

Committee: SOCHUM 1

Question of: Encouraging women's representation in politics

Students Officer: Carmen Bilbao

Introduction:

While there have been important advances in women's leadership in politics, as of November 1 2017, women make up only 7.2% of Heads of State and 6.2% Heads of Government. Data on women representatives in local government, including as mayors, heads of villages and towns, is not well collected and analyzed. Women's access to and continued role in leadership positions is challenged by a range of barriers, including discriminatory laws and practices, as well as social norms that prescribe traditional roles and attitudes towards women's participation in leadership and decision-making roles.

Though half of the world's population, women continue to be under-represented as voters, party leaders and elected officials. Yet evidence is strong that as more women are elected, countries experience higher standards of living; the priorities of families, women and minorities are addressed; and confidence in political parties goes up. In places as diverse as Croatia, Morocco, Rwanda, South Africa and Timor-Leste, having more female lawmakers led to legislation related to anti-discrimination, domestic violence, inheritance and child support.

Background Information:

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

Major Countries and Organisations involved:

Afghanistan:

Women's groups have provided significant support in mobilizing women to participate in the presidential and parliamentary elections and in monitoring the electoral process. They have also organized workshops for women refugees in order to expand their awareness of their rights.

Australia:

Women's groups, along with other groups in civil society, played an important role as advocates for the rights of children in immigration detention. They have lobbied for changes in domestic law and social policy and for improved services to enhance the ability of refugee families to rebuild their lives.

Morocco:

In 2004, the advocacy and awareness-raising efforts of women's rights activists associated with the organization Printemps de l'Egalité (Spring of Equality) helped persuade government leaders to support a landmark family law that is meant to address women's inequality, protect children's rights and safeguard men's dignity.

Mozambique:

A campaign against child marriage by several local women's groups contributed to the passage of a new family law in 2004 that raised the legal age of marriage without parental consent from 16 years to 18 years, and with parental consent from 14 years to 16 years.

Rwanda:

In 2002, women parliamentarians and community leaders collaborated during the drafting of a national convention to support women's educational opportunities, small business loans provided by rural banks and the creation of a commission to lobby on behalf of vulnerable young people.

Tajikistan:

The Tajikistan League of Women Lawyers drafted a national law on violence, which is currently pending approval by the president. The drafting of the law was a difficult task, but the League organized 32 workshops across the country for more than 1,100 participants, and eventually succeeded in obtaining the cooperation of local authorities, law enforcement and judicial bodies, ministries and other national institutions.

Relevant UN Treaties and Events:

Event/Date	Explanation
------------	-------------

1893	New Zealand was the first country to grant women the right to vote.
1918	Canadian women gain the right to vote. British women over 30 are granted the right to vote. The Indian National Congress supports giving women the right to vote.
1919	Women enter the British House of Commons for the first time.
1920	The 19th Amendment to the US Constitution, giving women the right to vote, becomes law.
1934	Women in Brazil and Thailand gain the right to vote.
1946	Women in Philippines gain the right to vote.
1948	Women in Japan vote and run for election for the first time.
1949	Women gain the right to vote in Israel and South Korea.
1954	Colombian women are granted the right to vote.
1961	Paraguay grants women the right to vote. It is the last republic in America to do so.
1963	Iranian women gain the right to vote.
1971	In Switzerland, women gained the right to vote in federal elections
1973	Women in Jordan gain the right to vote.
1984	In Liechtenstein, women were given the right to vote by the

	women's suffrage referendum of 1984.
1991	In Switzerland women obtained the right to vote on local issues
2001	A referendum including the right of women to stand for office is approved by voters in Bahrain.
2004	Kuwaiti women gain the right to vote.
2009	Michelle Obama becomes the first African-American First Lady of the United States.
2011	UN Women is formed out of a number of existing UN organisations. UN Women is formed to further the empowerment of women and girls and advocate for gender equality.
2015	Saudi Arabia granted women the same voting rights as men have.

Methods to empower Women (possible solutions) :

- **Education:** As previous chapters have underscored, a girl who is denied the right to go to school is denied much more than the knowledge she would have gained in the classroom. She is deprived of the opportunity to develop to her full potential in every area of life, including the right to political participation.

- **The involvement and support of men (in voting and in parliament):** While women's presence and active participation in politics is critical to advancing gender equality, gender initiatives require the involvement and support of men, especially male parliamentarians and political leaders.

- **Quotas:** The introduction of quotas has led to dramatic changes in women's political participation throughout the world. Though no such quotas exist for peace

processes, their use is gaining increasing recognition as a potentially effective vehicle for ensuring women's representation at the peace table.

- **Party politics:** Political parties remain the gatekeepers to the advancement of women in politics. Within the context of party politics, however, the sanctions for non-compliance are particularly important. While it may seem impressive for a party to commit to a 40 per cent quota for women representatives, for example, that commitment can be rendered meaningless if the candidacies of women are not actively promoted.
- **Participation in peace negotiations:** Over the past five years, active steps have been taken, particularly by the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, to ensure that UN Member States, and other political actors adhere to resolution 1325. Nonetheless, efforts to include women in peace processes and post-conflict resolution remain confined to a handful of examples.
- **Better data and research:** Research on the impact of women on legislation and policy related to children remains limited, even in the industrialized countries. While UNICEF can and must play a critical role in child advocacy at all levels of government, this effort needs to be supported by better research on, and analysis of, the broader dynamic of decision-making and policy outcomes, with a particular focus on women and girls.
- **Creating an environment where women can make a difference:** The presence of women in politics is a necessary but not sufficient condition for their political empowerment. Women's ministries and other women's political forums, as well as the commitment of governments to greater participation of women in parliament, are equally important factors in advancing gender equality.

Bibliography

- www.iknowpolitics.org "Women's leadership in politics"
- www.ndi.org/democracy-without-women-is-impossible "Democracy without women is impossible"
- www.unicef.org "The state of the world's children 2007"