

## Impact of Women Participation on the Political System

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### SHORT COMMUNICATION

Women are the breadwinners and the heart of the family; they are also the guardians of society's social, cultural, and fundamental values, and they are often the most effective agents of change; in fact, full community development is impossible without their outstanding cooperation and effective participation. Without a question, women's contributions to the political and socio-economic growth of any democratic state are enormous; but, women have yet to claim their appropriate place in the political and national life of the country. Women have proved their ability to be homemakers and guardians of family values; they have also demonstrated expertise in managing their households.

More women in parliament, according to studies, means more attention is paid to women's issues. Women's political engagement is a necessary condition for achieving gender equality and true democracy. It promotes women's direct participation in public decision-making and ensures more accountability to women. Increasing the number of women in decision-making positions is the first step toward greater political accountability for women, but it cannot end there. Gender-sensitive governance reforms are required, which will make all elected officials more successful in promoting and enforcing gender equality in public policy.

Promoting women's political engagement and good governance is one of UN Women's pillars of work, ensuring that decision-making processes are participatory, responsive, equitable, and inclusive. Efforts are concentrated through key entrance points that have the potential to promote women's status by catalysing far-reaching, long-term effects. Women are given assistance in translating the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which has been adopted by the majority of the world's states, into legal gender equality provisions.

UN Women supports women's political involvement in Timor-Leste through a series of programmes aiming at increasing women's capacity to play effective roles as political actors and improving governance structures' gender responsiveness. Timorese rural women are the focus of the Programme for Enhancing Rural Women's Leadership and Participation in Nation Building in Timor-Leste (PERWL), which aims to strengthen the capacity of women leaders and groups at the national and local levels to

participate in the nation-building process.

Women now make approximately 25% of all national lawmakers, up from 11% in 1995. Only four countries have 50% or more women in single or lower houses of parliament: Rwanda (61%), Cuba (53%), Bolivia (53%), and the United Arab Emirates (50%). A total of 19 countries, including nine in Europe, five in Latin America and the Caribbean, four in Africa, and one in the Pacific, have attained or exceeded 40%. Gender quotas—either statutory candidate quotas or reserved seats—have been implemented in more than two-thirds of these countries, allowing women to participate in national parliaments.

UN Women held a dialogue between national women leaders and women representatives in Suco Councils in 13 districts, providing an opportunity for women in the districts to interact with national women leaders representing government ministries, NGOs, and women parliamentarians and raise their concerns. The participants agreed on initiatives to develop linkages and support mechanisms between national and local women leaders as a result of the debate.

Women make up 2.18 million (36%) of elected members in local deliberative bodies, according to data from 133 countries. Only two nations have surpassed 50% female representation in local government, with another 18 countries having more than 40%. As of January 2020, there are regional differences in women's representation in local deliberative bodies: Central and Southern Asia accounted for 41%, Europe and Northern America for 35%, Oceania for 32%, Sub-Saharan Africa for 29%, Eastern and South-Eastern Asia for 25%, Latin America and the Caribbean for 25%, and Western Asia and Northern Africa for 18%.

Women's leadership in political decision-making processes improves them, according to established and developing data. According to an Indian study of panchayats (local councils), the number of drinking water projects in areas with women-led councils was 62% greater than in areas with men-led councils. A direct causal association was shown in Norway between the participation of women on municipal councils and day-care coverage. Women show political leadership by working across party lines in parliamentary women's caucuses—even in the most politically contentious environments—and by supporting causes of gender equality, such as the abolition of gender-based violence.

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