics. Women suffer injustice and sometimes violence; they tend to emphasize the principles of equity, equality and effectiveness, and are more pragmatic.

Male parliamentarian, Algeria

Men are single issue, primarily focused on self-advancement. Women are multifaceted and able to contribute on numerous fronts. They are more passionate and committed to achieving their objectives. They advocate on behalf of many fringe issues that do not normally have a voice. Most women, but not all, choose the issue above personal advancement.

Woman parliamentarian, Australia

The public feels and views women as better, patient and effective legislators who are honest and more trustworthy and fully committed to deliver services.

Woman parliamentarian, Uganda

Men are more oriented on future and long-term perspectives, and women care more about current needs and actual tasks.

Woman parliamentarian, Ukraine

Women have been discovered to be more honest and consistent than men.

Male parliamentarian, Uganda

Men's priority in politics is to gain power, even a strategic post, which will make them rich and generate many advantages. Most violence in politics is the work of male politicians. Men sometimes use political organizations to satisfy their private, individual or group passions, whereas women act in everyone's interests and rarely use violent methods.

Male parliamentarian, Congo

## In a Different Style

Globally, there is a growing body of research that has examined the leadership styles of women in politics. One school of thought finds that women have brought different styles and values to leadership, including a strong sense of community and society, that they are more likely to build consensus, are good at multi-tasking and tend to work harder.<sup>18</sup> *Politics: Women's Insight* found that women brought a more compassionate expression to the political

world, that they looked at problems differently, and that their approach was closer to the view of wider society. It also found that women respondents felt that the inclusion of women would lead to better democracy, increased transparency and improved governance. In addition, it is commonly thought that women are more likely than men to encourage cooperative behaviour, to be concerned with achieving consensus, and to favour a democratic approach to decision making.<sup>19</sup> These findings are also reflected in the qualitative responses of parliamentarians in Box 3.5.

Several respondents also highlighted that women tend to be expeditious, while being inclusive, in their work. A woman parliamentarian from Greece noted that “women ask for results, work quickly and effectively, take a task and go on with it” while another from Slovakia reflected that “women want to be active in public life. Women must resolve problems of everyday, of real life; from this they cannot escape to the sphere of abstract considerations. For that reason, they act quickly and effectively”.

Another school of thought finds that women have a different leadership style which is less combative and aggressive, and that women are more likely to think in terms of teamwork and speak in a different language that is understandable and comes from a personal perspective.<sup>20</sup> However, a less aggressive approach to politics does not imply reduced effectiveness, but rather should be seen as a different style.<sup>21</sup> It is also interesting that a less confrontational approach is often appreciated by the wider electorate. In many countries, the general public is increasingly derisive of politicians unable to reach consensus, or entrenched in adversarial blame games.

Respondents were asked if the presence of women in parliament had brought about a change, particularly if parliamentary language and behaviour were less aggressive. Responses were diverse, although overall two-thirds thought that there was a ‘noticeable’ or ‘small change’ in parliamentary language and behaviour, and this was more strongly felt among men than women. Interestingly, those who believed that a ‘substantial change’ had resulted tended to be women from the Arab States and Africa where an increased women’s parliamentary presence is a relatively new occurrence.

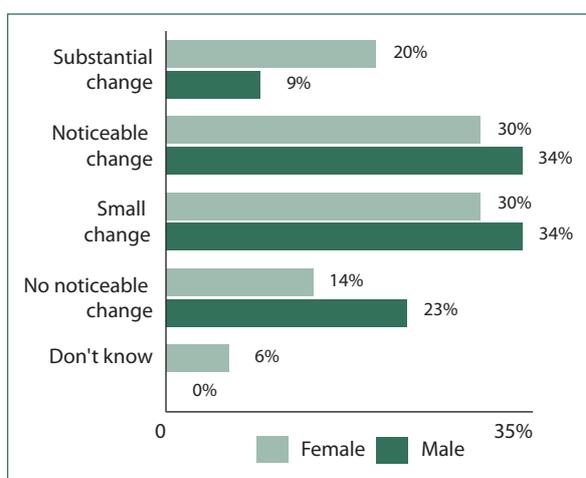


Figure 3.5: Parliamentary Language is Less Aggressive

Among those who believed there was a noticeable change, men in Africa, the Arab States and Asia predominated. The responses overall suggest that there are changes to be noted, but it is not clear that women have yet brought about a substantial change in this respect, possibly owing to their lesser presence in parliaments than men and the entrenched institutional norms that make such change quite difficult.

## A Complementary Agenda

Gender concerns relate to the relationship between women and men in society. A gender perspective acknowledges that there are differences between women and men—in their interests and concerns—that have resulted from socially and culturally learned identities and relations. These interests and concerns must be reflected in policy making if it is to be gender-sensitive.

One of the measures of the extent to which the participation of women is beginning to transform gender relations in decision-making bodies is whether the attitudes of men more broadly are beginning to change.<sup>22</sup> One study has found that as women’s and men’s presence in parliament becomes more balanced, women representatives are able to have a greater influence on the attitudes and preferences of men. This is reflected in the idea that “one of the things that changes as the numbers of women change is men”.<sup>23</sup> But are men becoming champions of gender equality, through contributing to the empowerment of women and raising women’s issues?

Survey participants were asked how active they are in women’s issues in their work. Figure 3.6 illustrates that two-thirds of women consider themselves to be ‘active’ in women’s issues, and another third ‘fairly active’ or ‘active.’ Not surprisingly, men reported lower rates of involvement in women’s issues. However, it is interesting to note that nearly 40 percent of men consider themselves to be either ‘very active’ or ‘active’ in the area of women’s issues, which perhaps suggests that men are becoming stronger advocates or indeed partners in raising women’s issues on the parliamentary agenda.

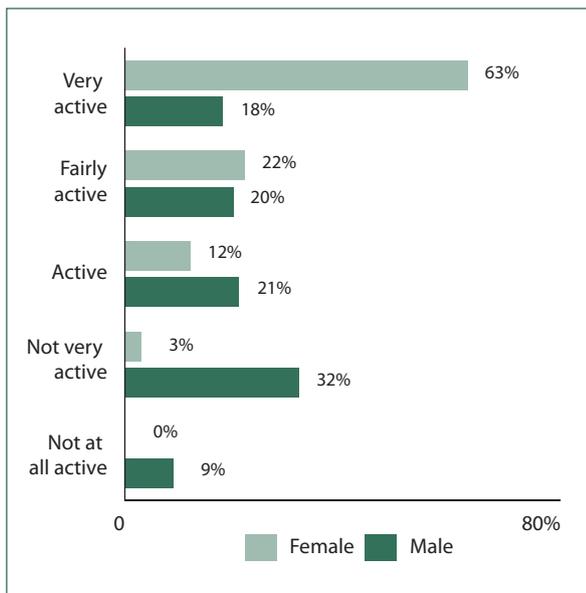


Figure 3.6: Level of Activity on Women's Issues

This may also suggest that at least some men are beginning to incorporate women's issues and gender equality into their work and thinking. However, as is discussed in Chapter 5, women also face resistance from men in their day-to-day work, highlighting the need for greater partnership in the area of gender equality. As one study notes: "Gender awareness is not just about women being empowered to speak up. It is also about men being empowered to take up gender issues."<sup>24</sup> This point is reiterated by a male parliamentarian from Uganda:

*Women talk to men. We very well know that women form a bigger percentage of the population than men. If you believe in what the majority has to say, men should be able to come out and support women when they raise an issue. . . . So why don't we give them a chance when they raise their issues?<sup>25</sup>*

Women and men together can develop complementary agendas and united societies, with respect not only for the differences between women and men, but also between nations.

## Summary

The key questions addressed in this chapter relate to whether there is a difference in interests, perspectives and styles between men and women in parliament and whether women bring different priorities and

agendas to governance. It was found that women and men do indeed have different interests and perspectives about the world; as individuals their sex, age, class and ethnicity are factors that shape their views.

While women are not a homogenous group, there is evidence that women parliamentarians have certain shared interests and concerns. Men too believe that women bring different interests and priorities to politics. It was found that most women parliamentarians feel a responsibility to represent the concerns of women in parliament, which generally fall into three main categories: social, physical and development concerns.

Do women substantively represent women? The responses in this chapter show that women overwhelmingly felt that they had a responsibility to represent women, but that this is not shared equally among all women. Indeed, some highlighted that women should advocate not only on behalf of women, but also on behalf of the interests of the wider community. In addition, some felt it to be important to move beyond what is perceived to be a women's agenda and noted that they are making important contributions to a broad range of political issues.

It is clear, however, that women are far more likely than men to prioritize domestic issues and those issues that have the most immediate impact on families. Democracy requires that the interests of different groups of society be reflected in the decision-making process. Women must have their concerns and perspectives represented in the world's parliaments. While some men feel that they raise issues of concern to women in their work, much more needs to be done to forge a complementary partnership between women and men. Women's perspectives and political priorities differ and they bring different concerns that complement those of men—together they will present a more holistic and richer perspective in politics. As one woman parliamentarian noted: "Women have to be in parliament, which plays a role in the daily life of people. Women have to be there in order to raise their voice, in order to raise the interests of their sex. I think this is very helpful because it helps society to be a holistic society."<sup>26</sup> ■

## Endnotes

1. Colleen Lowe Morna and Susan Tolmay (eds), 2007. *At the Coalface: Gender and Local Governance in Southern Africa*, Gender Links, Johannesburg, Chapter 6.
2. See for example Karen Celis, 2006. "Substantive Representation of Women", in *Journal of Women, Politics and Politics*, vol. 28, no. 2; Colleen Lowe Morna (ed.), 2004. *Ringling Up the Changes: Gender in Southern African Politics*, Gender Links, Johannesburg; Sarah Childs, Joni Lovenduski and Rosie Campbell, 2005, *Women at the Top 2005: Changing Numbers, Changing Politics?* Hansard Society, London.
3. See for example Colleen Lowe Morna (ed.), 2004. *Ringling Up the Changes: Gender in Southern African Politics*, Gender Links, Johannesburg, p. 136.
4. This finding was also evident in the 2000 IPU survey report in which more than 80 percent of women respondents believed that they held conceptually different ideas about society and politics than men. See IPU, Marilyn Waring, Gaye Greenwood and Christine Pintat, 2000. *Politics: Women's Insight*, IPU, Geneva, p. 30.
5. See for example Joni Lovenduski and Azza Karam, 2005. "Women in Parliament: Making a Difference" in Julie Ballington and Azza Karam (eds), 2005. *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers*, International IDEA, Stockholm, p. 197; Colleen Lowe Morna and Susan Tolmay (eds), 2007. *At the Coalface, Chapter 6*.
6. Sarah Childs, Joni Lovenduski and Rosie Campbell, 2005, *Women at the Top 2005: Changing Numbers, Changing Politics?* Hansard Society, London.
7. Marilee Karl quoted in Colleen Lowe Morna (ed.), 2004, pp. 137–138.
8. Personal interview with Ms. Maria Rauch-Kallat, (Member of Parliament, Austria), Geneva, December 2007.
9. Open-ended survey responses from men and women from Malaysia, Slovakia and Switzerland.
10. Joni Lovenduski, *Feminizing Politics*, Polity Press, Cambridge, p. 14.
11. In Uganda, 80 of the 333 seats in parliament are for women district representatives. They ensure women from different districts in Uganda are represented in the parliament.
12. Personal interview with Ms. Bintu Jalia Lukumu (Member of Parliament, Uganda), Geneva, December 2007.
13. Personal interview with Dr. Nedal M. Al-Tunaiji (Member of the Federal National Council, United Arab Emirates), Geneva, December 2007.
14. IPU, *Politics: Women's Insight*, p. 134, and Colleen Lowe Morna and Susan Tolmay (eds), 2007, *At the Coalface*, p. 17.
15. Personal interview, Ms Saumura Tioulong, (Member of Parliament, Cambodia), Geneva, October 2007.
16. IPU, *Politics: Women's Insight*, p. 136.
17. Personal interview, Ms. Victoire Ndikumana, (Member of Parliament, Burundi), December 2007.
18. See for example Colleen Lowe Morna (ed.), 2004. *Ringling Up the Changes*.
19. Maryann Barakso, 2007. "Is there a woman's way of governing?" In *Politics and Gender*, June, p. 203.
20. Quoted in Sarah Childs et al., 2005. *Women at the Top 2005: Changing Numbers, Changing Politics?* p. 68.
21. See also Colleen Lowe Morna et al, *At the Coalface*, Chapter 6.
22. Idem.
23. Mateo Diaz quoted in Sarah Childs et al., 2005. *Women at the Top 2005: Changing Numbers, Changing Politics?* P. 92.
24. Colleen Lowe Morna et al, *At the Coalface*, Chapter 7.
25. Personal interview with Mr. Mugumya Magulumaali (Member of Parliament, Uganda), Geneva, December 2007.
26. Personal interview with Ms. Sotiroula Charalambous (Member of Parliament, Cyprus), Geneva, December 2007.



# Chapter 4

## Policy Development: Women Making their Presence Felt

“ We could do better in politics if two conditions were fulfilled. One is that we need more women in our parliament. The other condition, which has the same importance, is to have a real partnership with the male parliamentarians and this does not happen often enough. ”

Woman parliamentarian, Romania

Chapter 3 examined the interests and priorities of women and men parliamentarians, and found that, the world over, they differ. Women feel strongly about and tend to prioritize different concerns to men. They are far more likely to prioritize domestic issues and those that have an immediate impact on families, to raise issues such as childcare, physical safety, parental leave and health concerns. Some women, however, emphasized that their interests extend beyond what are viewed as women's concerns and that they are making important contributions to a broad range of political issues; and that they feel a responsibility to represent the interests of the wider community in addition to those of women.

This chapter examines how the different perspectives and views that women bring to politics (as seen in Chapter 3) have translated into policy initiatives by women and men in parliament. It highlights how some of the specific concerns of women have crept, or often leapt, onto the legislative agenda all over the world. It identifies some of the specific policy areas that parliamentarians have focused on and highlights examples of how women and men are working together for gender equality. It addresses some of the constraints that women may come up against in broadening the political agenda, such as the role of political parties and the numbers of women in parliament. It also assesses whether the numbers of

women in parliament matter and if the numerical representation of women is linked to their substantive representation.

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### Key questions include:

- What policy areas do women and men prioritize in their legislative work?
- What are some of the constraints that parliamentarians may face when seeking to pursue a gender equality agenda?
- Do numbers really matter? Is a critical mass of women representatives necessary for women to have an effect?

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## Broadening the Political Agenda

Different studies have been keen to demonstrate a link between increases in the presence of women in parliament and policy reforms in the area of gender equality. Research undertaken in Australia, Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom and some Nordic countries has found that while politicians share common national interests, women

are more likely to introduce legislation related to women's concerns and family issues.<sup>1</sup> It is difficult to assess the legislative impact of women across all regions, however, as there is little in the way of comparative research in this area. Some of the difficulty might be attributed to the varied and incomparable parliamentary systems across the world. Where regional studies exist however—such as those of Southern Africa—they provide useful and transferable experiences and practice.<sup>2</sup> More comparative work across all regions would be similarly useful.

Different ways of changing the policy agenda include: introducing women's concerns into otherwise gender-blind bills; prompting debates on issues such as childcare, gender-based violence and parental leave; and proposing amendments to existing laws or enacting new laws.<sup>3</sup> Parliamentarians have sponsored bills and amendments, made interventions and exerted pressure on their colleagues to support women's concerns. Some evidence suggests that even when few in number, the presence of women can bring new agendas and issues to parliament.<sup>4</sup> As a women respondent from Namibia noted:

*We have introduced several bills—an anti-rape bill, an anti-domestic violence bill, the marriages equality bill—which would not have come in had it not been for the strong voice of women and, even if we may be numerically small, in terms of participating in the debates and also discussing the various bills and bringing in amendments to acts, women had a very strong input.<sup>5</sup>*

*Politics: Women's Insight* found evidence that women have made an impact in several policy areas including social services, labour, education, health care, violence, children's rights and laws in favour of gender equality, including quota laws.<sup>6</sup> Women parliamentarians were also far more likely to raise these issues than men. Another study of Southern African countries found that women have prioritized, and had a great effect on, the drafting of laws related to the family, gender-based violence and reproductive rights. It also showed that the breadth and depth of reforms are greater in countries with higher levels of women's representation.<sup>7</sup>

This chapter highlights some of the parliamentarians' views about their policies they prioritize and identifies some of the factors that affect, and hinder, their work. In addition to providing women's in-

sights, it builds on previous research by including the perspectives of male parliamentarians, and considers how a gender partnership for policy development is emerging in some countries.

## The Level of Activity in Different Policy Areas

Parliamentarians were asked how active they are in different policy areas. Table 4.1 reveals several interesting results. Male and female respondents identified themselves as being active in different policy areas in their legislative work.

Overall, the men self-identified as being most active in foreign affairs, economic and trade matters, education and constitutional affairs, while gender equality, labour and women's issues scored low levels of activity. For women the reverse is true—women self-identified as being the most active in women's issues, gender equality, social and community matters and family-related matters. Nearly half of all women respondents noted that they are very active on women's issues and gender equality matters. Only 14 percent of women scored themselves not very active in this area. The responses indicate a clear divide between men and women in relation to policy areas along traditional gender roles. One male parliamentarian from Germany noted:

*Women always have to think about how to handle family work, business and political work at the same time. That changes their views for example on issues related to education and childcare. It may also be that they believe other things when they think about improving infrastructure than men do, such as schools, nurseries and hospitals rather than more roads, tanks and airports.*

Women and men scored similarly on the environment, justice and constitutional matters as well as internal or home affairs, and both scored research and technology and sciences as the areas they are least active in.

Parliamentarians were also asked about the influence they believed the presence of women had on the passage of legislation in different policy areas (Table 4.2). Overall, the respondents believed (with no significant variation between women and men) that the presence of women in parliament has had the

**Table 4.1: Level of Activity in Different Policy Areas?**

Among Women Respondents	Level	Among Male Respondents	Level
Women's issues	4.5	Foreign affairs	4.0
Gender equality matters	4.4	Economic and trade matters	3.9
Social and community matters	4.2	Education	3.7
Family-related matters	4.1	Justice and constitutional matters	3.7
Education	4.1	Social and community matters	3.6
Health care	3.9	Infrastructure and development	3.6
Foreign affairs	3.7	Public administration	3.6
Justice and constitutional matters	3.6	Environment	3.5
Labour	3.5	National security, defence, military affairs	3.5
Environment	3.5	Finance	3.4
Infrastructure and development	3.3	Health care	3.4
Internal or home affairs	3.3	Family-related matters	3.4
Public administration	3.1	Internal or home affairs	3.4
Economic and trade matters	3.1	Gender equality matters	3.3
National security, defence, military affairs	2.9	Labour	3.2
Finance	2.9	Women's issues	3.1
Research and technology	2.8	Research and technology	3.1
Science	2.8	Science	3.0

Note: The totals indicate the average level of activity that respondents attached to each of the active policy areas on a five-point scale, where very active was scored as 5, fairly active as 4, active as 3, not very active as 2 and not at all actively as 1.

greatest influence on legislation related to domestic violence, childcare and parental leave. The areas in which the respondents believed that women have had the least amount of influence are economic and trade matters, finance, foreign affairs and national security. As one women respondent from Switzerland noted:

*Women have brought up topics that men would not have brought up and they have managed in very many cases to get those new topics through parliament and to have new legislation or a new law passed or new practices introduced that are now being used. The laws that we have passed over the past 30 years are laws that have improved the position of women in marriage and in the social insurance system. . . . We have brought up the topic of childcare, which is still on the move and is not yet completely installed. We have also addressed combating violence against women.<sup>8</sup>*

**Table 4.2: The Impact of the Presence of Women on Legislation**

Area	Score
Combating domestic violence	3.6
Childcare provisions and support	3.6
Parental leave	3.5
Reproductive health care	3.4
Education	3.3
Employment and equal pay	3.2
Political participation	3.2
Environment	2.9
Economic and trade matters	2.6
Finance	2.5
Foreign affairs	2.5
National security, defence, military affairs	2.4

The score indicates the average level of activity that respondents attached to each of the policy areas on a four-point scale, where a great deal was scored as 4; a fair amount as 3; not very much as 2; and none as 1.

Combating violence against women is an area in which women legislators have made their presence felt in all regions of the world. The past decade has seen a proliferation of international, regional and local campaigns and resolutions to combat the various forms of violence that women endure, including

domestic and sexual violence and trafficking. Parliamentarians have been at the forefront of these efforts to put in place legislation and legal sanctions to combat violence against women. Even when there are few women in parliament, there have been examples of women succeeding in convincing their male colleagues of the importance of taking action in this field. The only woman in the Sao Tome Parliament explains:

*I always work to combat violence against women, and I promoted this issue which led to a resolution condemning all forms of violence against women. We even asked for a bill to be passed because our laws and our Criminal Code in Sao Tome have not criminalized violent acts against women. I am the only one to push this bill but I will continue to fight and do everything possible. I started campaigning in parliament to tell men that if it was not passed, that means they are not part of the solution, but part of the problem. Everyone really must be involved in this.<sup>9</sup>*

Of course, greater numbers of women in parliament can achieve impressive results. In Rwanda a bill to combat gender-based violence resulted from extensive deliberation among a range of actors, not least male parliamentarians (see the Rwanda case study). This is also a good example of inclusive decision making, where a range of civil society organizations were consulted and their views included during the drafting of the bill.

The examples here illustrate that women, and indeed men, have been involved in a wide range of gender-related policy areas. In general there is a strong sentiment among respondents that women's presence has been felt most in social policy initiatives, such as efforts to eradicate gender-based violence and promote parental leave, and in providing support for carers of both children and the elderly. In addition, several parliamentarians highlighted that they had promoted legislation on women's political participation, particularly through supporting bills that legislate candidate quotas for women's presence in parliament.

While women tend to be more active on social policy initiatives than men, it must be noted that women are also active in policy areas *other* than those highlighted above. Women's contributions cannot be generalized too much, as one male parliamentarian from Iceland noted:

*In Iceland, when we discussed laws concerning maternity leave, female politicians took a very active part in the discussion. And also on domestic violence, and issues that concern women specifically, you see female politicians taking up those issues more often than the ordinary male politician. But both sexes take part in discussions, there is no issue in Iceland which only women take part in.<sup>10</sup>*

## Working in Partnership

The work of women in parliament can be facilitated by forming strategic partnerships. As men form the majority of members in parliaments, and dominate leadership positions in political parties, they are important partners in garnering support for implementing change. In addition, the views of both women and men are needed for the development of

### Box 4.1: Policy Initiatives for Gender Equality

I have introduced legislation to reform the code on nationality, and a bill for the establishment of a national observatory on equality, which was not accepted. I initiated parliamentary committee meetings on the position of women in the media and equal political rights, and I have asked numerous oral and written questions on equality and women's rights.

Woman parliamentarian, Morocco

There are specific laws and issues that women have focused on and they have considered increasing participation of women, such as the Maria da Penha Law which increases the punishments for those who commit violence against women. Another bill establishes an official retirement for those women who work at home only. A third is a bill which increases maternity leave from four months to six months. These have come to parliament because the women in parliament are putting pressure on to approve these bills.

Woman parliamentarian, Brazil

Over ten years ago, I was an activist on the committee that pushed for approval of the Law against Domestic Violence, which was adopted in 1995. I was also one of those pushing for the Law on Quotas of 30 percent, in the gender-based constitutional reform of 2004. As a parliamentarian, I helped draft the Law against Sexual Harassment and Gender-Based Political Violence, which received overall approval in September 2007. I helped draft the Integrated Law on Human Trafficking and People Smuggling, focusing on children and adolescents. I am preparing a Law against sexual harassment in the workplace and at schools.

Woman parliamentarian, Bolivia

I have personally introduced private members' business to recognize the importance of achieving the Millennium Development Goals; called on parliament to focus on the eradication of poverty and corruption, paying particular attention to impacts on women and children, and called on parliament to support aid programmes that assist women to access legal aid to prosecute domestic violence and cases of discrimination against women and children.

Woman parliamentarian, Australia

I am the gender spokesperson for my party so I work intensively with legislation on gender issues. For instance, I have proposed bills on paternity leave and trafficking.

Woman parliamentarian, Denmark

Women parliamentarians are constantly heightening their male colleagues' awareness of issues relating to the family, children and education.

Male parliamentarian, Algeria

I have sponsored various social laws such as on gender-based violence, separation and divorce, female genital mutilation, and bills on equality (being studied by parliament).

Woman parliamentarian, Spain

I have been especially involved in discussion of laws on violence against women and the family and on the Integrated System for the Protection of Minors. I press for women in politics as my party's Secretary for Women's Affairs and in that capacity collect legislative proposals and projects.

Woman parliamentarian, Argentina

I initiated a proposal to amend the Algerian electoral law. The amendment has not yet been adopted but if it is, the political parties would be obliged to place at least one woman among the first three positions on each list for local or national elections.

Woman parliamentarian, Algeria

I have proposed amendments to relevant bills such as recognizing gender equality in all bills and specifically mentioning the rights of women in the Human Rights Act, the Police bill, and the Labour bill. I proposed during the Constitution review quotas for women in the parliament but it did not get enough votes.

Woman parliamentarian, Maldives

I have introduced numerous bills and backed others on topics such as domestic violence, sexual harassment, child prostitution, fair administration of marital assets, people trafficking and smuggling, divorce, and so on.

Woman parliamentarian, Chile

I have tried to increase representation of women by campaigning for all-women shortlists in the Welsh Assembly and by supporting individual women candidates.

Woman parliamentarian, United Kingdom

gender-sensitive legislation. Several of the examples here highlight that working together with men is an important strategy for placing women's concerns on the parliamentary agenda. Indeed, women cannot enact laws without the support of at least some of their male colleagues.

In many instances, men have been important allies in the implementation of gender-related legislation, as one male parliamentarian from Zambia explained:

*There is a positive move to support women more in politics. The main concerns of women are women's rights as the legal set-up favours men. Women are advocating equality in every sphere of life, and they have been agitating for laws to protect them from abuse by men—violence against women and children. Men in the party group have also joined in the debate and it has*

*been discussed in the Committee on Legal Affairs, Governance, Human Rights and Gender Matters.*

A male representative from the United States of America highlighted that:

*As the very first male member of the League of Women Voters in my home county, I have been at the vanguard of promoting equal rights for women—at work, at home and within government. I have aggressively pushed for laws mandating equal pay for equal work, family leave policies, equitable health care, combating domestic violence and many other areas of legislation.*

In Uganda, too, the concept of partnership is important:

*We work in partnership with men on many laws in Uganda. For example, we have been working on a private members' bill on sexual offences and we have men who have given active support to the bill when we were presenting it for a first reading. I have men on my committee who support the issues that affect women. For example, in combating female genital mutilation, the men are keen to support that cause because it dehumanizes women. We have been working with the men and we are happy that Ugandan men are supporting our causes. In order to bring about gender equality, one thing that we need to do is inform people and make them aware.*

Women parliamentarians are also working in partnership with other stakeholders, such as civil society organizations, interest groups and the women's movement:

*In Burundi, for example, I can say that women have framed a draft bill, in collaboration with civil society and women's associations, on the inheritance and donations code because there is no written inheritance law. The initiative was taken by women parliamentarians in collaboration with civil society associations. In particular, we have an association of women jurists, and they—as experts—were the ones to initiate the move. As many women parliamentarians are members of that association, we lobbied the men a lot and, subsequently, women parliamentarians took ownership of the project. This is a concrete initiative that was taken by women parliamentarians in collaboration with women's associations—such an example shows that when there is a critical mass, sufficient numbers of women together can achieve something. Of course there has to be political will generally for certain initiatives to be taken.<sup>11</sup>*

The survey responses confirm that, in general, women have tended to put different policy concerns on the agenda. In doing so, an important strategy is to work in partnership with different stakeholders. Men are sometimes allies in fighting for gender-related policies. However, in practice, those who seek policy change may face constraints on and even obstacles to their work.

## Constraints on Acting for Women

While women tend to prioritize different policy areas to men, it does not automatically follow that women are able to transform the content of politics. One study cautions against setting up an “expectation that women representatives are in a position to transform the content of politics by bringing women's concerns and perspectives to the political table.”<sup>12</sup>

Different constraints come into play. On the one hand, it may be that not all women act on behalf of women or feel that they have a responsibility to represent the interests of women. On the other, it may also be that there are not enough women in parliament; the assumption being that the more women there are in parliament, the more likely it is that the interests of women will be raised. Additional impediments may be related to questions of ideology and party loyalty, or institutional constraints and gendered norms that operate in parliament (this is discussed in detail in Chapter 5). The role of women parliamentarians needs to be considered alongside other actors such as the national gender machinery, the women's movement or women's groups in civil society, and allies in government.<sup>13</sup>

Respondents were asked about the factors they believe to be most important in influencing the adoption of gender-related legislation (Table 4.3). Similar responses were received from women and men. Overall, the strongest variable was the support of the ruling political party in parliament, as would be expected. As decisions are usually made by majority vote, the “leading party always has a strong influence on the passage of legislation and decisions”.<sup>14</sup> However, this will vary from country to country depending on the strengths and numbers of political parties in parliament. After ruling party support, the support of female parliamentarians and the numbers of women in parliament were perceived as important, and ranked almost as high. The support of male parliamentarians was also identified as influential—more influential in fact than the support of civil society, the influence of which might have been expected to be high in such matters. The case of Rwanda highlights the importance of linkages between women's organizations and civil society organizations to the development of gender-sensitive legislation.

**Table 4.3: Factors that Affect the Adoption of Gender-related Legislation**

Factor	Score
Ruling party support	3.6
Support of female parliamentarians	3.5
The number of women in parliament	3.4
Support of male parliamentarians	3.3
Support of civil society groups or interest groups	3.2
Support of the international community	3.0
Opposition party support	2.9
Support of the business community	2.8
Support of your constituency	2.7

The score indicates the average level of importance that respondents attached to each of the policy areas on a four-point scale, where a great deal was scored as 4; a fair amount as 3; not very much as 2 and none as 1.

### Political Parties

Parliamentarians may be limited in their capacity to address women’s issues and concerns because of

party policies and party discipline. Political parties are most often the gatekeepers to women’s representation in parliament, and their ideologies, rules and culture will affect women in the party group in parliament. While in some countries parliamentarians may gain their mandates independently of parties, in most instances women are selected as candidates by political parties and stand for election on a political party ticket. In countries where party identity is strong, “the space for women representatives to act other than in line with their party is likely to be much reduced” and in these situations “it does not seem reasonable to presume that gender identity will trump party identity”.<sup>15</sup> This sentiment is supported by a woman parliamentarian from Cyprus who noted:

*Undoubtedly, women, irrespective of their political party orientation, are more sensitive towards issues concerning women, family and children. However, their priorities are also determined by the political priorities set by the party to which they are attached.*

Political parties are important arenas for policy development and debate, and for setting political

## Case Study: Rwandan Women Setting the Agenda

*Elizabeth Powley, Consultant in Gender and Governance*

In 2003, women were elected to 48.8 percent of the seats in Rwanda’s lower house of parliament, pushing it to the top of the world rankings in terms of women in national parliaments. Rwanda offers an opportunity to examine a parliament where women have not only reached, but actually exceeded, the standard definition of critical mass. Women’s subsequent success in shaping the parliamentary agenda is due in part to their large number, as well as to the presence of an activist women’s caucus, and the highly consultative model of policy making that they have developed.

The women’s agenda in Rwanda’s parliament is coordinated by a cross-party political caucus, the Forum of Rwandan Women Parliamentarians (Forum des Femmes Rwandaise Parlementaires, or FFRP). Since the 2003 election, the FFRP has worked to revise existing discriminatory laws, and pushed for the inclusion of a gender perspective in new laws as they are introduced. In 2005, the Forum of Women Parliamentarians Strategic Plan 2005–2009 was adopted, which outlined a five-year strategic plan to guide its activities and achieve its goal of developing “policies, laws, programs, and practices [that ensure] equality between men and women and gender equity”. The strategic plan was designed to address four priority areas: building the institutional and organizational capacity of the FFRP; enhancing gender equality within the parliament; initiating gender-sensitive laws; and improving gender-based governmental oversight.

The most prominent example of the women parliamentarians' legislative leadership is the development of a bill to combat gender-based violence (GBV), introduced in parliament in August 2006. The GBV bill is a landmark piece of legislation: it defines rape in Rwandan law for the first time, and it is the only piece of legislation introduced by parliamentarians since the 2003 election. In all other cases, the executive branch has drafted bills and set the legislative agenda.

The process employed by the FFRP to draft and introduce this piece of legislation was highly participatory. It involved extensive public consultation and collaboration with civil society over nearly two years. The leadership style of Rwanda's women parliamentarians is distinguished by the close relationship they have with civil society organizations. Before entering parliament, a number of the women parliamentarians were themselves prominent members of women's civil society organizations. As parliamentarians, they maintain close relationships with civil society activists, particularly with representatives of those organizations that focus on women's issues. As it had in previous legislative campaigns, the FFRP coordinated its efforts on GBV with representatives of civil society, relying on their expertise to inform development of the bill. The president of Pro-Femmes/Twese Hamwe, a coalition of women's non-governmental organizations, has referred to the FFRP as civil society's partner inside the parliament and described the relationship as a strategic alliance.<sup>i</sup>

Importantly, the FFRP also sought to collaborate with men in the development, and especially the introduction, of the GBV bill. The primary method the FFRP used to enlist men's support was inviting the involvement of male colleagues at every stage of the policy-making process, and asking key male allies to play leadership roles. The FFRP made the strategic decision to share early drafts with male colleagues, to ensure that men felt included rather than alienated by the introduction of the bill, and to enlist men in sponsoring the bill, which proved effective. When the bill was introduced in August 2006, it had four female and four male co-sponsors. According to FFRP President Judith Kanakuze, a strategic decision was made that, while everyone recognized that women pushed the process, at that moment working to ensure that men also felt ownership of the bill was more important than demonstrating women's leadership.<sup>ii</sup> The FFRP was able to strengthen the legitimacy of the GBV bill by recruiting male allies for something that is often considered solely a "women's issue." By late 2007, the final version of the bill had moved out of committee and had been passed by the lower house. At the time of writing, it awaits passage in the upper house.

The FFRP first considered GBV legislation when the caucus was founded in 1996, but it did not have the capacity to undertake the project for another 10 years, until women reached critical mass and the FFRP had become an effective institution in parliament.<sup>iii</sup> Women have increasingly been able to assert their legislative agenda as their numbers have grown, and as the FFRP has matured. The hallmark of the FFRP's legislative process is a consultative and collaborative approach and its strategic decision to involve constituents, civil society and male colleagues in the process.

*(The information draws on research funded by The Initiative for Inclusive Security, a program of Hunt Alternatives Fund. For more information, see [www.InclusiveSecurity.org](http://www.InclusiveSecurity.org))*

- i. Suzanne Ruboneka, personal interview with *The Initiative for Inclusive Security*, August 2006.
- ii. Judith Kanakuze, (Member of Parliament, Rwanda), personal interview with *The Initiative for Inclusive Security*, August 2006.
- iii. Faith Mukakalisa, (Member of Parliament, Rwanda), personal interview with *The Initiative for Inclusive Security*, August 2006.

*More information can be found in Elizabeth Pearson, Demonstrating Legislative Leadership: The Introduction of Rwanda's Gender-Based Violence Bill, The Initiative for Inclusive Security, Hunt Alternatives, 2008. For a more comprehensive discussion of how the women parliamentarians involved their male colleagues see Elizabeth Powley and Elizabeth Pearson, "Gender is Society": Inclusive Lawmaking in Rwanda's Parliament", Critical Half, vol. 5, no. 1 (Winter 2007).*

## Case Study: Making Women's Presence felt in Parliament in Kenya

*Ms. Beth Mugo, Member of Parliament in Kenya and former Deputy Minister, highlights how women's presence has been felt in committee work and in legislation in parliament in Kenya, but notes some of the constraints of party politics.*

I believe that, under very difficult circumstances, women have tried to put their interests and the different issues to do with women and their membership to the male population. I think that the area in which we have been successful is in making sure that there is a gender perspective in every bill that comes to parliament. The women parliamentarians study the bill, and the members of the Kenyan Women's Parliamentarians Association (KEWOPA), regardless of the political parties they support, look at it through a woman's eyes to see how it affects females, to see that the health, medical, education, housing, violence bill, or whatever bill, it is, has language that supports women across the board. We especially examine the budget to assess what is in it for women, and then we lobby the Minister of Finance, like we did for the last budget, to include a fund for women in the budget which will be a revolving fund. On issues like that, we have been fairly successful.

When bills are tabled, officially they go to the committees that they relate to, and we try to see that there are women on those committees. In addition, if it is a bill that is of interest to us particularly as women, we will have a workshop and take a few days to examine it—all the women in parliament together. Sometimes the donors will organize a workshop for us and we will go through it with a fine-tooth comb to make sure we are not missing anything. Because we are very few—we are only 18—and some of us are ministers and some of us have other responsibilities, we sometimes find that we cannot do this with every bill.

Women have also brought private members' bills to the parliament, such as the Violence against Women bill and the Affirmative Action bill. In the last parliament women initiated five or six bills, out of a total of around 30 bills. The legislation which we have tried to put forward in support of women includes the Sexual Offences bill and the Affirmative Action bill. Initially, men wanted to throw out the Sexual Offences bill and then, when there was a lot of outcry around the country, the bill was passed but in a diminished state so that in the end it became a shell—all the meat was gone. It was passed after removing a lot of areas that they felt would oppress men.

Similarly, the Affirmative Action bill sought to legislate women's political representation. The Minister for Justice and Constitutional Affairs, Ms. Karua Martha Wangari, sought to increase the number of seats in parliament by creating 90 new Members of Parliament, of which 40 would go to new constituencies and 50 to nominated women. Of course, after some debate the men threw it out. In fact, it was hardly debated—it was the bill that went the quickest because the men were not interested in the debate. In a parliament of 210, only 18 of whom are women, you can see how we are placed.

So I can say that we have made a difference. Women's voices have been heard hard and loud and we have put what we think is important in the bills—more gender-sensitive language—or highlighted issues particularly relevant to women. However, on real, hard issues the men still resist. That is the experience. So what we need is many more women in parliament.

(Edited interview, Geneva, 7 October 2007)

priorities, and are therefore one of the key institutions through which to promote gender equality concerns.<sup>16</sup> Party manifestos and platforms developed for electoral campaign purposes are often based on the principle of equality and representation, but in practice pay lip service to gender equality. Indeed, few political parties actively promote a gender equality agenda and few women hold the top decision-making positions in parties. A lack of internal democracy and accountability—and selection procedures that are not transparent—can hamper women’s efforts to gain rank and hold decision-making positions in political parties. Yet how decision-making bodies are constituted can have important ramifications for the representation of competing interests.

Respondents were asked if women were well represented in the policy-making organs of their political parties. Overall, less than 20 percent of respondents believed that women were ‘very’ well represented. Nearly half thought that women were ‘fairly well represented, and one-third thought that women are ‘not very’ well represented or not represented at all, with similar levels between women and men. Only a few respondents provided examples of their political party adopting quotas to ensure the representation of women in the decision-making bodies of the party, such as on executive committees.

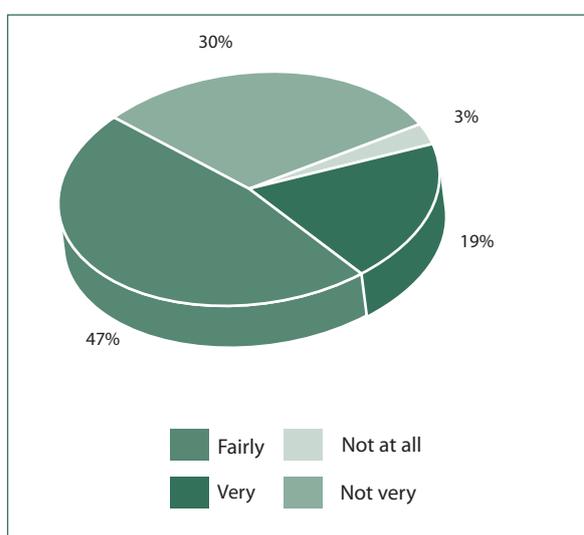


Figure 4.1: Quality of Representation of Women in the Policy Organs of Political Parties

The decision-making bodies of political parties are influential, but these are bodies in which women have traditionally been, and still are, under-represented. In some political parties, women’s sections have been created to give women a voice and unite

them within the party. The women’s section can be an important arm of the party, contributing to policy development and perhaps even playing a role in the executive bodies of the party. However, in most instances, women’s sections act only as a meeting place for women and a tool for mobilizing women voters. Their limited clout in the decision-making circles of the party means that they remain marginalized from mainstream party activity.

Respondents were asked what they believe to be the main contributions of women’s sections to political parties. The highest proportion of respondents, 83 percent, believe them to be responsible for promoting women’s participation inside the party, while 74 percent think that they seek to defend gender issues in the party. More than two-thirds believe that they provide support to women candidates during elections or mobilize the women’s vote ahead of elections. Just 58 percent believe that the women’s sections provide input into decision making in the party. It often falls to the strong political women within parties to raise issues, as a woman parliamentarian from Sao Tome explained:

*Usually, debates are initiated at the level of each parliamentary group, at the party level. As far as women’s issues are concerned, it is the women who take the initiative. As people say, when it comes to women’s issues, the men are not very interested. I am not saying that there is no interest at all, but the men do not participate very actively. So regarding women’s issues, it is the women who take the initiative and who ask the men for support. Even at the party level, it is always the women who take the initiative to get things started.<sup>17</sup>*

A woman parliamentarian from Kenya noted that:

*Women are also not necessarily free to pursue their own agenda [relative to the political party’s agenda], but we give ourselves as much freedom as possible. We tell parties that women’s issues are women’s issues and we will look at them regardless of party politics. Most of the time, they will give permission and the government will support us on certain issues to do with women.<sup>18</sup>*

An additional constraint is related to party discipline in parliament. Respondents were asked how

often they voted according to the party line. There were some mixed results with no noticeable differences between men and women. Nearly two-thirds of respondents vote according to the party line either 'always' or 'always except for conscience votes.' A further 22 percent identified that they 'usually' vote according to the party line. Less than 15 percent intimated that they were free to vote as they liked.

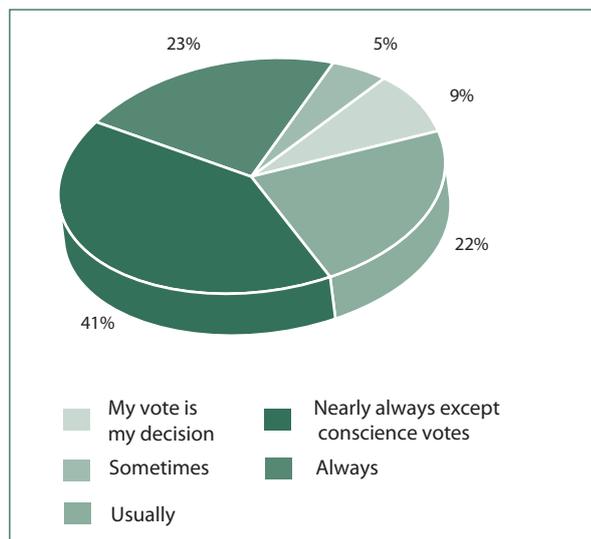


Figure 4.2: Voting according to the Party Line

A woman parliamentarian identified the problem as follows:

*You find that there is a certain limit as to how you can go outside your party's policy because you risk being de-whipped. So women are in a very precarious and difficult situation where we want to support women's issues but find that we are tied to political parties. I must say that party discipline can constrain the effect that women have in parliament.<sup>19</sup>*

## Critical Mass: Do Numbers Matter?

Discussions about women's increased access to parliament invariably lead to debates about the level of representation required for women to make a difference. The *Critical mass theory* is the widely accepted framework that suggests that women are substantively represented when their numbers reach a certain level, at which point institutions and policies will start to be transformed. It is held that as the presence of women increases, the likelihood that

women's interests will be represented and that female perspectives will be presented also increases. The widely accepted figure is 30 percent, as specified in various international and regional conventions including those of the United Nations.<sup>20</sup> For some, 30 percent is an interim target on the way to achieving parity between women and men in politics.

As is explained in the case study on critical mass below, the presence of women in parliament should lead to improved policy-responsiveness and institutional culture and practice. An example that is often cited is the impact that the presence of a high proportion of women in decision-making bodies in Scandinavian countries had on policy making and spending priorities, including the passage of legislation related to subsidized childcare services, parental leave, flexible working hours and pension rights for unpaid care work.<sup>21</sup>

The IPU report *Politics: Women's Insight* finds that most of the respondents believed that women changed politics, but that a key variable was the number of women participating as political actors in parliaments.<sup>22</sup> Overall, respondents for that publication felt that higher levels of representation among women would result in better outcomes for citizens.

Respondents in this survey were asked if they agreed with the statement: the more women there are in parliament, the greater influence they will have on political priorities and policy. Overall, just over half of respondents 'strongly agreed' and one-third 'agreed' with the statement. Few respondents disagreed with the statement, although women agreed more strongly than men.

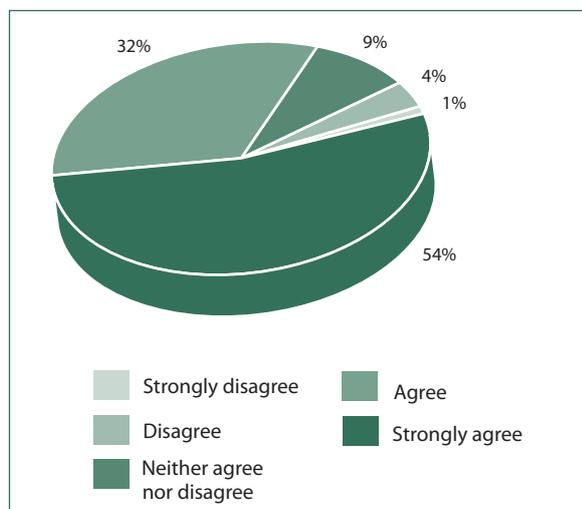


Figure 4.3: The More Women in Parliament, the Greater their Influence on Political Priorities and Policy

One male parliamentarian explains:

*The more female politicians in politics, the better [it is for passing policies that affect women]. One-third of parliamentarians are female and that has had a very positive influence on discussions in Iceland, as well as broadening the discussion on the welfare state and education.*<sup>23</sup>

While the target for critical mass is most often set at 30 percent, one study points out that critical mass may be understood less as a fixed number and

more as the point where “women, through a combination of numerical strength, enabling political environments, empowerment and conviction feel able to raise critical questions in mainstream environments”.<sup>24</sup> Box 4.2 highlights the views of parliamentarians and shows that an increased presence of women has not only changed the composition of many parliaments, but also provided an impetus for significant policy change. There is, as articulated by a woman parliamentarian, another reason to aim for higher representation of women based on the acknowledgement that not all women will (or wish to) represent women’s concerns. A bigger

#### Box 4.2: Do the Numbers Matter?

What has happened in the South African Parliament is the fact that there are so many women means that one is no longer talking in abstract. It means that one is speaking from a real perspective. The numbers do matter and I think that women have brought about a different quality of debate. We went through a period when this was perhaps a little unusual and new, but now I think that when people stand at the podium of parliament, one thinks not in terms of whether they are a woman or a man, or whether they are a young person or an old person, a black person or a white person, but simply that we are South Africans together bringing different perspectives and different histories to the resolution of our national issues.

Male parliamentarian, South Africa

One thing is for sure. The presence of women in parliament has been instrumental in sparking debate on the role and place of women in parliament and in society.

Woman parliamentarian, Burkina Faso

The presence of women in parliament can bring about remarkable change in the country, especially in the area of promotion of gender equality and also poverty reduction. The Senate represents the voice of people at local level. Therefore, when more women come to higher positions, they can play an important role in addressing women’s concerns and promoting more women in decision-making positions. More women in parliament will be considered a success and recognition from society of women’s capacity in the development of the country, especially from men. This will encourage and give more confidence to other women to participate in all political, social and economic activities.

Woman parliamentarian, Cambodia

In past parliamentary sessions, women’s issues have not been given priority as the number of women parliamentarians has been limited; as the number of women in this parliament has increased to about 25 percent, they are highlighting the importance of women’s issues and promoting legislation to support women’s equity, equality and empowerment.

Woman parliamentarian, Sudan

In recent years we have noticed a small change in the Cyprus Parliament on gender issues. The change is connected to the fact that more women are elected and they are very actively involved in parliamentary work.

Woman parliamentarian, Cyprus

In past parliamentary sessions, women’s issues have not been given priority as the number of women parliamentarians has been limited; as the number of women in this parliament has increased to about 25 percent, they are highlighting the importance of women’s issues and promoting legislation to support women’s equity, equality and empowerment.

Woman parliamentarian, Sudan

## Case Study: Do numbers Matter? A Revised Critical Mass Theory

*Drude Dahlerup, Professor of Political Science, Stockholm University, Sweden*

According to conventional wisdom, it takes a critical mass of women to make a difference in politics. This argument has been used by advocates of gender balance in politics, and also by those involved in the quota debate. In fact, the most common proportion advocated by proponents of gender quotas in politics is 30 percent—but why 30 percent and not 20 percent or 50 percent?

In the 1980s, the critical mass argument was used primarily to apply to situations where women had not reached 30 percent in parliaments or local councils. Consequently, the argument was that it was unrealistic to expect major changes until women's representation had reached a critical mass, because a small number of women in politics tend to be tokenistic.

Today, however, experience tells us that it is impossible to identify such a fixed turning point, be it 20 percent or 30 percent. Of course, the numbers or percentages of women in parliaments and local councils are important for reasons of democratic legitimacy and for many other reasons. But maybe the theory of a critical mass needs to be reformulated. Even a few women can make a big difference in politics under the right conditions.

Originally, the term critical mass was borrowed from nuclear physics, where it refers to the quantity needed to start a chain reaction—an irreversible turning point or a take-off into a new situation or process. By analogy, it has been said that a qualitative shift will take place when women exceed a proportion of about 20, 30 or 50 percent in an organization or assembly. Important points about minority behaviour were taken from the organizational theory of Rosabeth Moss Kanter (1977) and from the classic article of Helen Mayer Hacker (1952) on women's "minority status" in society at large. Based on the experience of the Nordic countries, in which women were already 30 percent of parliamentarians by the 1980s, Drude Dahlerup (1988) argued that the move from a small to a large minority is significant, but that critical acts may be more important than a critical mass. Recently, the critical mass theory has been revisited and rephrased. Mona Lena Krook and Sarah Child (2006) argue that we should study "critical actors" and their role in pursuing policy change, either alone or together with others—women as well as men.

Maybe the very question "do women make a difference in politics?" is wrong: try "do men make a difference in politics?" Perhaps we should ask instead under what conditions an increase in women's political representation can lead to change, not only in public policy, but also in the political culture and climate, the efficiency of women politicians and the way we talk about women politicians in a society.

One may argue that the relative number of women as a minority in political institutions is most important when we look at politics as a workplace. Here, we return to Moss Kanter's organizational perspectives. How important is the relative number of women to their ability to become effective in their work—to perform their tasks as politicians the way they individually prefer in spite of being a minority? How important are numbers for issues such as stigmatization, exclusion, incumbency and providing role models? No doubt, political life is much harder for women politicians who want to pursue an agenda of change if they also have to fight for their basic rights as women parliamentarians and local councillors.

We know that in most countries it is female politicians who have placed issues of gender equality on the political agenda. If successful, they may also have changed the attitudes of their male colleague on issues like childcare, violence against women and women's rights in general—thus decreasing gender differences within a party. At any rate, numbers interrelate with other factors, making isolating the effect of sheer numbers almost impossible.

For further information see *Politics & Gender*, vol. 2, no 4 (2006).

pool of women therefore means that there are more to draw from who will act on behalf of women.<sup>25</sup> Women are also not a homogenous group. A greater presence of women provides a broader spectrum of views to fully represent their diverse views, not just on women's concerns but on all policy matters.

### **The Voice of a Few**

The presence of greater numbers of women in parliament generally increases the chance that women's concerns, or the views of women, will be raised—in debates, in committee work and in party caucuses. When the numbers of women are small, however, the opportunities for such interventions decrease. A small number of women in parliament can put added pressure on those female members to raise the concerns of women. This is particularly difficult in countries where the number of women is negligible. Although a difficult task, by working with allies inside and outside parliament, parliamentarians can still strive to make an impact, as noted by the only woman Member of Parliament in Sao Tome:

*I do feel the weight of women on my shoulders and I do think I have a great responsibility as*

*the only woman in parliament. I represent half of society in Sao Tome. I have a huge responsibility but I believe that I am supported by women on the outside who help me too. I am also the Chairperson of the Human Rights Committee in Sao Tome, which gives me another forum to discuss women's issues where I act as spokeswoman for women's concerns in parliament. For example, I would be very pleased if the bill on domestic violence against women was adopted in parliament. It would be a huge step in the direction of eliminating all forms of violence against women.*<sup>26</sup>

When women constitute a small minority in parliament, it may be hard for them to be confident that their views will garner enough support to be influential. Moreover, as is discussed in Chapter 5, much of the important detailed work is done in parliamentary committees. In countries with a low representation of women, respondents complained that there are just not enough women to participate effectively in the work of committees. Women are either left out of policy discussions by virtue of their physical

## **Case Study: Women's Parliamentary Presence in Cambodia**

*Ms. Saumura Tioulong, a Member of Parliament in Cambodia since 1998, highlights some of the challenges posed by the small number of women in parliament.*

In Cambodia, because the number of women in leadership positions has not reached a certain level—you could call it a threshold—I do not think that women have been able to make any impact on society, at least seen from the political point of view. Of course, economically or socially speaking they have; their role has emerged and their influence, for example on the economy, has grown over the past 10 years. Unfortunately, this has not been reflected in the political arena.

I think women have different priorities because we are different so we definitely see things in a different way and we imagine solutions that are different. The problem is that women represent such a minority of opinion in parliament that it is difficult for them to express an opinion which they know is not going to gather enough support to be adopted or acted on. In terms of legislation, we have worked on domestic violence. It took us in parliament six or seven years to have the draft law on domestic violence finally adopted. It kept on being deferred because many men just did not think it was a priority. There was always something else that was of greater priority.

Because of the practice of party discipline, and of course the party leadership is male-dominated, it is difficult for women who feel already so lonely to go back to their respective parties and try to get encouragement or support from their male leadership. Most of the time, they do not get that support. So what we have to do is to go through different channels that are less institutionalized or less formal, such as using and working with international organizations.

(Edited excerpts from interview, Geneva, October 2007)

### Box 4.3: Women's Representation in Parliamentary Committees

Women are very poorly represented on important bodies at all levels, including in both houses of parliament. They are therefore very poorly represented on the committees as well.

Woman parliamentarian, Morocco

There are only four women in parliament; three of them are in Cabinet. Only one woman is a committee member of about three committees: this is insufficient.

Male parliamentarian, Samoa

The representation of women is not at all sufficient. There is a disproportionate female representation in parliament. Invariably, the number of women on committees is not sufficient. To ensure women representation on every committee, all women members sit on more than one committee.

Male parliamentarian, Zambia

The number of elected and nominated women fluctuates but has never been higher than 30 percent. There are simply not enough women to serve all the committees, although the women do serve on several and thus work harder than their male counterparts.

Woman parliamentarian, Jamaica

The number of women on committees in the parliament is insufficient because there are no women at all on any of the parliamentary committees.

Male parliamentarian, Solomon Islands

The number of women in both houses—the Senate and the lower house—is still limited. There are not enough women to make a sufficient number of members on all or even most of the committees

Woman parliamentarian, Jordan

The number of women is insufficient. There are approximately 18 per cent women in the parliament and therefore they cannot be represented on all committees. The rules state that a Member of Parliament may work only in one Committee.

Male parliamentarian, Ukraine

We need to have more women in our parliament to implement and also pass bills successfully that have to do with gender balance.

Woman parliamentarian, Liberia

absence, or overloaded with committee work, which means they ultimately cannot dedicate sufficient time to committees and their inquiries. The solution, expressed in Box 4.3, would be to increase the number of women in committees to ensure a gender perspective in all policy outputs.

## Summary

The involvement of women in setting political priorities delivers a stronger and more representative democracy and results in better outcomes for citizens. Women parliamentarians have made great strides in shaping legislative agendas in their countries. While parliaments vary in terms of the number of women members, it is apparent that the efforts of women

have resulted in more policies that are of benefit to them and the communities in which they are based. Women have raised their concerns in debating chambers, and proposed and supported bills, prompting parliaments to take the concerns of women into account in policy development. Women parliamentarians are the most ardent promoters and defenders of women and have redefined political priorities to include women's concerns and perspectives.

In particular, efforts to combat gender-based violence are yielding results on the legislative front the world over. Women in parliaments in all regions of the world are at the forefront of efforts to combat this scourge which is endemic in many societies. Legislative agendas are also focusing on parental leave and childcare, pensions, gender equality laws and elec-

toral reform in favour of enhancing women's access to parliaments. Women have been the key actors in placing these issues on the legislative agenda. But the role does not fall exclusively to women as men slowly begin to take up these issues too. In some notable instance, the efforts of women parliamentarians to forge partnerships with their male colleagues have paid dividends. However, how men can further support gender equality policies requires further attention and future action.

In some instances, however, women who want to act on behalf of women face constraints in their work: sometimes they do not have the support of their peers, while at other times they may find that the gender-based policies they advocate are at odds with the policies of the political parties they represent. It is not possible to prove conclusively a causal link between the number of women parliamentarians and their substantive representation, or when women are able to make a difference "acting for women". Numbers do matter, however, as women's increased presence in parliament can, at a minimum, facilitate the articulation of women's concerns and alter the gender dynamics. At a maximum, increased num-

bers can result in women's leadership in sponsoring bills, working in committees or amending laws that transform and benefit communities and the society as a whole. The more women there are to go around, and the more women and men work in partnership, the more the responsibility can be shared.

The fact that women parliamentarians are responsible for putting women's concerns on the legislative agenda does not imply that all women have done so or feel a responsibility to do so. Women are also looking beyond women's concerns to other areas traditionally thought of as men's domain, such as fiscal policy and foreign affairs. This study bears out the finding that the policies of political parties are central in determining legislative priorities and agendas, and it is at this level that more needs to be done to support a women's agenda in partnership with largely male-dominated leaderships. As more bills are passed and laws amended, policy oversight and implementation will become central. One of the challenges now facing women parliamentarians is to ensure policy implementation and to hold governments to account. ■

## Endnotes

1. See for example United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, 2005. *Gender Equality: Striving for Justice in an Unequal World*, UNRISD, Geneva. p. 163; Childs, Sarah, Joni Lovenduski and Rosie Campbell, 2005. *Women at the Top 2005: Changing Numbers, Changing Politics?* Hansard Society, London; Skjeie, Hege, 1998. "Credo on Difference—Women in Parliament in Norway" in Azza Karam (ed.), *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers*, International IDEA, Stockholm; Swers, Michele. L., 2002. *The Difference Women Make: The Policy Impact of Women in Congress*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago. Further examples are available in the Bibliography.
2. See for example Gretchen Bauer and Hannah Britton (eds) 2006. *Women in African Parliaments*, Lynne Rienner Publishers; Colleen Lowe Morna (ed.), 2004. *Ring Up the Changes: Gender in Southern African Politics*, Gender Links, Johannesburg.
3. Joni Lovenduski and Azza Karam, "Women in Parliament: Making a Difference," in Julie Ballington and Azza Karam (eds), 2005. *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers*, International IDEA, Stockholm, p. 201.
4. See for example Colleen Lowe Morna (ed.), 2004. *Ring Up the Changes: Gender in Southern African Politics*, Gender Links, Johannesburg.
5. Personal interview with Ms. Nora Schimming-Chase (Member of Parliament, Namibia), Geneva, October 2007.
6. IPU (Marilyn Waring, Gaye Greenwood and Christine Pintat), 2000. *Politics: Women's Insight*, IPU, Geneva, pp. 38-39.
7. Colleen Lowe Morna (ed.), 2004. *Ring Up the Changes: Gender in Southern African Politics*, Gender Links, Johannesburg, p.189.
8. Personal interview with Ms. Doris Stump (Member of Parliament, Switzerland), Geneva, October 2007.
9. Personal interview with Ms. Maria das Neves Sousa (Member of Parliament, Sao Tome), Geneva, October 2007.
10. Personal interview with Mr. Agust Agustsson (Member of Parliament, Iceland), Geneva, October 2007.
11. Personal interview, Ms. Victoire Ndikumana, (Member of Parliament, Burundi), Geneva, December 2007.

12. Sarah Childs, Josie Lovenduski and Rosie Campbell, 2005. *Women at the Top 2005: Changing Numbers, Changing Politics?* Hansard Society, London, p. 56.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 61.
14. Personal interview, Ms Saumura Tioulong, (Member of Parliament, Cambodia), Geneva, October 2007.
15. Childs et al, p. 154.
16. UNRISD, 2005. p.158.
17. Personal interview with Ms. Maria das Neves Sousa (Member of Parliament, Sao Tome), Geneva, October 2007.
18. Interview with Ms. Beth Mugo, (Member of Parliament, Kenya), Geneva, October 2007.
19. *Idem.*
20. According to John Mathiason, the 30 percent was included in the Agreed Conclusions adopted at the 1990 session of the Commission on the Status of Women. It was subsequently endorsed again at the Beijing Conference in 1995. For further information see John Mathiason, 2001. *The Long March to Beijing: the United Nations and the Women's Revolution*, vol. 1, the Vienna Years, Mt. Tremper, NY, AIMS, Inc.
21. UNRISD, 2005. p.149
22. IPU, Politics: *Women's Insight*, p. 30.
23. Personal interview with Mr. Agust Agustsson (Member of Parliament, Iceland), Geneva, October 2007.
24. Colleen Lowe Morna (ed.), 2004. *Ringing Up the Changes*, p. 33.
25. Personal interview with Ms. Minodora Cliveti (Member of Parliament, Romania), Riga, December 2007.
26. Personal interview with Ms. Maria das Neves Sousa. *op. cit.*

# Chapter 5

## Institutional Change: Gender-sensitive Parliaments

“Institutions are a microcosm of our society. Institutional transformation is both a litmus test of, and a pre-requisite for, societal transformation.”<sup>1</sup>

Chapter 4 examined how women in parliaments have made their presence felt and highlighted some of the specific policy areas in which women are most active. Although the number of women in parliaments around the world varies greatly, it is apparent that the gradual increase in women’s presence has resulted in new priorities being placed on the legislative agenda. Women parliamentarians are the most ardent promoters and defenders of women and have redefined political priorities to include women’s concerns and perspectives. In particular, efforts to combat gender-based violence are yielding results, and legislative efforts are also addressing parental leave and childcare, pensions, gender equality laws and electoral reform in favour of enhancing women’s access to parliaments. The research also demonstrates, however, that women face certain obstacles in pursuing change, such as their relative numbers in positions of power and the ideologies and policies of political parties.

This chapter focuses on the institution of parliament—the organization, the rules, the processes and structures through which politics is done. When women enter parliament, they typically enter a male domain where the vast majority function according to rules established by men. This creates another set of potential challenges for women—challenges that they have already begun to confront. This chapter highlights some of the initiatives that have been taken and the changes introduced to improve the gender sensitivity of parliaments. First, it examines the institutional structures that have been put in place to facilitate gender mainstreaming, such as through

committees. Second, it addresses some of the changes to the rules and practices of parliaments under consideration to make them more gender-sensitive and family-friendly.

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### Key questions include:

- Do the traditional rules and practices of parliament affect women’s participation?
- What institutional structures have been put in place to facilitate the work of women? What has been the effect of parliamentary bodies, such as committees and women’s caucuses, on gender mainstreaming?
- Has the presence of women in parliament brought about more gender-sensitive norms and practices?

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## Parliamentary Structures

As is demonstrated in the previous chapters, a stronger presence of women in parliament allows for new priorities and issues to be highlighted and addressed. Mainstreaming gender equality in the work of parliament should contribute to effective policies that address the needs and interests of both halves of the population. There are no systematic strategies for gender mainstreaming, however, and this has resulted in piecemeal approaches being taken in different legislatures.<sup>2</sup> Survey respondents were

asked about the factors which were most influential in shaping a more gender-sensitive parliamentary agenda. Overall, respondents identified the following as the most influential:

- The support of the ruling party in parliament;
- The work of parliamentary committees, including committees that specialize in gender equality and the status of women;
- The work done by women's parliamentary caucuses, which are cross-party networks of women; and
- New rules established for the functioning of parliament.

## Parliamentary Committees

Much of the work of parliaments is done through parliamentary committees. Legislative committees conduct detailed examinations of bills that come before the parliament, while oversight or scrutiny committees examine government administration and may also propose new policies or laws. These may be supplemented by ad hoc or select committees established for a particular purpose.<sup>3</sup> Committees usually report to the parliament as a whole and make recommendations for government action on the matters under consideration. Methods of appointing committee members vary in parliaments around the world and may include appointment by political parties or groups represented in parliament (in proportion to their overall representation in the chamber) or election by all members.

### Gender mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming is a strategy that puts gender equality issues at the centre of broad policy decisions, institutional structures and resource allocation. It also includes the views and priorities of women in decision-making structures.<sup>4</sup> There is no single model for gender mainstreaming but institutional mechanisms are crucial. Committee work offers an important opportunity for mainstreaming gender issues in the work of parliament, not only in developing legislation but also in terms of oversight of government action. Many women parliamentarians work through committees to voice their concerns and interests and raise the profile of gender issues.

However, the low level of representation of women in the world's parliaments continues to hamper gender mainstreaming efforts. Research undertaken by the IPU in 1988 and again in 1991 found that the low proportion of women in parliamentarians made it difficult for them to participate in all parliamentary committees, and that they tended to be concentrated in committees dealing with social issues, health, the family and education.<sup>5</sup> The low proportion of women also meant that there were fewer and less varied committees in which they were able to participate, relative to men. Similarly, the 2000 study *Politics: Women's Insight* revealed that more than two-thirds of those surveyed believed that the absence of women in committees affected the development of legislation and that greater proportions of women in parliament were needed for satisfactory policy making.<sup>6</sup> As much of the work of parliament is done in committees, it is important for women to be present and active, and for their views and concerns to be raised and considered.

However, there has been seemingly little progress to date. Parliamentarians were asked if they considered that the number of women in parliamentary committees was sufficient. Overall, two-thirds of respondents replied that they did not think the presence of women was sufficient, while less than one-third thought that it was.

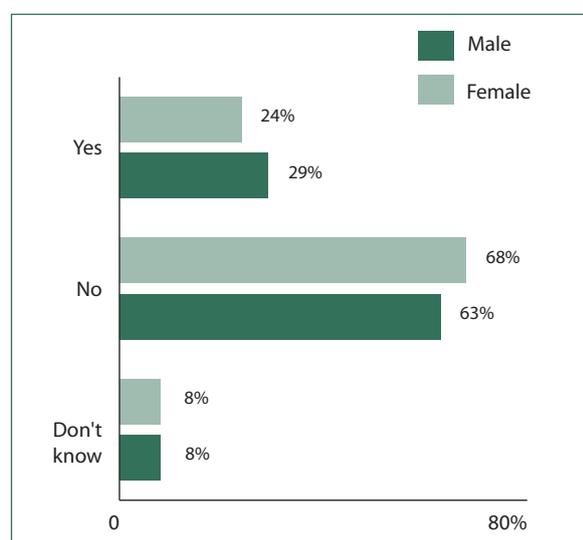


Figure 5.1: Does a Sufficient Number of Women Serve on your Parliamentary Committees?

Chapter 4 highlighted some of challenges that women parliamentarians face in pursuing their policy priorities. One of the challenges highlighted is linked to their low numbers in parliament: often there are simply not enough women to participate

## Case Study: Mainstreaming Gender in the Austrian Parliament

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*Mrs. Maria Rauch-Kallat, Member of the Parliament of Austria and former Minister of Health and Women, highlights the different strategies for mainstreaming gender and working in partnership with men.*

In politics, there are several things that are important to promoting gender equality. First, consciousness-raising with men as well as with women is very important. Very often women do not realize what constitutes discrimination and it takes some time to see. This is especially true of hidden discrimination which is not felt—or at least not immediately. Second, legislation and legal measures help to promote women and to eliminate or punish discrimination. Third, the support of various organizations that promote women is needed—NGOs as well as party organizations.

One of the most important things is to have a fair share in family work, for as long as mothers still have 80 per cent of the load of family work, the education of children, managing the household, and so on, they will never have enough time to engage in politics. So a fair share means not only a fair share in politics but also a fair share in family work by fathers.

The best way to work for equality in parliament is to ensure gender mainstreaming throughout all structures, such as through committees where the outcomes for men and women of every law we are debating should be examined. Of course, committees on gender equality have a function in consciousness-raising and in taking initiatives to promote women.

Building political party support is also important, especially if a party is the governing party and you need the parliamentary group to reaffirm laws. A good opinion-forming process is needed together with the support of parliamentary groups. Party leaders also have a responsibility to promote equality between men and women, especially in terms of numbers in their parliamentary group.

In the Austrian Parliament we have a lot of men who work as our partners, so we are not working against men. We need the support of men to improve the situation. Sometimes men are mentors, so we have built up mentoring in Austria. When I was Minister for Women, we built up a big mentoring programme. This measure has helped a lot and while we normally ask women to mentor women, we also take men as mentors for women. A very important strategy is networking, so we built up various networks for women and mixed networks for men and women. It is important for women to take time for networking, because men are very successful at networking. Women often do not take the time for networking, but they are improving.

(Edited excerpt from interview, Geneva, December 2007)

in all the committees, or women may have to take on additional work and spread themselves too thinly by taking on several committee assignments. This also leads to women having a far heavier workload than men. The low number of women in parliaments affects their ability to be effective in committee work, as a woman parliamentarian from Sudan commented:

*The proportion of women in parliament is less than 25 percent and this is reflected in the low number of women in the committees, which is not sufficient to allow women to affect political decisions.*

### The Concentration of Women in “Soft Committees”

Traditionally, women have tended to be concentrated in committees that deal with social issues, education, health and family affairs. *Politics: Women’s Insight* confirmed this imbalance in committee assignments in 2000, revealing that women tend to concentrate in certain committees such as those dealing with health and education. While these portfolios are important, as they often scrutinize a large share of public expenditure, women are often absent from or struggle for representation in other portfolios such as finance and foreign affairs.<sup>7</sup> This research confirms the prevalence of this trend. That women tend to be concentrated in certain portfolios is demonstrated by the views of parliamentarians in Box 5.1. A woman parliamentarian from Burkina Faso notes that:

*Most women are concentrated in the committees on social and cultural affairs. For a long time there was only one woman on the Finance and Budget Committee, yet this is the committee that allocates and distributes the resources for government policy. Women are also poorly represented on the legal committee.*

This trend is evident not only in countries with a low number of women representatives. A respondent notes that this is true even in Sweden, a country which is often well regarded in terms of equality and has achieved near-parity between women and men in parliament:

*We have 48 percent women in parliament but there are committees that are not balanced. The imbalance is traditional: men in defence and women in social affairs.*

### Box 5.1: Women’s Concentration in the “Soft Committees”

In some committees there are very few women and in others there are too many, depending on the theme—health and education are women’s areas and the economy and finance are men’s.

Woman parliamentarian, Switzerland

Some committees do not have a single woman, such as Roads and Transport, Sports and Finance.

Male parliamentarian, Ghana

There are 15 percent women in parliament, 29 out of 200 deputies. They are not represented in all the parliamentary committees, such as the economic committee. There is a higher representation of women in the committees dealing with education and health and European affairs.

Woman parliamentarian, Czech Republic

Of the 500 deputies in the National Assembly, only 40 are women. Two are members of the Bureau of the Socio Cultural Committee. There are too few women to cover the committees sufficiently.

Woman parliamentarian, Democratic Republic of the Congo

There are too few women in the following committees: defence and security, agriculture and the environment, the economy and planning, and generally finance.

Woman parliamentarian, Niger

There should be more women in economics affairs, finance and trade committees, and more men in equal opportunities and health committees.

Woman parliamentarian, Austria

There are very few of us for the number of parliamentary committees, we focus on those where there are the most difficulties (family, education, health).

Woman parliamentarian, Chile

The inclusion of a few women in policy making, especially a good number of women who are chairing some important committees, has brought about a good change and given women a lot of prestige in this respect.

Woman parliamentarian, Pakistan

The trend for women to be concentrated in certain portfolios is not only evident at the parliamentary level. At the executive level, too, the majority of women ministers tend to hold the so-called “soft” portfolios—those related to social affairs, the family, children, youth and women’s affairs. Of the 1,022 ministerial portfolios held by women worldwide in 2008, only six were defence portfolios.<sup>8</sup> Some dispute the term “soft” portfolio, as education and social affairs often carry the biggest budgets and they can have “hard” consequences for nations. Yet women’s absence from those committees dealing with the economy, finance and the budget means that women are losing out on having their voices and perspectives heard in determining financial priorities and shaping national agendas. As much of the work of parliament is done in committees, it is there that women must be present and press for the inclusion of their views in all policy matters.

## Parliamentary Committees on Gender Equality and the Status of Women

The past two decades have seen a proliferation of committees that deal exclusively with gender equality matters, or include gender equality among the issues in their scope:

- In 1991, committees dealing with women’s issues existed in 21 of the 96 parliaments for which information was available.
- In 2008 there were 93 parliamentary committees in 80 countries with responsibility for addressing gender equality matters.<sup>9</sup> Just 35 countries have reported that they do not have such committees.
- The region with the highest concentration of committees dealing with gender issues is Europe (35), followed by Africa (18) and the Americas (12). A handful of committees are found in Asia, the Arab States and the Pacific.<sup>10</sup>

The establishment of these committees can be politically significant, illustrating the importance that a parliament attaches to achieving gender equality

in its work. Such committees are also important as they “bring gender equality into the main building rather than leaving it out in the wings”.<sup>11</sup>

Of the existing committees, 38 are permanent and specialize in gender equality issues, while 55 are multifunctional and address gender matters along with other areas, such as human rights, equal opportunities, social affairs, youth or children. The committees have powers that range from the authority to introduce legislation to mainly monitoring and oversight functions. Different tools are available for committees to do their work, including oral and written questions, and the right to summon ministers and government officials and to hold public hearings.<sup>12</sup>

These committees are valuable for providing a forum for parliamentarians to scrutinize all proposed legislation from a gender perspective. They also serve to enhance the gender aspects of many political issues and the legislative agenda, and to generate public discussion.<sup>13</sup> When asked about the functioning of specialized committees on gender equality in countries where they exist, 56 percent of parliamentarians either agreed or strongly agreed that they are effective in their work, 31 percent were ambivalent, and 13 percent either disagreed or strongly disagreed. Overall, the majority of respondents believed that the committees dealing with gender make useful contributions to the work of parliament. Interestingly, men form half or more of the membership in 50 percent of the committees dealing with gender equality and the status of women. Only one committee has 100 percent female membership.<sup>14</sup>

### A Dual Approach

There is no single approach to mainstreaming gender concerns in parliament. In addition to gender mainstreaming through specialized or multifunctional committees, other parliaments seek to mainstream gender through existing, mainstream committee structures. Some parliaments use a combination of the two approaches, working through both mainstream and specialized committees simultaneously. As gender equality is a cross-cutting issue, it is important that it is mainstreamed into all parliamentary committees, regardless of the portfolio.

## Case Study: Gender Mainstreaming and Committees in Cyprus

*Ms. Sotiroula Charalambous is a Member of Parliament in the House of Representatives in Cyprus and Chairperson of the Committee for Equality between Women and Men, the Vice-Chairperson of the Committee for Labour and Social Affairs and a member of the Committee for Economic and Budgetary Affairs. Ms. Charalambous highlights the importance of committee work for mainstreaming a gender perspective in parliament.*

Our main function as parliamentarians is the legislative function, which of course is very important, but you have to take into consideration that in Cyprus we have a constitutional restriction that we cannot put up a bill in parliament which affects the budget. This is something very typical for our parliament. When a draft bill comes to parliament, for example, we can amend this bill only if the government agrees. This is the biggest restriction in parliament.

The majority of bills come from the government, but we use another tool that we have in our hands which is to raise issues for discussion in parliamentary committees and thereby exercise pressure on the government to address certain issues. So, for example, if we want to have paid parental leave, we put the issue on the parliamentary committee agenda to be discussed. In this way we exercise pressure, and we try to bring on board non-governmental organizations that are relevant to the issues at hand in the parliamentary committees in order to raise their voice and support us in our work. We become a pressure group on the government.

The main avenue for gender mainstreaming is the specialized committee but we are also trying to raise gender issues in each committee. I think that this is very helpful because, for example in the budgetary committee, the president of the committee is a woman, so this helps because the budgetary committee has the duty to examine the whole budget. But, in order to do this, you have to have women on the committees. In recent years it has been very positive that not only have women parliamentarians raised issues in their relative committees that have to do with gender issues, but also men parliamentarians—to me this is a very positive step.

What is positive and what will achieve progress in our parliament is that we have women who are chairpersons of committees. Before being the chairperson of the specialized committee, I was the President of the Labour and Social Insurance Committee. This helps because it is a very practical way of showing that women can do the same as men and they can even be better than men.

Edited excerpt from interview, Geneva, December 2007

“

This is what gender mainstreaming is about. It is not only one committee dealing with “women’s affairs” but every committee, and everybody has to look into what a new law means for women and whether or not it helps to improve the situation for women.<sup>15</sup>

”

## Case Study: Gender Mainstreaming in Sweden

*Ms. Annika Carlsson, Member of the Committee on the Labour Market, Sweden, highlights the Swedish approach to gender mainstreaming.*

When adopting a position on a political proposal, the consequences for both women and men are taken into consideration. By taking into account the differences in conditions for women and men in connection with various proposals, the aim is to achieve a practical political outcome that promotes women's and men's equal opportunities and puts right any injustices. A thorough gender equality analysis sometimes makes it possible to see that certain measures are necessary to enable women and men to achieve the same objectives. It is also important to be aware that, even if gender aspects are analysed, the same conclusions will not always be reached by all women. It is possible to agree on the objectives but not on how to achieve them.

In the 1990s parliamentary working methods changed and gender equality issues were gradually assigned to the individual parliamentary committees. If a proposal contains measures to combat violence against women, the matter is considered by the Committee on Justice. If issues concerning gender equality in the health services are raised, then the Committee on Health and Welfare deals with the matter. Each issue is, quite simply, considered by the committee to which the field of activities belongs. . . . This practice is now included formally in the Riksdag Act.

The Swedish parliamentary model, where each committee is responsible for specific policy areas, has a number of strengths and weaknesses. Its weaknesses include that:

- The gender equality perspective is forgotten when a large number of proposals have to be considered; and
- Gender equality is weighed against other priority areas, such as immigration, the elderly or children.

Its strengths include that:

- Decisions are taken where the power and money are, which means that it is easier to make and implement changes.
- Issues are not considered in any particular order; and they are not considered to be women's issues.
- All parliamentary committees are obliged to take account of how their proposals will affect women as well as men.
- Gender equality is not about a single issue with a universal solution—there are many issues and many different solutions which need to be resolved in various stages in order to achieve equal rights for women and men, and equal opportunities in all areas of society.

There is plenty of room for improvement in Sweden, in Europe and throughout the world. Women must never feel satisfied with making just a bit of progress. Women today must take responsibility for ensuring that tomorrow's generation have the opportunity to become what they want, without any limitations imposed by an unequal society. If this is to be achieved, gender equality cannot be treated as an isolated issue. It has to be included in all policy areas.

Excerpt from a case study published in IPU, 2007. *The Role of Parliamentary Committees in Mainstreaming Gender and Promoting the Status of Women*, Report 52. Geneva. pp. 13–15.

An IPU report on the role of parliamentary committees in mainstreaming gender equality found that successful mainstreaming in parliaments also depends on the coordination between committees in parliament, such as convening common sittings that debate the contents of specific bills and ensure the inclusion of a gender perspective. This coordination is particularly crucial for budget and finance committees, with a view to developing gender-sensitive budgets. Men should play a greater role, ensuring that a gender perspective results from the inclusion of the views of both men and women.

Committees on gender equality can be effective bodies for channelling the concerns of women but it is also important to ensure that women's concerns do not become relegated or marginalized in such committees. Some parliaments have therefore opted to mainstream gender concerns in all parliamentary committees, rather than establishing a specialized gender body, as is highlighted in the case study on Sweden.

### Gender budgeting

Gender budgeting is an approach that aims to develop policies that mainstream gender. It aims to “mainstream gender in the budgetary process and bring a gender perspective into economic policy making . . . most importantly, it is about changing policies and transforming processes.”<sup>16</sup> Gender budgeting therefore refers not only to expenditures earmarked for women, but also to an analysis of the entire budget from a gender perspective, including security, health, education, public works, and so on, to ensure that the allocations address the needs of both women and men.

Parliamentarians and members of committees have a role in this process. The purpose of gender committees is to raise gender issues during the budget debates, develop partnerships with the budget committees, and serve as conduits between women's organizations and parliament. Parliamentarians can ensure that the correct questions are being asked and that governments are held to account. Parliamentary committees can further transform what is essentially a political debate into a public one by incorporating interest groups and civil society. In addition, scrutinizing the operating budget of parliament and undertaking a gender impact analysis of the priorities and expenditure allocations can be useful tools for identifying specific areas that require funding.

Several parliamentarians have taken part in specialized training and information sessions on the mechanics of gender budgeting. Such forums offer important cross-border learning and networking opportunities, particularly when both men and women take part.<sup>17</sup> In addition to gender budgeting, several parliamentarians have benefited from gender mainstreaming training and capacity-building workshops, which can be important tools for supporting institutional transformation.

## Women's Caucuses

Women in several countries have realized that as a minority in parliament, it is advantageous to form alliances and coalitions to affect change. Of the 77 countries for which the IPU has data, just under half of the parliaments reported the existence of a caucus of women parliamentarians. Such bodies have been formed on the understanding that they are important forums for bringing women together across political party lines to channel the interests and concerns of women. They are also important forums for working with other partners and engaging members of civil society, as a parliamentarian from Uganda explained:

*We have formed the Uganda Women's Parliamentary Association through which we promote gender issues in parliament. We have also learned to lobby male parliamentarians to support gender issues. We also reach out to civil society organizations and all those who can help us push gender issues effectively.*

Women's caucuses undertake a range of functions, such as conducting studies to “examine the gender gaps in all our legislation pertaining to women and children” as a parliamentarian from Zimbabwe explained. In those countries with women's caucuses, 61 percent of the respondents believe that such caucuses have been successful at influencing parliamentary or legislative activities and providing oversight. A women parliamentarian explained the successes of the women's caucus in Burkina Faso:

*Women parliamentarians have proved that they can assume their role at least as well as men, if not better. They have had to act in united and concerted fashion, giving the men pause for thought. They have shown that when they have a common interest, they can pave over their ideological differences to fight together and obtain remarkable results.*

## Case Study: Gender Responsive Budgets

It is often assumed that a national budget is gender-neutral; that in its functions, a budget will benefit women and men, girls and boys equally. In fact, by failing to take account of the different roles, capabilities and needs of women and men, budgets can reinforce existing inequalities. The purpose of bringing a gender perspective to the budget is to ensure that budgets and economic policies address the needs of women and men, girls and boys of different backgrounds equitably, and to attempt to close any social and economic gaps that exist between them.

To achieve economic efficiency, budgets and the policies they finance should recognise the dependence of the paid economy on the unpaid care sector and plan for both of them appropriately. While economic efficiency is a compelling reason for budgets to be gender-responsive, the goal of equity is equally important. Parliaments can monitor government commitments fulfilled through the allocation of resources to bridge existing gender gaps in capabilities, opportunities and decision-making power. In addition, tracking expenditures against gender and development commitments improves accountability and transparency of the budgetary process and the effectiveness of budget policies.

### **How to perform a gender analysis of budgets:**

Several tools have been developed for use in gender analyses of expenditures and revenues. A commonly used tool is the Gender-Aware Budget Statement, which can be applied to the whole budget or to a number of sectors. Expenditures and revenues are analysed, using various tools, for their likely impacts on different groups of women and men, girls and boys.

### **Gender analysis of expenditures**

#### *Step 1: Situation gender analysis of a sector*

This analysis begins with studying key documents and data on gender issues in the country and identifying their underlying causes and effects, both immediate and long-term. Very often, parliamentarians and civil society organizations have a fair idea about the social and economic situation of women and men, girls and boys in their constituencies. Data can be found in line ministries, statistical departments and international reports.

#### *Step 2: Gender analysis of sector policy*

In the second stage, sector policy and programme documents are examined to see whether they address the gender issues previously identified. Does the policy reduce gender inequalities, leave them as they are or increase them?

#### *Step 3: Gender analysis of budget allocations*

The third stage analyses the extent to which any policy commitments to address gender concerns are matched by allocations from the budget. Does the government do what it says it is going to do? An assessment is also made of whether the allocations address the gender issues identified in step one.

Gender budgeting initiatives have been developed in over 50 countries, including Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Egypt, Guatemala, India, Kenya, Mexico, Morocco, Mozambique, Nepal, Nigeria, Peru, the Philippines, Senegal, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania and Uganda.

Information from Inter-Parliamentary Union (Joachim Wehner & Winnie Byanyima), 2004. *Parliament, the Budget and Gender*, IPU, UNDP, UNIFEM and World Bank Institute. Geneva.

Two-thirds of respondents believed that women's caucuses have been successful in uniting women across party lines. For one-third of respondents, however, the problem of party loyalty remains. In many instances, women's caucuses do not receive parliamentary support, such as financial resources, support services or even the office and meeting spaces needed to organize their work. Meeting arrangements can be difficult and must be organized around the formal business of the parliament.

Additionally, parliamentarians have highlighted how the work of all bodies dealing with gender equality (parliamentary committees and caucuses) could be greatly facilitated and enhanced by the provision of timely and accurate sex-disaggregated data. Such data would also help parliamentarians to fulfil their watchdog role and oversee government action and progress.<sup>18</sup>

A barrier to the formation of cross-party women's caucuses is that party systems may hinder or actively discourage working across party lines to achieve outcomes, as a parliamentarian from Cambodia explained:

*We tried to organize a cross-party women's caucus but again were hindered. The caucus activities were never able to take off because of party discipline. They come to discuss it but nothing comes out of it. It is like I agree with you that we should have red telephones and I will say it informally to you; and we will have lunch together, and I am like you and I share the same opinion as you. But when it comes to trying to change the phones into red ones, you go back to your party and your leadership says "no, no, no, phones have to be grey". I then go back to my party leadership and they say "no, the phones have*

## Case Study: Namibia's Women's Caucus

*Ms. Margaret Mensah-Williams, Vice-President of the National Council of Namibia, highlights the role of the Women's Caucus in Namibia.*

The gender committee in Namibia concentrates on specific issues, such as HIV and AIDS, whereas the women's caucus plays a vital role in examining all acts for discrimination, and looking at the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The distinction that I make is that the committee looks at issues related to equity or equality to ensure enforcement, whereas the women's caucus actually elevates women to the position where they ought to be.

The caucus is like a watchdog and it pushes issues, whereas in the gender committee I feel that members are approaching the issue from a party political viewpoint. In the women's caucus, there is one objective which is for all of us to be equal and that, to me, is the main distinction: that we do not look at each other and where we come from; we look at each other as women and what we fight for is all the women in the country.

The issues that we address are: (1) the budget; (2) we look at CEDAW and its legislative implications; (3) we reach out and ensure that people understand their rights; and (4) we ensure that all the acts are enforced. The caucus may also come up with motions and issue collective statements on behalf of women where necessary.

The women's caucus is also a disseminator of information and encouragement for people to use and benefit from the laws passed. Otherwise, they just sit on the shelves: good laws, a democratic country, but with little enforcement—so that is very important. In parliament we exercise an oversight function over the executive; so we have an important role as the majority of them are male and will protect and defend what belongs to them.

(Edited excerpts from Interview, Geneva, October 2007)

*to be green” and I say “yes sir” and you say “yes sir” and that is it. So we have not been able to change anything but I think it is important that such a caucus exists.<sup>19</sup>*

## Gender-sensitive Parliaments

Parliaments are organized and operate according to established rules, processes and norms that have historically been determined by men. When women enter parliaments, therefore, they typically enter domains which operate along gendered lines—a political environment where the inherent institutional culture and traditions may be biased against them. This can affect how political representation works in practice.<sup>20</sup> Removing the barriers to women’s participation is therefore crucial for creating gender-friendly parliaments that respond to the needs and interests of both men and women.

The institutional culture of parliament can be reflected in different ways, such as in the facilities of parliament, the rules and norms that have been adopted and the unwritten mores.<sup>21</sup> Debates about modernizing parliaments, in particular adopting gender-sensitive and family-friendly reforms, provide another example of the impact of women’s presence in parliament.<sup>22</sup> In some parliaments, reforms have been successfully implemented in response to the changing gendered needs of parliaments as more women enter them, such as changes in the sitting times. However, in many instances the practices and norms of parliaments remain unchanged, which can act as a deterrent for women. In 2000 *Politics: Women’s Insight* found that many women politicians believed that “male practices” were barriers to women’s participation in parliament. The research highlighted practices that impede women’s progress, such as the old boys’ network, back room deals and a reluctance to give away power.<sup>23</sup> Such barriers are still experienced by women parliamentarians today.

Survey respondents were asked whether the presence of women had brought about a change in the rules and practices of parliament. Figure 5.2 shows that, overall, results were disappointing: only eight percent of respondents believed that there had been a ‘substantial change’ while 20 percent believed there had been a ‘noticeable change’ (with a higher concentration in Europe and Africa); 38 percent believed there had been a ‘small change’ while 31 percent had noted no ‘noticeable change.’

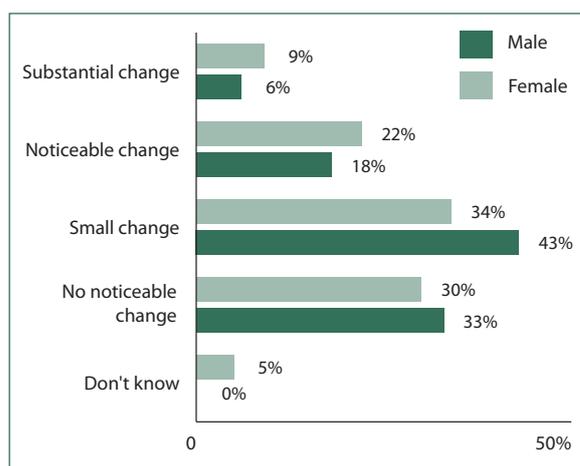


Figure 5.2: Changes in the Rules and Practices of Parliament brought about by the Presence of Women

Respondents were then asked to identify the particular areas in which change had occurred as a result of women’s presence in parliament. Table 5.1 indicates that, overall, both men and women believed that women’s presence had been influential in bringing about a change in parliamentary language<sup>24</sup> and slightly less instrumental in introducing parental leave provisions for parliamentarians. Respondents believed that less progress was evident in terms of changing parliamentary dress codes or the sitting hours of parliament.

Table 5.1: Change Related to Women’s Presence in Parliament

Parliamentary language and behaviour is less aggressive.	2.5
Maternity/paternity leave provisions for parliamentarians have been introduced.	2.3
More training opportunities are provided.	2.1
The rules and practices of parliament have changed.	2.0
Childcare facilities have been introduced.	2.0
Dress codes take into account the needs of women and men.	1.9
The sitting hours of parliament have changed to take into account the needs of women and men.	1.7

The score indicates the average level of activity that respondents attached to each of the policy areas on a four-point scale, where a great deal was scored as 4, noticeable change as 3, small change as 2 and no noticeable change as 1.

## Parliamentary Working Arrangements

Parliaments are workplaces that have been shaped primarily by men. They remain organizations that follow long-held traditions, including the timetable of sitting days and the times for debates and hearings. Parliamentary cultures often emphasize a club-like atmosphere where work inside the building is to be prioritized over other responsibilities. In many cases these priorities and patterns date back to the years before women gained access to parliaments. In the organization of parliamentary business and the schedule of the day, men are still in charge in many instances and this is reflected in how the chamber is organized and how the chamber functions. A key challenge is therefore to identify those aspects of the organization of parliamentary work that can be re-organized and updated to accommodate the needs of both men and women.

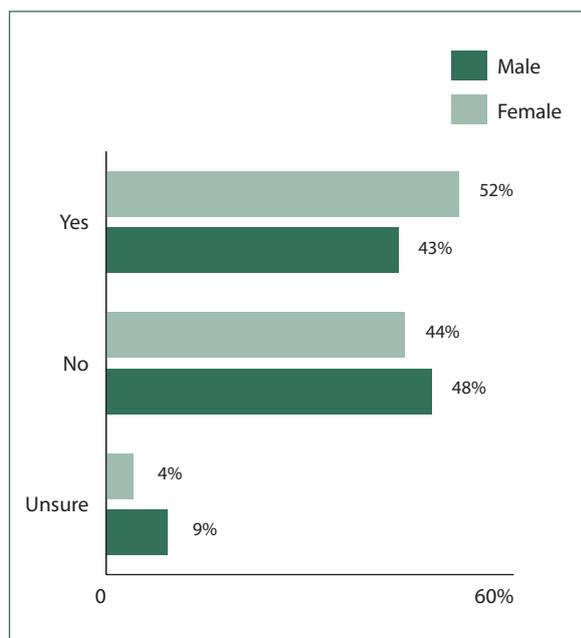
## Family-friendly Working Environments

Typically, institutions in the public domain were established on the assumption that those who worked in them had few or no domestic responsibilities.<sup>25</sup> As many women retain family responsibilities when they enter parliament, they have highlighted the need for a balance between time devoted to parliamentary work and to domestic responsibilities. A woman parliamentarian from Chile noted that:

*Parliamentary work certainly takes up a great deal of time, with sessions lasting from morning until late at night and the many commitments undertaken; this makes it difficult to see one's family. The working hours have to be arranged so that the family occupies an important place on the agenda.*

The challenge of balancing family life and political commitments, however, applies to men too and changing working patterns in parliaments ultimately benefits all members.

The survey found that more than half of women respondents and more than 40 percent of men had faced difficulties in balancing their family and political commitments. Both the increased presence of women in parliaments and evolving societal expectations about men's involvement in the domestic sphere have led to changes in some practices in recent years, but much more needs to be done.



5.3: Balancing Family Life and Political Commitments

## Sitting Hours

As women enter parliaments, one of the main challenges they face is changing working patterns. Overall, women respondents are more likely than men to support reforms that promise to have a differential impact on women, such as the provision of childcare facilities.<sup>26</sup> Women parliamentarians are more likely to feel that parliamentarians should work similar hours to other professions, that the working week should be shorter and that night sittings should be discontinued.

For example, respondents were asked whether they believed that the sitting hours of parliament had changed to take into account the needs of women and men (Figure 5.4).

Disappointingly, few respondents felt that the sitting hours of parliaments had been changed to significantly help parliamentarians to balance their political and domestic responsibilities. Over two-thirds believed that there was 'no noticeable change' or only a 'small change,' with similar levels reported by women and men. While efforts are being made, little significant change was reported across countries. In a handful of parliaments, however, women fought for and won significant reforms in this regard.

In South Africa, for example, the parliamentary calendar has been reorganized to match the school calendar so that parliamentarians are either in recess

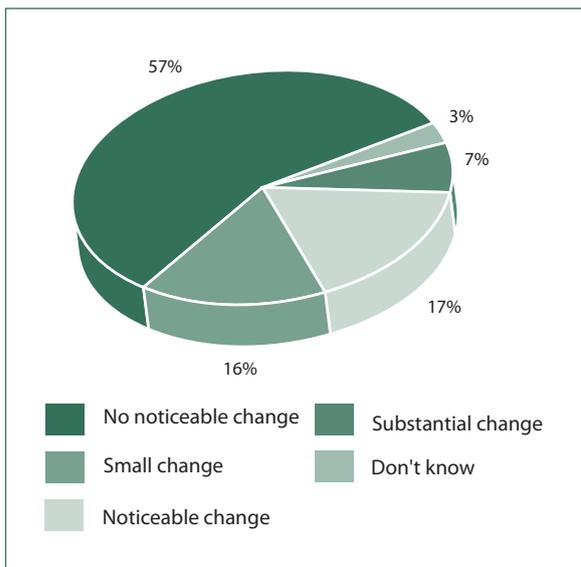


Figure 5.4: Changes to Sitting Times in Parliament

or have constituency time when students are on vacation. Debates finish much earlier in the evening to accommodate parliamentarians with families, and childcare facilities have been put in place. Unfortunately, the responses to this survey (see Box 5.2) highlight that across parliaments there is much more to be done to introduce parliamentary sitting times that are family-friendly and gender-sensitive and accommodate the domestic needs of parliamentarians.

### Childcare

The provision of childcare facilities provides further flexibility for parliamentarians, especially when parliament is far from their home constituencies. One study finds that “of all the possible work place innovations, few make a stronger statement about family-friendly practices than having childcare facilities paid for and arranged by the institution.”<sup>27</sup> In addition, some respondents highlighted parliament’s role in setting an example for other public and private sector workplaces, as a women respondent from Saint Lucia noted:

*I believe that parliament must lead by example in setting up day care places for women parliamentarians so that while they are dealing with the business of running the country they can feel secure that their children are safe. This can also work well for the men who can also assist their wives in taking care of the children. This can be extended to all public offices so as to encourage and increase productivity.*

## Box 5.2: Incremental Institutional Progress

There definitely needs to be more done but, across the board, parliaments have had to consider the demands of women with family or caring responsibilities in sitting hours, and some recognition of childcare needs, although the major responsibility still remains with individuals.

Woman parliamentarian, Australia

The parliament has had to consider timetable changes, day sessions and ending the long-standing male practice of night sessions.

Woman parliamentarian, Argentina

Parliament is currently revising the House Standing Orders to address issues that discriminate against women. For example, women parliamentarians are not allowed into the chamber with their handbags.

Woman parliamentarian, Kenya

The numbers have risen slowly, so most of the changes have been slow. But noticeable change happened when more women parliamentarians started having babies during their term in parliament, and after our first woman Speaker came into power.

Woman parliamentarian, Finland

Some of the issues are catered for in our Rules of Procedure including the dress code for both male and female parliamentarians. Even parliamentary language and behaviour have been addressed in the Uganda Rules of Procedure.

Woman parliamentarian, Uganda

The only substantial change that has occurred over the last six years has been the relaxation of the dress code to allow women to wear long trousers in parliament and to allow them to carry handbags. Regarding debates, women have proved to be as aggressive, if not more, than men particularly on matters to do with family and child welfare.

Male parliamentarian, Zambia

While some studies have shown that among the first changes that women may seek to make when they enter parliaments is to put in place childcare centres and introduce family-friendly sitting hours,<sup>28</sup> the results from this survey suggest that there are obstacles to implementing childcare facilities that need to be considered.

Overall, two-thirds of respondents felt that there had been no noticeable change or only a small change regarding the introduction of childcare facilities in parliaments. Many parliaments have found it difficult to reconcile the costs involved with the sporadic nature of the demand for childcare services. Demand is sporadic because of the amount of time parliamentarians spend in the country's parliament and the time spent away in constituencies.<sup>29</sup> However, parliaments could undertake a cost-benefit analysis of such measures, and consideration could be given to increasing the budget allocated to such facilities in parliaments.

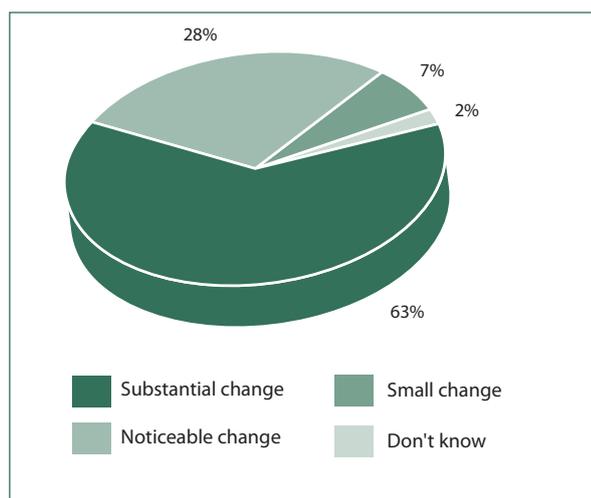


Figure 5.5: Introduction of Childcare Facilities

## Gendered Parliamentary Mores

Creating a gender-sensitive parliament includes the creation of a working environment that is family-friendly and free of harassment, as well as the evolution of a new institutional culture—its language and practices—that encourages the best in both men and women. The mores of parliament have tended to exude maleness, resulting in institutions in which men tend to feel at ease but women are affected by the mannerisms and behaviour.<sup>30</sup>

Survey respondents were asked whether a gentlemen's club or old boys' network dominated parlia-

ment.<sup>31</sup> The results illustrate that women are more likely to see evidence of a gentlemen's club than male parliamentarians—this can go beyond networks of men, and be felt in the language used and the dress codes. Some women parliamentarians reported that discriminatory practices still existed in their parliaments, such as not being allowed to take their handbags into the chamber, or being prevented from wearing trousers.

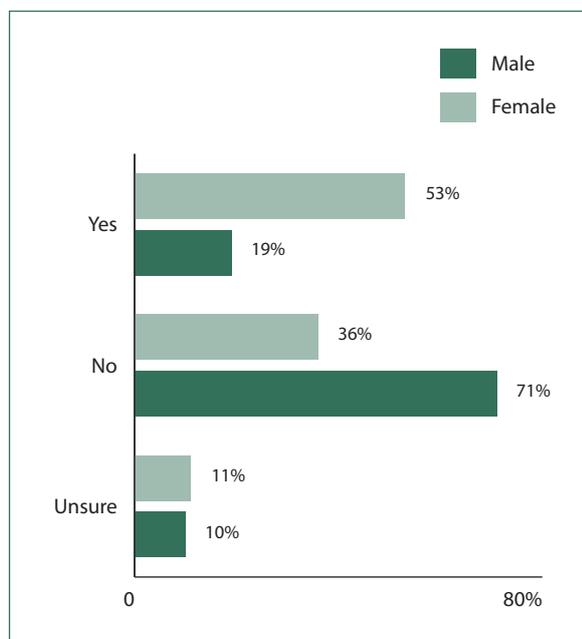


Figure 5.6: Does a Gentlemen's Club Dominate Parliament?

A feature of parliamentary life that potentially alienates women from the process is the language used in parliaments, and the often confrontational approach used in the chamber. In some instances, this mock belligerence can become actual or perceived verbal abuse, including demeaning references to women's concerns or women parliamentarians, sexism and the use of exclusively masculine references in debate. *Politics: Women's Insight* found that language had become an indicator of male bias and behaviour, and that this was offensive to many. In this survey one woman parliamentarian from Burkina Faso remarked:

*I am truly convinced that women politicians pay a high price for their participation in political life. They are the targets of various kinds of attack, even below the belt. This is because they often constitute the conscience of "politickers". It is a good thing they often end up developing thick skins.*

## Case Study: Family-friendly Sittings in Australia

*Case Study provided by Sonia Palmieri, Department of the House of Representatives, Australia*

Mirroring the increase in women's representation, institutional reform of the Australian Federal Parliament has been gradual but is now understood to be necessary. The parliament has acknowledged the need for change in a number of areas.

The *sitting hours* of the House of Representatives used to be distinctly family unfriendly. On the assumption that members would prefer to work longer hours on fewer days while in session in Canberra (which, for many members, is some distance from their own electorates), the House would sit until 11pm on at least two nights each sitting week. These hours were amended in 2003 to ensure the House rose (unless otherwise arranged) no later than 9.30pm. In 2008, following the election of a new government, an attempt was made to make the sitting hours even more family friendly. To ensure the House would not sit past 9pm on Mondays and Tuesdays, a new but optional "backbenchers" day was proposed on Fridays. However, following serious outcry from the Opposition, these changes were revoked. The Senate's hours were not subject to these changes. Indeed it is not uncommon for the Senate to be sitting later than the House.

*Childcare* options within Parliament House were extensively investigated throughout the 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament (2004–2007) for children of parliamentarians and staff. A number of difficulties were identified, however, in the design of the proposed centre: for the centre to be situated in the available space, it would only be able to cater for a limited number of infants between 6 and 18 months old; and while priority would go to the children of Members of Parliament, the sporadic placement of their children (mostly during sitting weeks) would mean that places would cost more than the average. In spite of these drawbacks, it is understood that an organization will run the childcare centre from 2009.

Given the priority accorded the issue of childcare during the recent election campaign, the new government has been keen to demonstrate its commitment to parental needs in the Parliament. In its first week of sittings, it moved a resolution to allow special provisions for nursing mothers. In cases where a woman is nursing her small infant when a vote is called, she may now ask her (Government or Opposition) Whip to vote on her behalf (by proxy).

A woman parliamentarian from the Maldives commented:

*I have been able to cope with the difficulties and also deal with issues as I encounter them, through various means. An assertive response to harassing remarks usually deters men from repeating the behaviour.*

Twenty-six percent of women respondents had been the target of disparaging remarks, compared to nearly 23 percent of males, revealing a minimal gender split. This may indicate that men as well as women suffer from the combative culture in parliaments. Values and beliefs are communicated through the

use of language and can be a persuasive political tool. However, attitudes and beliefs have historically been associated with a male political culture that has gone hand in hand with their dominance in parliaments. The rules governing the use of language may require an overhaul to take into account gender sensitivity.

## Women in Parliamentary Leadership Positions

Few women have held or hold the position of speaker in parliament—the most senior parliamentary position. In January 2008, women held 28 of the

262 (10.7%) presiding officer posts in parliaments around the world. The number of women presiding officers has hovered around the 10-percent mark for the past 10 years. The highest concentrations are in the Caribbean and in Europe, with eight women presiding officers in each region. Five women hold this position in Africa, followed by four in the Americas and three in Asia and the Pacific.<sup>32</sup>

Little useful data was gained in relation to the effects of women attaining parliamentary leadership positions on changing the mores and processes of parliaments. This may be due to the very different structures of parliaments across the world, and the lack of clearly analogous leadership positions and structures. *Politics: Women's Insight* found some evidence that women presiding officers had made material and functional improvements to parliaments.<sup>33</sup>

Some survey respondents provided comments on their experiences of women in leadership positions, and those that did so felt that having women in more high-profile roles had helped the parliament to develop a more inclusive atmosphere, especially as the speaker holds an influential position in the parliament. The speaker is usually well placed to change or influence the rules of parliament, and a woman speaker can act as a role model for other women. A woman parliamentarian from Colombia highlighted:

*In the case of Colombia, the fact that the presiding officers of the three last congressional periods have been women probably gave greater prominence to women on the congressional agenda. Also, the fact that a woman is presiding affects the way parliamentarians treat each other, as the men show respect for the person presiding.*

The role model function that women can fulfill is also highlighted by the former Speaker of the Senate of Jamaica, Ms. Syringa Marshall-Burnett: “We become role models for newly elected parliamentarians and for young people especially girls and women in terms of decision-making at the highest levels of government and public life” and instill respect and public trust.<sup>34</sup>

A 2006 IPU report of a meeting convened for women speakers of parliament highlighted the effect that women speakers could have on parliament’s functioning and in strengthening the participa-

tion of women. One delegate reported that in her opening speech as Speaker of the Parliament, she underscored the importance of the participation of women in politics and emphasized the need to change working methods and procedures to implement family-friendly sitting hours. Another delegate noted that she used her influence as speaker to open a discussion on gender equality in parliament and in political parties, and, as a result, some parties had changed their constitutions to incorporate gender equality principles.<sup>35</sup> The report also highlighted the role of women speaker role as champions of gender equality. While the speaker played a facilitating role within the chamber—moderating debates between rival political factions—outside the chamber, she was well-placed to highlight the problem of gender inequality and promote the interests of women.

### **An Agenda for Gender Equality in Parliament**

Survey respondents were asked how regularly they believed gender equality concerns were mainstreamed into the work of parliament. A discouraging finding is that more than half the respondents believed that gender equality was only occasionally or rarely mainstreamed in parliament. Just one-third thought it was regularly mainstreamed while another 10 percent believed it was mainstreamed all the time, with women and men reporting similar levels.

Mainstreaming gender in parliament—in the organization, the rules and structures—requires a deliberate and concerted effort. Initiatives have been introduced to improve the gender-sensitivity of parliaments. For example, in 2004, the Swedish Parliament established a working group to undertake a review of gender equality efforts in its own structures.<sup>36</sup> The working group was tasked with examining “gender equality beyond figures” and presented its proposals on how to improve gender equality in a report.<sup>37</sup> The report resulted from in-depth interviews with 30 Members of the Swedish Parliament (Riksdag).

The working group submitted a series of recommendations to the Secretary General of the Riksdag in order to enhance gender equality. The proposals were grouped under seven main headings, and include the following: adopting a programme of equality for every mandate period with the aim of promoting equality in the parliament; increasing visibility and knowledge of gender equality; enhancing mentoring of, and support to, new members and ensuring

## Case Study: Women Finding their Way in South Africa

*Pregs Govender was an African National Congress parliamentarian elected to South Africa's first non-racial parliament in 1994. Her book, Love and Courage: A Story of Insubordination (2007) highlights her experiences of entering parliament for the first time. Her experiences are shared by women in many parliaments after large-scale social change.*

One of the first challenges Pregs Govender relates was the need to claim and classify a male toilet as a women's toilet, as almost all the toilets in the building were for men. She relates that "it was not just the toilets that were designed for men: there were men's-only gyms, subsidized pubs, not to mention the long hours and the way the Assembly conducted itself with a pugnacious debating and heckling style."

She also recalls that the parliament was slow to adapt to the changing profile and interests of members, instead continuing to reflect the white and largely male patterns of the apartheid era. She noted that little allowance was made for those who were raising families or had no domestic help, and was concerned at the example parliament was setting for the nation: "I saw no reason why parliament could not plan its work within a clear timetable so that we could all contribute effectively while leading more balanced lives. We surely could not provide compassionate leadership for our country if we did not exercise such leadership over ourselves and in our homes."

Govender's experience serving in committees led her to believe that they—and not the chamber itself—were the parliament's real engine rooms. Assigned to the finance committee (despite her protestations of being ill-suited to the task) she was able to use this position to press for the examination of the impact of policies on women and poor people. Despite early rebuffs that such issues had no place in the consideration of government budgets and spending processes, she advocated and eventually received a commitment to the collection of national statistics related to women's unpaid contribution to the economy and the disaggregation of statistics by sex, a key tool in evaluating the impact of policies on women.

Govender's role on the finance committee also saw her press for and achieve a Women's Budget as a method for "analysing the entire budget for its gendered impact on women". Faced with opposition inside and outside her party, she explains how "Parliament, first through the finance committee and then the committee on women, used its power to ensure that government institutionalised a gender analysis in the national Budget in 1998."

Parliament's Committee on the Status of Women, which Govender chaired, was an important institutional mechanism for gender equality. It established "transformative legislative priorities for women," 80 percent of which were enacted by the end of 1999. These included the Domestic Violence Act, the Child Maintenance Act, the Customary Law on Marriages Act and changes that benefited women workers in the labour laws.

Excerpts with the permission of the author from *Love and Courage: A Story of Insubordination*, 2007, Johannesburg: Jacana Media (Pty) Ltd., pp. 147–163.

that due consideration is given to parental responsibilities when planning the work of parliamentary committees.<sup>38</sup> The work of the Riksdag is based on an understanding that “gender equality efforts must be conducted in a planned, methodical and continuous fashion, which can be achieved by the Riksdag Board determining an action programme for each electoral period and then following it up and evaluating it. Drawing up an action programme is the responsibility of the Secretary General of the Riksdag, while two officials are responsible for its implementation in practice.”<sup>39</sup> The example of the Riksdag highlights the importance of setting measurable targets for evaluating performance with regard to gender mainstreaming in parliaments. While some work is being done, efforts could be enhanced across parliaments by the development of benchmarks or indicators across parliaments and regular internal reviews.

## Summary

While some progress is being made in parliaments, particularly through specialized committees on gender equality and the work of parliamentary women’s caucuses, much work remains to be done. Indeed, for effective gender mainstreaming through all state structures several other stakeholders should be involved, as a woman parliamentarian noted:

*In Cambodia, even though one of the nine commissions in parliament is responsible for addressing the specific needs of women, we still need to have a women’s unit in other commissions of the Senate. Gender is a cross-cutting issue so it is necessary for women’s voices to be heard by all the parliamentarians responsible for different*

*tasks. At national level, a gender unit has been established in most ministries and it is considered to be a successful mechanism for gender mainstreaming in Cambodia.*

Reorganization and improvements are needed in all areas of parliamentary life—both in the evolution of cultural mores so that parliament is more welcoming to men and women from diverse backgrounds, and in the institutions of parliament, allowing more effective committee work on gender issues, the emergence of women’s caucuses and more visible roles for women in parliamentary leadership. This work must be done by women and men as they develop a genuine partnership approach. This is explained by a woman parliamentarian from Sudan:

*The increased number of women in the parliament and their election as chairpersons to about 25 percent of the committees in the parliament, together with the strong collaboration between women from different parties in the development of a special caucus for women for the first time, will all do much to promote women’s rights in development and politics.*

Many of these conclusions illustrate that there is scope for broader and more detailed work within parliaments to assist in the achievement of gender equality. Such actions could be greatly facilitated by the development of benchmarks or indicators to measure gender mainstreaming within parliaments, including an examination of parliaments’ budgets. Chapter 6 identifies priorities for future action and research. ■

## Endnotes

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2. Colleen Lowe Morna and Susan Tolmay (eds.), 2007. *At the Coalface*, p. 13.
3. See the IPU website at [www.ipu.org](http://www.ipu.org) and IPU, Hiromori Yamamoto, 2007. *Tools for Parliamentary Oversight: A Comparative Study of 88 National Parliaments*, IPU, Geneva.
4. See for example IPU, *Tools for Parliamentary Oversight*, 2007, p. 23.
5. IPU, 1991. *Women and Political Power*, IPU, Geneva, p. 142.
6. See Inter-Parliamentary Union (Marilyn Waring, Gaye Greenwood & Christine Pintat), 2000. *Politics: Women's Insight*, IPU, Geneva, p. 106.
7. The United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, 2005. *Gender Equality: Striving for Justice in an Unequal World*, UNRISD, Geneva. Chapter 9.
8. IPU, 2008. "Women in Politics 2008: Room for improvement despite significant gains", Press release no. 297, New York, 29 February.
9. Information is available for 115 countries in total. Some parliaments reported the existence of more than one committee dealing with gender issues, particularly in cases where the parliament is bicameral. IPU, 2008. PARLINE Database: Parliamentary bodies dealing with the status of women, Available online at <http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/instance-women.asp>.
10. Idem.
11. IPU, 2007. *Report on the Role of Parliamentary Committees in Mainstreaming Gender and Promoting the Status of Women*, IPU, Geneva, p. 8.
12. Idem. p. 2.
13. Joni Lovenduski and Azza Karam, "Women in Parliament: Making a Difference," in Julie Ballington & Azza Karam (eds), 2005. *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers*, International IDEA, Stockholm, p. 201.
14. Belgium's Advisory Committee on Social Emancipation comprises all women members. IPU, 2008. PARLINE Database.
15. Quoted in IPU 2007, *Report on the Role of Parliamentary Committees in Mainstreaming Gender and Promoting the Status of Women*. p. 10.
16. Elizabeth Klatzer quoted in *ibid*, p. 41.
17. The IPU hosted six regional meetings for parliaments which sought to strengthen parliaments' capacity to contribute effectively to the budgetary process, with a specific focus on gender, between 2000 and 2007.
18. IPU, 2007. *Report on the Role of Parliamentary Committees in Mainstreaming Gender and Promoting the Status of Women*. p. 3.
19. Personal interview, Ms Saumura Tioulong, (Member of Parliament, Cambodia), Geneva, October 2007.
20. Joni Lovenduski, 2005. *Feminizing Politics*, Polity Press, Cambridge, p. 26.
21. Colleen Lowe Morna (ed.), 2004. p. 99.
22. Sarah Childs, Josie Lovenduski and Rosie Campbell, 2005. *Women at the Top 2005: Changing Numbers, Changing Politics?* Hansard Society, London, p. 71.
23. IPU, 2000. *Politics: Women's Insight*, p. 40.
24. Also see the discussion in Chapter 3 of this publication.
25. Parliament of South Africa, 1998. *Transforming Parliaments: Report of the Fifth International Conference of Women Presiding over National Parliaments*, Cape Town, p. 11.
26. Also see, for example, Childs, Lovenduski and Campbell, 2005, p. 71.
27. Colleen Lowe Morna (ed.), 2004, p. 100.
28. Idem.
29. See for example Case Study on Family-friendly Sitings in Australia.
30. Parliament of South Africa, 1998. p. 12.
31. Old boy networks are exclusive informal networks linking members of a profession or ex-students of a school or university in order to provide connections, which have traditionally excluded women.
32. IPU, 2008. *Women in Parliament in 2007: The Year in Perspective*, IPU, Geneva.
33. IPU, 2000. *Politics: Women's Insight*, p. 109.
34. Ms. Syringa Marshall-Burnett, 2006. "How Women are Transforming Parliaments: The Specific Contribution of Women Speakers," Speech delivered at *Gender Equality on the Legislative Agenda: The Role of Women Presiding over Parliaments*, an IPU event organized on the occasion of the 50th Session on the Status of Women, New York, 27 February.

35. IPU, 2006. *Summary Report: Gender Equality on the Legislative Agenda: The Role of Women Presiding over Parliaments*, an IPU event organized on the occasion of the 50th Session on the Status of Women, New York, 27 February.
36. The review was initiated in response to a series of events. Mr. Anders Bengtsson explained that in November 2003, representatives of the Swedish Social Democratic Party submitted a series of proposals to the Parliamentary Board on how to improve gender equality in parliament. The authors of the communication concluded that despite many years of quite successful political activity for gender equality, inequalities were still prevalent in parliament, stemming from structural problems and subtle expressions of discrimination emanating from unspoken rules and traditional patterns. A 2004 survey done by one of Sweden's largest daily newspapers confirmed that a majority of women parliamentarians felt that they had been discriminated against simply because they were women. See Mr. Anders Bengtsson, 2005. "Gender Issues as 'People's Issues': The Role of Male Parliamentarians, Speech delivered at the IPU and UN Division for the Advancement of Women Parliamentary Event, *Beyond Beijing: Towards Gender Equality in Politics*, New York, 3 March.
37. *Working Group on Gender Equality* in the Riksdag, 2004. Fifteen Proposals for a Riksdag with Gender Equality, Riksdag, Sweden (selected translation February 2005).
38. *Idem*.
39. Email correspondence with Ms. Gunilla Upmark, Head of Secretariat to the Committee on the Labour Market who is responsible for implementing the action programme on gender equality within the Swedish Riksdag.

# Chapter 6

## Conclusions: Defining a Future Agenda

“The problem is not competence, because women are up to the task, both intellectually and physically, but rather conviction and inequality. Efforts have been made, but much remains to be done to place women on a par with men. Bridging the gap, which is a bar to our development, requires political decision and will. The future of humanity should not be solely in the hands of men; it is a matter of concern to all of us without distinction.”

Ms. Johanita Ndahimananjara,  
Member of Parliament, Madagascar

This report has focused on the institution of parliament, the place where a country's policy direction is set and its laws are made. It is at the parliamentary level that more needs to be done to ensure that the policy agenda reflects the views and interests of the society from which its representatives are drawn. A representative parliament allows the different experiences of men and women to shape the nation's social, political and economic future.

This report highlights the views of parliamentarians who described the values they represent, the policies they support and the work they are doing to implement a gender equality agenda. It has incorporated throughout the views of both men and women, but represents only a portion of the experiences and stories of the hundreds of parliamentarians who strive for legislative and institutional change across the world.

The presence of women in parliament continues to increase in most regions of the world but remains disproportionate. Although raising the numbers is a primary concern, it is equally important that once in parliament women develop and use their positions of influence to participate substantively in decision making.

Women are not a homogenous group, but there is strong evidence that women parliamentarians have certain shared experiences and concerns. Men also believe that women bring different interests and priorities to politics. Women have raised their concerns in debating chambers, proposed and supported bills, and prompted parliaments to take the concerns of women into account in policy development. Women parliamentarians are the most ardent promoters and defenders of women and have redefined political priorities to include women's concerns and perspectives.

But this role should not fall exclusively to women. Slowly, men are taking up these issues too. Many of the men surveyed raise issues of concern to women in their work, but much more needs to be done to forge a partnership between women and men. Women have different concerns which complement those of men and, together, they can provide a more holistic and richer perspective on politics. A gender equality perspective can only result from the inclusion of the views and experiences of both men and women, and by considering the effects of laws and policies on both halves of the population.

In many ways, however, this report attests to the reality that equality in parliaments remains a long way off. Women parliamentarians continue to face difficulties in their work—perhaps none greater than seeking change in political structures developed, and still dominated, by men. In most parliaments, the mainstream is the “male-stream”—institutions in which networks and clubs operate that have traditionally excluded women.

Women who want to act on behalf of women often face constraints in their work: they lack the support of their parliamentary colleagues or find that the gender-based policies they wish to pursue are at odds with the policies of their political parties. Political parties are important arenas for policy development and for setting political priorities, and are therefore one of key institutions through which to promote gender equality. However, it is very far from all political parties that promote a gender equality agenda or uphold their manifesto pledges in practice, and few women hold the top decision-making positions within their ranks. This research found the support of the ruling party to be the most important factor in introducing and enacting gender-related legislation, making change vital at this level.

Numbers matter because increased numbers of women in parliament can, at a minimum, facilitate the articulation of women’s concerns and agendas by sponsoring bills, working in committees or amending laws—the more women there are to go around the more the responsibility can be shared. As more bills are passed and laws amended, policy oversight and implementation becomes central. Key strategies for the successful implementation of a gender equality agenda are to ensure policy implementation and to hold governments to account.

## Parliamentary Action for Equality

The results illustrate the different avenues through which gender mainstreaming efforts in parliaments can be channelled. Successes often result from a combination of efforts. The survey respondents were asked to identify their priority areas for making parliaments more sensitive to the needs of both men and women. The aggregate findings of the survey indicate that all these areas are worthy of examination or innovation, as part of wider programmes of gender mainstreaming and strengthening parliaments.

The most widely indicated structural change identified by respondents relates to bolstering the capacity of *existing committees on gender equality or caucuses of women parliamentarians*; or establishing them where they currently do not exist. Nearly 30 percent of respondents would make such changes to improve their parliament’s performance. These parliamentary bodies provide a valuable forum for parliamentarians to scrutinize all proposed legislation from a gender point of view and recommend gender-specific amendments. A woman parliamentarian from Egypt explained: “I highly recommend establishing a committee on women’s affairs that would include men as members. The committee would, among other things, monitor progress on mainstreaming gender in government programmes.” Such bodies also serve to enhance the gender aspects of many political issues on the legislative agenda, and have an important monitoring and oversight function: “Each Parliament should set up its own oversight committee to monitor the principles of equality and effectiveness and to set the relevant objective evaluation criteria for the entire legislative session,” noted a male parliamentarian from Algeria.

The next most widely indicated response relates to implementing changes in *parliamentary processes and facilities* to make them more family-friendly, enabling parliamentarians to meet both their parliamentary and personal responsibilities. The provision of childcare, revision of the parliamentary timetable and procedural changes were suggested by 22 percent of respondents, as a parliamentarian from Australia explained: “I support consideration of more flexible working hours, particularly to address family needs. That could involve more access to special leave for children’s school events and illness. I do support childcare to allow parliamentarians and staff to balance their needs while the parliament is sitting.”

Sixteen percent of respondents indicated that more *research, training and networking* would assist efforts to make parliaments more sensitive to the needs of women and men, as would the provision of more technical assistance and information. It was noted that sharing cross-national experiences among parliaments provides access to valuable information and experience, while research support and gender specialists are important in assisting the work of parliamentary committees. Only 29 percent of respondents had received training in gender equality and related matters in their parliaments. Some

respondents emphasized that international organizations can play an important role in supporting the work of parliament. A woman parliamentarian from Namibia noted: “International parliamentary organizations can do a great deal both materially and otherwise to strengthen efforts made by women nationally to gain qualitative and quantitative power in decision making.” A male parliamentarian from Uganda noted: “For both men and women parliamentarians, there is generally a lack of exposure to the practices of other parliaments. My recommendation is to invest more in terms of the induction of new parliamentarians to ensure effective practical learning and to empower them with proper training.”

Eleven percent believed that if parliamentarians had a closer relationship with their *constituents*, then the parliament would be able to reflect the needs of both women and men more effectively, based on a better understanding of citizens’ needs. Coordination or linking with civil society organizations is also needed. Ten percent believed parliament would function better, and more to the benefit of men and women, if more funding was provided for *support services and outreach work*. Additional funding for research assistance would see policies more informed by gender impact analyses across the spectrum of parliamentary work. In this regard, an examination of the overall budget of parliament, and allocations for gender mainstreaming work, could be considered.

## A Collective Approach

The actions outlined above are within the remit of parliaments to act on themselves. Such practices may usefully be informed by the development of parliament-specific indicators or benchmarks for gender mainstreaming. Women and men must continue to highlight gender-blind parliamentary practices and norms through the mechanisms that are afforded to them in parliament by lobbying those who have the capacity to introduce change, such as the Speaker, with details of current and future needs regarding childcare, or the nature of the difficulties encountered by women because of existing sitting patterns.

Caucusing with women from all parties to reach mutually agreed solutions; seeking promotion to positions of parliamentary influence such as com-

mittee chairs and directing the topics of the committee’s inquiries; researching the use and benefits of parliamentary committees on gender equality across parliaments; and seeking support from outside parliament are also effective methods. Media strategies may also be important, as it is often the case that when women gain support from the wider public, they can more readily exert pressure on their male colleagues for reform and policy change.

Other work remains to be done within political parties, not only in terms of supporting women’s candidacies, but also in ensuring that once in parliament, women are able and empowered to have an impact on all aspects of the political agenda. Political parties set policy priorities and provide the central link between the institutions of governance and civil society. They are central to ensuring that the demands of different groups of society are represented in parliament and reflected in policy development. The empowerment of women may, in some cases, require a change in party structures, including—even if only temporarily—the adoption of special measures to ensure the participation of women in the key policy organs of parties.

For real change to occur, however, political will is required. Men and women must agree and acknowledge that women’s inclusion and equal participation in parliamentary processes not only benefits societies and the global community, but is also necessary for legitimate democracy. With that agreement, states as a whole must act to ensure women’s inclusion as legitimate and credible actors in politics, and in particular to facilitate their input into the work of parliaments. This work may be facilitated and supported by international parliamentary organizations, particularly by providing capacity building, training and networking opportunities.

Above all, parliaments need more women. The current levels of women’s representation in the world’s parliaments (one-third of which have less than 10 women members) essentially amounts to a democracy deficit. It is clear that women, not men, have predominantly been behind the great strides that have been made on issues such as gender-based violence, trafficking of women and children, equal pay, childcare and parental leave. The continued, and enhanced, participation of women is therefore necessary to ensure that such issues continue to be placed on the political agenda.

Greater numbers of women are also essential given the diversity of views held by women themselves. While women may share common experiences, the interests they prioritize vary according to their political, cultural, social and economic backgrounds.

Greater representation, then, would increase the overall pool of women prepared to act on behalf of women. More women would also better reflect the diversity of the population they represent. ■

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## Annex 1: Countries and Parliaments of Respondents and List of Interviewees

The survey respondents came from the following countries and parliaments:

Afghanistan: National Assembly	India: Parliament
Albania: People's Assembly	Indonesia: House of Representatives
Algeria: Parliament	Iran (Islamic Republic of): Islamic Consultative Assembly
Angola: National Assembly	Ireland: Parliament
Argentina: National Congress	Israel: Parliament
Armenia: National Assembly	Italy: Parliament
Australia: Parliament of the Commonwealth of	Jamaica: Parliament
Austria: Parliament	Japan: National Diet
Bahrain: National Assembly	Jordan: National Assembly
Belarus: National Assembly	Kenya: National Assembly
Belgium: Federal Chambers	Lao People's Democratic Republic: National Assembly
Benin: National Assembly	Latvia: Parliament
Bolivia: National Congress	Lebanon: National Assembly
Bosnia and Herzegovina: Parliamentary Assembly	Liberia: Legislature
Botswana: National Assembly	Lithuania: Parliament
Brazil: National Congress	Luxembourg: Chamber of Deputies
Bulgaria: National Assembly	Madagascar: National Assembly; Senate
Burkina Faso: National Assembly	Malaysia: Parliament
Burundi: Parliament	Maldives: People's Majlis
Cambodia: Parliament	Malta: House of Representatives
Cameroon: National Assembly	Mexico: Congress of the Union
Canada: Parliament of	Monaco: National Council
Chile: National Congress	Morocco: Parliament
Colombia: Congress	Namibia: Parliament
Comoros: Assembly of the Union	Netherlands: States-General
Congo: Parliament	New Zealand: House of Representatives
Costa Rica: Legislative Assembly	Niger: National Assembly
Côte d'Ivoire: National Assembly	Nigeria: National Assembly
Cuba: National Assembly of the People's Power	Norway: Parliament
Cyprus: House of Representatives	Pakistan: Parliament
Czech Republic: Parliament	Philippines: Congress
Democratic Republic of the Congo: Parliament	Poland: Sejm; Senate
Denmark: Parliament	Portugal: Assembly of the Republic
Egypt: People's Assembly; Advisory Council	Qatar: Advisory Council
Equatorial Guinea: House of Representatives of the People	Republic of Korea: National Assembly
Estonia: The Estonian Parliament	Romania: Parliament
Ethiopia: House of Peoples' Representatives; House of the Federation	Rwanda: Parliament
Finland: Parliament	Saint Lucia: Houses of Parliament
France: Parliament	Samoa: Legislative Assembly
Gabon: Parliament	Sao Tome and Principe: National Assembly
Georgia: Parliament	Senegal: National Assembly
Germany: Federal Diet; Federal Council	Serbia: National Assembly
Ghana: Parliament	Seychelles: National Assembly
Greece: Hellenic Parliament	Singapore: Parliament
Iceland: Parliament	Slovakia: National Council
	Slovenia: National Assembly; National Council

## The survey respondents came from the following countries and parliaments (continued):

Solomon Islands: National Parliament	Uganda: Parliament
South Africa: Parliament	Ukraine: Parliament
Spain: The Cortes	United Kingdom: Parliament
Sri Lanka: Parliament	United States of America: Congress
Sudan: The National Legislature	Uruguay: General Assembly
Sweden: Parliament	Venezuela: National Assembly
Switzerland: Federal Assembly	Yemen: Parliament
The former Yugoslav Rep. of Macedonia: Assembly of the Republic	Zambia: National Assembly
Togo: National Assembly	Zimbabwe: Parliament
Tunisia: Chamber of Deputies; Chamber of Councillors	European Parliament

## Personal interviews were held with the following parliamentarians:

Mr. Agust Agustsson (Member of Parliament, Iceland), October 2007.  
Ms. Azima Shakoor (Member of Parliament, Maldives), October 2007.  
Dr. Nedal M. Al-Tunajji (Member of Parliament, United Arab Emirates), Geneva, December 2007.  
Ms. Sotiroula Charalambous (Member of Parliament, Cyprus), Geneva, December 2007.  
Ms. Minodora Cliveti (Member of Parliament, Romania), Riga, December 2007.  
Ms. Maria Helena Veronese Rodrigues (Member of Parliament, Brazil), Geneva, October 2007.  
Ms. Bintu Jalia Lukumu (Member of Parliament, Uganda), Geneva, December 2007.  
Mr. Mugumya Magulumaali (Member of Parliament, Uganda), Geneva, December 2007.  
Ms. Margaret Mensah-Williams (Member of Parliament and Vice-President of the National Council, Namibia), Geneva, October 2007.  
Ms. Beth Mugo (Member of Parliament, Kenya), Geneva, October 2007.  
Ms. Alphonsine Mukarugema (Member of Parliament, Rwanda), Geneva, October 2007.  
Mr. Jack Mwimbu (Member of Parliament, Zambia), Geneva, October 2007.  
Ms. Victoire Ndikumana (Member of Parliament, Burundi), December 2007.  
Ms. Maria das Neves Sousa (Member of Parliament, Sao Tome), Geneva, October 2007.  
Mrs. Maria Rauch-Kallat (Member of Parliament, Austria), Geneva, December 2007.  
Ms. Nora Schimming-Chase (Member of Parliament, Namibia), Geneva, October 2007.  
Mr. James Selfe (Member of Parliament, South Africa), Geneva, October 2007.  
Ms. Doris Stump (Member of Parliament, Switzerland), Geneva, October 2007.  
Ms Saumura Tioulong (Member of Parliament, Cambodia), Geneva, October 2007.  
Baroness Uddin (Member of Parliament, United Kingdom), Geneva, December 2007.

## Annex 2: Research Design and Methodology

This report draws mainly on primary data collected in an original survey between December 2006 and January 2008. It combines the quantitative results from a survey of the views of both women and men parliamentarians from around the world with qualitative information about their experiences in parliament collected through open-ended questions in the survey questionnaire. It also incorporates the experiences of parliamentarians gathered through separate in-depth interviews.

In addition, secondary resources, such as comparative studies and scholarly articles, and national and regional level analyses, were consulted. This is primarily a report of the survey findings and highlights the views of parliamentarians. While other comparative research studies and existing IPU datasets were also consulted, the report does not attempt to synthesize or analyse the wealth of existing literature on gender equality and political participation. The last global survey research of women parliamentarians was conducted by the IPU in 1999–2000. The results are published in *Politics: Women's Insight (2000)*, which is referenced in this report as supporting data.

The report is designed to share results across countries, providing a global view of trends rather than regional analyses. There is some limited reference to regional variations where these are particularly striking. The views of parliamentarians from all regions of the world are provided through direct quotations.

This report is not a manual or a handbook, and it does not seek to make prescriptive recommendations for change. The IPU offers the examples in this report as a contribution to the ongoing debate on how to achieve a full partnership between women and men in parliaments.

### The Survey Questionnaire

The questionnaire used in this survey was drafted in 2006 by the Gender Partnership Programme of the IPU Secretariat in consultation with various stakeholders. The Secretariat solicited the views of,

and received input from, a wide range of reviewers, including:

- Members of the IPU Coordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians (an elected body of women parliamentarians mandated to guide the work of the IPU's Meeting of Women Parliamentarians);
- Members of the IPU Gender Partnership Group (GPG) (a group consisting of two women and two men from the IPU's Executive Committee mandated to ensure that the activities and decisions of the IPU give equal consideration to the concerns of women and men);
- A select group of researchers and practitioners well-versed in the design and implementation of survey research.

The survey consisted of 50 questions—25 closed questions and 25 open questions—that provided respondents with an opportunity to describe and explain their experiences in politics. In most instances, questions were asked using a standard four- or five-point scale where respondents expressed their level of agreement with a statement, for example, from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

The questionnaire was designed to collect background information about the respondents, as well as to collate the views and opinions of parliamentarians under three main themes: their election to parliament, their participation in political life and their views on institutional transformation for gender-friendly parliaments. The full questionnaire is presented in Annex 3.

### Data Collection

The data were collected over a 14-month period between December 2006 and January 2008. Data were collected, stored and processed using an online survey database. The survey questionnaire was available in English, French and Spanish.

The survey questionnaire was sent to all national parliaments in the world. Members of Parliament

from different party groups were invited to complete the questionnaire. The IPU sought to obtain responses from at least four members per parliament (two men and two women where possible), and from a variety of political parties and political affiliations, making this a random sample.

The IPU received responses from 272 parliamentarians in 110 countries. The rate of response varied from as many as eight to as few as one parliamentarian per responding country. The completion rate of the survey questions also varied significantly. In addition, in-depth interviews were held with another 20 parliamentarians to obtain more information.

Forty percent of the respondents were male, making this report a reflection of the perspectives of both men and women on the question of gender equality in politics. The respondents were drawn from all regions of the world. The highest proportion were from Europe, 38 percent; followed by Africa, 25 percent; Asia and the Pacific, 15 percent; the Americas, 12 percent; and the Arab States, 10 percent. The respondents were also drawn from across the political spectrum.

The answers were coded to provide data on overall trends. The coding process also anonymized the responses. In order to respect the anonymity of respondents, the information on those parliamentarians who answered the open-ended questions in the survey is limited to specifying their sex and their nationality. Opinions given during the personal interviews are personally attributed.

### Limitations of the Survey

A survey questionnaire of this type inevitably has some limitations:

- The questionnaire collected the views of parliamentarians. However, it would also have been useful to collect official responses from parliaments about the structures and changes implemented to ensure gender-sensitivity in their structures and working methods.
- Not all the questions covered in the survey, or their results, are presented in the report. Space constraints make it impossible to present all the data. In addition, follow-up interviews revealed that some of the questions contained a level of ambiguity that could lead to different interpretations of the question across countries. These questions were omitted from the report.

While the views and attitudes of parliamentarians form the basis of the data, it is important to highlight that the factors that influence such views cannot be controlled or generalized across countries and regions. The strength of this report, however, lies in bringing together the perspectives and lived experiences of both men and women parliamentarians from all regions of the world, and their testimonies form the basis for its conclusions.

## Future Research

Where they exist, cross-regional analyses of this type provide useful learning. Their regional basis means that the lessons may be more directly applicable, based as they are on shared histories, levels of development and often legal and political systems.

At the individual country level, parliaments may find it helpful to conduct a survey using all or part of the IPU questionnaire to gain a local reflection of the attitudes of parliamentarians.

This study is based on a survey of parliamentarians. It may be useful to undertake a complementary study exploring the parliaments as institutions, which could include a stocktaking of parliamentary structures and staffing in each country—for example, asking how many parliaments have introduced childcare facilities. In addition, in-depth studies of the modes of gender mainstreaming in parliaments—such as through committees and caucuses, or budgeting for gender equality have been flagged as important areas of investigation. ■

**Annex 3:  
Survey Questionnaire**

**Equality in Politics Study**

A survey research project conducted  
by the Inter-Parliamentary Union

Country: \_\_\_\_\_

Unicameral  Lower house  Upper house



**1. BACKGROUND**

a. Personal background:				
Name (Surname, first name)				
E-mail address				
Postal address				
Telephone number (incl. area code)				
Fax number (incl. area code)				
Date of birth (dd/mm/yyyy)				
Sex		Female	Male	
Number of dependents				
Marital status	Married/cohabiting	Single	Divorced/widowed/separated	Other

b. What was your occupation prior to election?			
Legal profession		Writer, literary, artist	
Political party official		Architect, surveyor, engineer	
Civil service and local authority administration		Armed services	
Finance, management or business		Clergy	
Education profession		Clerical, secretarial, administration	
Journalism, broadcasting, media		Trade union official	
International civil servant		Civil society activity	
Home-maker, care-taker		Research	
Social worker		Physician, dentist	
Agriculture/farming		Nursing	
Sciences		Other (explain)	

c. Do you practice your profession during the parliamentary term?			
Yes (please specify how many hours per month)	Hours	Do not practice	



d. What is your highest level of education attained?			
No formal education		University or polytechnic degree	
Primary school only		Post-graduate university degree	
Secondary school only		Other higher education	

e. Parliamentary background:						
<b>Mode of obtaining seat</b>	Directly elected on a party list		Indirect election	Appointed by the head of state/government		
	Directly elected in a constituency		Nominated by the assembly/parliament	Other (specify)		
<b>What type of constituency do you hold?</b>	Rural	Urban	Semi-urban	National/nation-wide	None	Other (specify)
<b>Are you a member of a parliamentary committee or caucus?</b>	Yes, which one(s)?		No	Other (explain)		
<b>Have you held any other parliamentary positions?</b>	Member of the bureau of the chamber	Senior member of a committee (chairperson, rapporteur)	Parliamentary secretary to a minister	Member of the Shadow Cabinet	Other (explain)	
<b>Have you held a ministerial post?</b>	Yes, which one(s)?		No	Other (explain)		
<b>Are you a member of a political party?</b>	Yes, which one?		No, independent candidate	Other (explain)		
<b>Does your party belong to any of the following party international groups?</b>	Centrist Democrat International	International Democrat Union	Liberal International	Socialist International	Other (explain)	
<b>Are you a representative of an ethnic or minority group in parliament?</b>	Yes, which one(s)?		No	Other (explain)		

f. How many times have you stood for, or been elected to, parliament?				
	Once	Twice	Three times	Four times or more
Stood for parliament				
Been elected to parliament				

## 2. YOUR ELECTION TO PARLIAMENT

1. What was your main channel of entry into politics?		
Political party activity		Member of local or district council
Trade union activity		Member of sub-national legislature: provincial or state level
Social work		Family connections
Non-governmental organization (name them)		Other, specify

2. How much influence did the following have in motivating you to become a candidate? PLEASE CHECK ALL THAT APPLY					
	Great deal	Fair amount	Not very much	None	Don't know
I wanted to serve my country.					
I wanted to be involved in the decisions that affect my life.					
I was asked to stand by my political party.					
I was encouraged by my family, friends or community.					
I wanted to improve the community where I live.					
I wanted to improve the lives of women.					
I wanted to improve the lives of men.					
Other, specify					

**3. Have you participated in any of the following as an electoral candidate?**

**PLEASE CHECK ALL THAT APPLY (and specify by whom, such as political party, NGOs, international or regional organization, etc.)**

	Yes	No	Specify by whom
Electoral campaigning, including electoral outreach and networking			
Raising campaign finance			
The roles of parliamentarians, legislative work and oversight functions			
None			
Training only for female or male candidates			
Other, specify			

**4. What kind of electoral preparation did you find most valuable or would like to have in the future?**

Please explain your answer

Can we quote this answer in our study?	Yes	No

**5. How much influence, in your opinion, does the following have in deterring MEN from entering politics?**

	Great deal	Fair amount	Not very much	None	Don't know
Prevailing cultural attitudes regarding the roles of men in society					
Religion					
Security concerns					
Lack of finances					
Domestic responsibilities					
Lack of support of political parties					
Politics seen as «dirty» or corrupt					
Lack of education					
Lack of confidence					
Lack of support from family					
Lack of support from the electorate					
Lack of support from other men					
Lack of support from women					
Lack of experience in «representative» functions: public speaking, constituency relations					
Other, specify					

**6. How much influence, in your opinion, does the following have in deterring WOMEN from entering politics?**

	Great deal	Fair amount	Not very much	None	Don't know
Prevailing cultural attitudes regarding the roles of women in society					
Religion					
Security concerns					
Lack of finances					
Domestic responsibilities					
Lack of support of political parties					
Politics seen as «dirty» or corrupt					
Lack of education					
Lack of confidence					
Lack of support from family					
Lack of support from the electorate					
Lack of support from other women					
Lack of support from men					
Lack of experience with «representative» functions: public speaking, constituency relations					
Other, specify					

### 7. What do you consider to be the main obstacle(s) to winning a seat in your country?

Please explain your answer

Can we quote this answer in our study? Yes No

If a member of a political party: (otherwise skip to question 16)

### 8. How supportive is your political party of the participation of the following groups in politics?

	Very	Fairly	Not very	Not at all	Don't know
Minority groups					
Ethnic or religious groups					
Men					
Women					
Young people					
Aged/elderly					
Disabled people					
Other, specify					

### 9. Does your political party have an official position, manifesto or policy on the following?

	Yes	No	Explain
Gender equality or participation of women and men in politics and society			
Participation of minority groups			
Participation of ethnic or religious groups			
Youth			
Disabled			
Other, specify			

### 10. How much influence does the following have in the selection of candidates for election in your party?

	Great deal	Fair amount	Not very much	None	Don't know
National party leaders					
Party nomination committee					
District or regional officers					
Local party members					
Women's branch					
Trade unions					
Minority groups					
Other, specify					

### 11. If your political party has a women's branch, what are its main tasks?

	Yes	Partially	No	Don't know
Provides organizational and logistical support to the political party				
Provides input into decision-making in the party				
Undertakes to promote women's participation in political life				
Supports women candidates during election				
Provides support to women elected to parliament				
Mobilizes the women's vote ahead of elections				
Defends gender issues within the party				
Other, specify				
There is no women's branch				

### 12. How effective is the women's branch in supporting the participation of women in your political party?

	Very	Fairly	Not very	Not at all	Don't know
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**13. Has your party adopted special measures to increase the participation of women in your party structures or for election?**

<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
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**14. If you answered yes to question 13, has your party:  
PLEASE CHECK ALL THAT APPLY AND DESCRIBE**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Not sure</b>	<b>Please Describe</b>
Voluntarily adopted measures to support the candidacies of women for national elections?				
Specified an alternation of women on party lists, such as a woman in every second or third position?				
Specified if women or men should stand in specific constituencies?				
Allocated specific resources for women candidates to contest elections?				
Adopted rules concerning the presence of women in its decision-making structures, such as the executive committee?				
Adopted measures or programmes to sensitize party members to gender equality issues?				
Other, specify				

**15. Are women well represented in the policy-making organs of your political party in your opinion?**

<b>Very</b>	<b>Fairly</b>	<b>Not very</b>	<b>Not at all</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
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**16. Has your parliament implemented any of the following to increase political participation?  
PLEASE CHECK ALL THAT APPLY AND DESCRIBE**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Please Describe</b>
Reserved seats in parliament for women			
Reserved seats in parliament for under-represented groups			
Reserved seats in parliament for youth			
Adopted legislated candidate quotas for women			
Adopted legislated candidate quotas for under-represented groups			
Adopted legislated candidate quotas for youth			
Other, specify			

**17. What are your views on the following statements regarding the use of gender quotas to increase women's participation in parliament?**

	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>
Quotas are a necessary measure to address the under-representation of women and increase their numbers in parliament					
Quotas should only be implemented on a <i>temporary basis</i>					
Voluntary quotas adopted by political parties are preferable to quotas legislated by the parliament					
Quotas that are legislated must be accompanied by enforcement provisions					
Quotas are useful but not sufficient and must be accompanied by other measures such as sensitization programmes					
Quotas are not useful and lead to tokenism for women					
Quotas are not necessary. Women should be elected on merit					
Quotas are discriminatory					

**18. Do you consider that parliamentarians who gain their mandate through reserved seats, political party quotas or appointments are viewed differently to other elected parliamentarians?**

Yes	Sometimes	No
Please explain your answer		
<b>Can we quote this answer in our study?</b>	Yes	No

**19. What do you think is the most effective way to increase the number of women in parliaments?**

Please explain your answer		
<b>Can we quote this answer in our study?</b>	Yes	No

### 3. PARTICIPATION IN POLITICAL LIFE

**20. How active are you in the following policy areas?**

	Very active	Fairly active	Active	Not very active	Not at all active
Economic and trade matters					
Education					
Environment					
Family-related matters					
Finance					
Foreign affairs					
Gender equality matters					
Healthcare					
Infrastructure and development					
Internal or home affairs					
Justice and constitutional matters					
Labour					
National security, defence, military affairs					
Public administration					
Research and technology					
Science					
Social and community matters					
Women's issues					
Other, specify					

**21. How much overall influence do the following groups have on policy in your parliament?**

	Great deal	Fair amount	Not very much	None	Don't know
Male parliamentarians					
Female parliamentarians					
Ethnic minority parliamentarians					
Young parliamentarians					
Other, specify					

## 22. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Women and men should have an equal role in running the government.					
Women shape politics as much as men.					
Women should have an equal role with men in running business and industry.					
Female parliamentarians have a responsibility to represent the interests of women in society at large.					
Male parliamentarians have a responsibility to represent the interests of men in society at large.					
The more women there are in parliament, the greater influence they will have on political priorities and policy.					
Men can sufficiently represent the interests of women in politics.					
Women can sufficiently represent the interests of men in politics.					

## 23. Do you believe that the perspectives and political priorities of women differ significantly from those of men in your country?

Yes	Sometimes	No
Please explain your answer		
Can we quote this answer in our study?		No

## 24. As a parliamentarian, do you make a special effort to consult any of the following in your work?

	Yes	Sometimes	No
Minority groups			
Women			
Ethnic or religious groups			
Men			
Aged/elderly			
Young people			
Disabled			
Other, specify			

## 25. Do you feel that your parliament should have:

	Many more	A few more	Same as now	Fewer	Don't know
Women parliamentarians					
Male parliamentarians					
Minority representatives					
Young representatives					
Disabled representatives					
Other, specify					

26. Do you agree, or disagree, with the following statements?					
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<b>Justice:</b> Women are 50% of the population and should be as equally represented as men in decision-making positions.					
<b>Legitimacy:</b> Women's presence will increase the political legitimacy of parliaments					
<b>Legal:</b> Women should be represented in decision-making bodies because this right is enshrined in international instruments and national laws.					
<b>Difference:</b> Women bring different views, perspectives and talents to politics.					
<b>Empowerment:</b> The empowerment of women will lead to the development of society at large.					
<b>Voting block:</b> Including more women will increase the electoral appeal of political parties or groupings.					

### Legislative outputs

27. How much influence, in your opinion, does the following have in affecting the adoption of gender-related legislation?					
	Great deal	Fair amount	Not very much	None	Don't know
Ruling party support					
Opposition party support					
The number of women in parliament					
Support of male parliamentarians					
Support of female parliamentarians					
Support of your constituency					
Support of civil society groups or interest groups					
Support of the business community					
Support of the international community					
Other, specify					

28. What effect do you believe a significant increase in the participation of women in parliament would have in the following areas?					
	Substantial change	Noticeable change	Small change	No noticeable change	Don't know
Content of debates on legislation					
Votes taken on legislation					
Work of parliamentary committees					
Reports of parliamentary committees					
Variety of issues raised in parliamentary debates					
Other, specify					

**29. What impact has the presence of women had on influencing the passage of legislation in the following areas?**

	Great deal	Fair amount	Not very much	None	Don't know
Combating domestic violence					
Childcare provisions and support					
Economic and trade matters					
Education					
Employment and equal pay					
Environment					
Finance					
Foreign affairs					
Maternity/paternity leave					
National security, defence, military affairs					
Political participation					
Reproductive healthcare					
Other, specify					
Please explain your answers					
Can we quote this answer in our study?				Yes	No

**30. Does your parliament have a specific mechanism to implement, or oversee the implementation, of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)?**

Yes	No	Don't know
Please explain your answer		
Can we quote this answer in our study?		Yes No

**31. Does your parliament have a specific mechanism to implement, or oversee the implementation, of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)?**

Yes	No	Don't know
Please explain your answer		
Can we quote this answer in our study?		Yes No

**32. What impact has the presence of women had on influencing the passage of legislation affecting children in the following areas?**

	Great deal	Fair amount	Not very much	None	Don't know
Child protection legislation (such as prohibition of corporal punishment, child sex tourism, juvenile justice)					
Child health					
Education					
Child support (alimony)					
(Government) allowances for children and/or families					
Other, explain					
Please explain your answer					
Can we quote this answer in our study?				Yes	No

**33. Have you taken any action to specifically promote gender issues in your parliament?**

Yes	Sometimes	No
Please explain your answer		

34. How often do you vote according to the party line?					
Always	Nearly always except conscience votes	Usually	Sometimes	Never	My vote is my decision

35. Do you agree, or disagree, with the following statements?					
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Parliamentarians are accountable first and foremost to their political party.					
Parliamentarians are accountable first and foremost to their constituencies.					
Parliamentarians can only address women's issues if the party has developed specific policies on women.					
Parliamentarians are free to address women's issues without party support.					

36. How much attention, in your opinion, has the mainstream media given to the following:					
	Great deal	Fair amount	Not very much	None	No opinion
Accounts of your personal or family life					
Accounts of your political career					
Stories promoting a positive image of women in politics in general					
Stories promoting a positive image of men in politics in general					
Stories providing an informed commentary on parliamentary proceedings in your country					

#### 4. INSTITUTIONAL TRANSFORMATION: GENDER-FRIENDLY PARLIAMENTS

37. Has the presence of women in parliament, in your opinion, brought about a change in the following?					
	Substantial change	Noticeable change	Small change	No noticeable change	Don't know
Parliamentary language and behaviour is less aggressive.					
Rules and practices of parliament have changed.					
Sitting hours of parliament have changed to take into account the needs of women and men.					
Dress codes take into account needs of women and men.					
Maternity/paternity leave provisions have been introduced.					
Introduction of child care facilities.					
More training opportunities are provided.					
Other, specify					
Please explain your answers					
<b>Can we quote this answer in our study?</b>				Yes	No

### 38. Have you faced any difficulties in fulfilling your parliamentary mandate?

Disparaging or harassing remarks	Yes	No	Unsure
Unwritten «rules» and norms negatively affect participation	Yes	No	Unsure
Balancing family life and political commitments	Yes	No	Unsure
A 'gentlemen's club' dominates in parliament.	Yes	No	Unsure
Lack of resources or information to support my work	Yes	No	Unsure
Other, specify	Yes	No	Unsure
Please explain your answers			
<b>Can we quote this answer in our study?</b>			Yes
			No

### 39. On average, how many hours do you usually dedicate to the following activities in an ordinary week?

	Number of hours per week	Estimated % of time per week
Attending parliamentary debates in the House		
Working in parliamentary committees		
Dealing with constituency work		
Informal meetings with parliamentarians		
Informal meeting with members of the public		
Informal meetings with lobbyists and interest groups		
Informal meetings with the media		
Attending party meetings		
Travelling time		
Using email and the internet		
Other, specify		

### 40. What new structures or services, if any, would you put in place to make the parliament in your country more sensitive to the needs of both men and women?

Please explain your answer			
<b>Can we quote this answer in our study?</b>			Yes
			No

### 41. How much influence does the following have in shaping the parliamentary agenda to become more gender-sensitive?

	Great deal	Fair amount	Not very much	None	Don't know
Speaker (president) of parliament					
Bureau of parliament, if applicable					
Rules established for the functioning of parliament					
Parliamentary committees					
Parliamentary caucuses					
Ruling party					
Opposition parties					
Informal networks					
Cross-party caucuses					
Other, specify					

### 42. How regularly are gender equality concerns mainstreamed into the work of parliament?

	All the time	Regularly	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
In parliamentary committee debates					
In policy development in your party caucus					
In plenary debates in parliament					
Other, specify					

## Committees

### 43. Do you consider that the number of women in all committees in your parliament is sufficient?

Yes	Don't know	No
Please explain your answer		
Can we quote this answer in our study?		No

### 44. Do you agree, or disagree, with the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Gender equality concerns should be mainstreamed into all structures in parliament.					
Gender equality concerns should be considered in special bodies on gender equality and/or the status of women.					
There should be both gender mainstreaming and special bodies dealing with gender equality and/or the status of women.					
The committee on gender equality in my parliament is effective in its work (if applicable).					
Please explain your answers above					
Can we quote this answer in our study?					No

### 45. Where INTER-party (cross party) caucuses of women parliamentarians exist, please specify if the caucus:

	Yes	No	Explain
Has official parliamentary recognition			
Has informal parliamentary recognition			
Has an office or meeting place			
Receives official parliamentary support such as financial resources or services			
Is able to influence parliamentary and legislative activities, either on a formal or informal basis			
Has united women across party lines			
Works with groups in civil society			
Other, specify			

### 46. Where INTRA-party caucuses of women parliamentarians exist, please specify if the caucus:

	Yes	No	Explain
Has official parliamentary recognition			
Has informal parliamentary recognition			
Has official party recognition			
Has an office or meeting place			
Receives support such as financial resources or services			
Is able to influence party decisions and policy			
Works with groups in civil society			
Other, specify			

47. Have you received specialized training in parliament on:			
	Yes	No	Explain by whom
Budgeting?			
Gender equality?			
Legislative procedures?			
Orientation training?			
Oversight function?			
Other, specify			

48. Has your parliament implemented any of the following activities to promote gender equality?			
	Yes	No	Explain
Specialized training on gender equality for parliamentarians			
Specialized training on gender equality for parliamentary staff			
Disseminated information on gender equality issues			
Disseminated information on gender mainstreaming			
Celebrated International Women's Day, 8 <sup>th</sup> March			
Equipped its library with relevant and timely information on gender issues			
Developed a media strategy or outreach strategy			
Other, specify			

49. Has the presence of women in parliament, in your opinion, brought about a positive change in the way the public views women in politics?				
Substantial change	Noticeable change	Small change	No noticeable change	Don't know
Please explain your answer				
<b>Can we quote this answer in our study?</b>			Yes	No

**Executive/Government**

50. Do you agree, or disagree, with the following statements?					
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Women are sufficiently represented in executive positions in the government in my country.					
Where there are more women in parliament there are likely to be more women in executive positions.					
Government should make sure that women have an equal chance of succeeding.					

**Other**

Please add any other information you find to be of interest for the purposes of this questionnaire.		
<b>Can we quote this answer in our study?</b>		No

END



