

PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN POLITICS IN DEVELOPING NATIONS: A WAY TO GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

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ABSTRACT

According to the World Bank, gender equality enhances economic development, improves prospects for future generations and strengthens political and social systems. Though women now comprise more than 40 percent of the world's labor force, they still lag behind men in terms of possessing power, earnings and productivity. Women also face greater obstacles when it comes to participation in social and political institutions. Particularly in developing nations, the gender gap hinders economic and social development and destabilizes the political environment (World Development Report 2013). Women have the right to participate in political processes that affect them, their families, and their societies. Countries with increased women's participation and leadership in civil society and political parties tend to be more inclusive, responsive, egalitarian, and democratic. When women meaningfully participate in peace processes, they can help to expand the scope of agreements and improve the prospects for durable peace.

Key ward: Developing Nations, Empowerment, Equality, Political Participation, Women.

I. INTRODUCTION

While the world has achieved progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment under the Millennium Development Goals (including equal access to primary education between girls and boys), women and girls continue to suffer discrimination and violence in every part of the world.

Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world.

Providing women and girls with equal access to education, health care, decent work, and representation in political and economic decision-making processes will fuel sustainable economies and benefit societies and humanity at large (United Nations Goal 5 of Millennium Development Goals)

While the developed world discusses the glass ceiling, the end of men and whether women can really ever have it all, activists in developing countries tend to focus on more basic issues like combating violence against women and providing equal access to vaccines, basic healthcare, and primary education.

"Today, it is estimated that 6 million women are missing every year (World Development Report, 2012)," writes MIT's Esther Duflo, one of the world's foremost development economists and a John Bates Clark medalist, in a new comprehensive literature review on the relationship between poverty and gender inequality across the developing world, published in *Journal of Economic Literature* (Dec. 24, 2012). Sex-selective abortion, infanticide, unequal treatment in childhood, and the risks of childbirth all play a role in the missing women phenomenon.

II. METHODOLOGY

The method of generating data for this research is based on the use of secondary sources of data. That is Journal, Newspapers, Books and Internet sources.

III. GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

3.1 The Challenge

Around the world nearly 98 million girls are not in school. Globally, 1 in 3 women will experience gender-based violence in her lifetime. In the developing world, 1 in 7 girls is married before her 15th birthday, with some child brides as young as 8 or 9. Each year more than 287,000 women, 99 percent of them in developing countries, die from pregnancy- and childbirth-related complications.

While women make up more than 40 percent of the agriculture labor force only 3 to 20 percent are landholders. In Africa, women-owned enterprises make up as little as 10 percent of all businesses. In South Asia, that number is only 3 percent. And despite representing half the global population, women comprise less than 20 percent of the world's legislators.

3.2 The Opportunity

Investing in gender equality and women's empowerment can unlock human potential on a transformational scale.

Women account for one-half of the potential human capital in any economy. More than half a billion women have joined the world's work force over the past 30 years, and they make up 40 percent of the agriculture labor force. According to the World Bank, countries with greater gender equality are more prosperous and competitive.

An extra year of secondary school for girls can increase their future earnings by 10-20 percent. Girls with secondary schooling are up to 6 times less likely to marry as children than those with little or no education. And countries that invest in girls' education have lower maternal and infant deaths, lower rates of HIV and AIDS, and better child nutrition.

When women participate in civil society and politics, governments are more open, democratic and responsive to citizens. When women are at the negotiating table, peace agreements are more inclusive and durable. And

simply by empowering women farmers with the same access to land, new technologies and capital as men, we can increase crop yields by as much as 30 percent helping to feed a growing population (USAID 2015).

3.3 Our Strategy

At USAID, we believe that gender equality and women's empowerment isn't a part of development but the core of development.

Progress cannot be delivered in a vacuum. For societies to thrive, women and girls must have access to education, healthcare, and technology. They must have control of resources, lands, and markets. And they must have equal rights and equal opportunities as breadwinners, peace-builders and leaders.

That's why we have gender programs in more than 80 countries. In 2012, we released our Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy [PDF, 2.7 MB], cementing our commitment to supporting women and girls. Building on this critical foundation and decades of experience, we're ensuring all our strategies and programs are shaped by a gender analysis, and establish metrics that measure the gender impact of our programs (USAID 2013).

Through Feed the Future, we're advancing policy changes that give women access to financial services and ownership of the very land they tend. One year after launching Saving Mothers, Giving Life (link is external) in Uganda and Zambia, the public-private partnership program has reduced maternal mortality by roughly a third. In Afghanistan, the Promoting Gender Equality in National Priority Programs (PROMOTE) Partnership is the largest investment we have ever made to advance women and girls in development (USAID 2013).

IV. PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN POLITICS A WAY TO GENDER EQUALITY

Women have the right to participate in political processes that affect them, their families, and their societies. Countries with increased women's participation and leadership in civil society and political parties tend to be more inclusive, responsive, egalitarian, and democratic. When women meaningfully participate in peace processes, they can help to expand the scope of agreements and improve the prospects for durable peace.

Yet, women around the world are still largely absent from national and local decision-making bodies; struggle to have a voice in peace building transitions; and are excluded from political processes. Despite representing more than half of the global population, women comprise less than 20 percent of the world's legislators. From discrimination and violence to a lack of support and resources, women face countless challenges to participation in the civic and political life of their countries.

According to the USAID Strengthening women's rights and addressing barriers to political participation are critical to achieving gender equality and female empowerment. That's why we're supporting women around the world by:

- Providing training for female members of political parties and parliaments and supporting the development of women's caucuses
- Providing skill building and leadership training for women civil society members, women's organizations, and female journalists

- Supporting women's participation in political and post-conflict transitions
- Improving women's access to justice and increasing women's participation and representation in the justice sector
- Supporting local efforts to advocate for legal rights that enable women to participate fully in the political and economic life of their societies
- Building capacity for civil society organizations to advocate for women's participation in political transitions and governance processes

To help USAID better achieve these goals, in 2012 the US Agency for International Development, launched the Center of Excellence on Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance (DRG Center), a global resource for evidence-based research. Since its launch, the DRG Center has provided technical expertise, urgent funding, and critical information to the U.S. Government and international development community.

The Women in Power (WiP) Project: A research and learning project that reviewed USAID's programming related to the promotion of women's political empowerment and leadership, examined successes and challenges in historical and current programming, and tested a new statistical model for measuring women's political leadership. The project concluded with the Women's Leadership and Political Empowerment Progress Review and Ways Forward Workshop in November 2014. In 2015, the USAID implemented the following activities to the WiP project in order to produce learning products for internal and external distribution and integrate research results into existing trainings. WiP resources include:

- **Desktop Study of USAID Programming:** The Desktop Study documented objectives, approaches, and results of USAID activities, that aimed to increase women's political representation and leadership.
- **Country Case Studies:** Five case studies, conducted in Cambodia, Georgia, Jordan, Kenya and Mexico, provide a deeper look at the objectives and achievements of select USAID-funded programs with a significant focus on women's leadership and political empowerment.
- **Diamond Leadership Model Report:** The Report on the Diamond Leadership Model provides information on a new measure of women's leadership and power in the public arena. The model, piloted in 30 countries, measures three levels of leadership (high, mid, and low) across four government sectors (legislative, executive, judicial, and security).
- **WiP Video:** View the video clip (link is external) for an overview of the project, including interviews with USAID leadership and segments from the 2014 WiP Workshop.
- **Women in Power Summary Report [PDF, 1.2MB]:** The report gives an overview of the WiP program and Diamond Leadership Model, key findings, and recommendations for USAID and external partners.

Global Women's Leadership Program (GWLP): Supports the participation of women in peace processes, political transitions, donor conferences, and other decision-making processes relevant to conflict prevention and resolution, democratic development, and human rights. The GWLP has supported female delegates to Yemen's National Dialogue Conference and women involved in peace-building and national reconciliation efforts between the North and South of Yemen. In Burma, GWLP activities were geared toward integrating gender into electoral systems and processes. GWLP programming has worked with female members of parliament (MPs)

and civil-society leaders to understand opportunities within the electoral reform agenda in advance of the 2015 elections. In addition to individual consultations, three successful events were held with female MPs and civil society leaders to discuss women's political leadership and learn from Indonesia's electoral reform process.

Global Labor Program (GLP): With a budget of \$50 million, the five-year program (2016 - 2021) is being implemented by the Solidarity Center, and promotes labor rights and access to justice for workers. The new award supports country programs in **Cambodia, Bangladesh, Burma, Ukraine, Morocco, South Africa, Colombia, Mexico** and regional programs in **Asia, Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Southern Africa and Latin America** that cover activities in 31 countries. The regional program in Latin America has a dedicated Central America component, housed in **El Salvador**. All program activities are designed to be inclusive of vulnerable populations, including women. Cross-cutting regional and global activities include grassroots trainings for advocacy to address gender-based violence at work.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The United Nations UN Sustainable Development Programme Agenda stated that by 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, religion or economic or other status.

However, the following recommendations were made:

- i. The United Nation UN and any other International Organization campaigning for gender equality and participation of women in politics in providing training for women that are interested to participate politics in Developing Nation.
- ii. That the International Organization should make sure the certain percentage has been given to women in all political position and decision making process.
- iii. That the ethnicity and religion issues have to be taken into consideration.
- iv. To give all the needed support required by women.

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