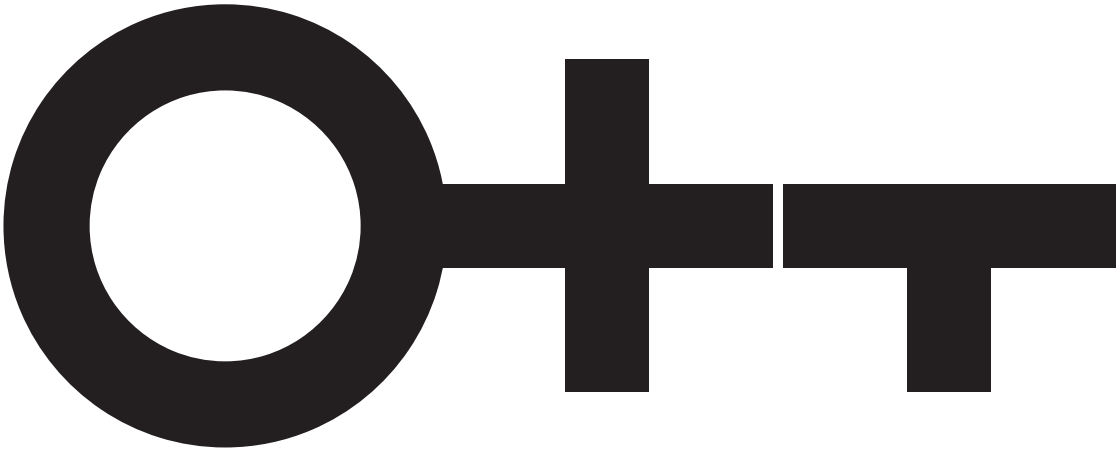
Just politics
Women transforming political spaces



ONE WORLD ACTION
FOR A JUST AND EQUAL WORLD

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Women transforming political spaces

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Executive summary

In November 2007, One World Action brought together 40 women and men from north and south for a unique dialogue – *Just Politics: Women transforming political spaces*. This report summarises the week's events which explored what difference women in power can make, and how women's involvement in politics can be supported and strengthened.

The report focuses on two main themes:
1. Ways to increase women's political participation
2. Strategies for transforming political spaces

Ways to increase women's political participation

Through addressing social and structural barriers to women's participation in politics such as the feminisation of poverty; policies of exclusion; women's disproportionate responsibility for domestic labour; traditional gender roles and values; heightened security regimes and curtailed civil liberties; and the persistence of gender violence.

By supporting initiatives to enable women, especially marginalised women, to participate in political life. These include decent jobs with just wages; education; training; capacity-building; creating and expanding participatory spaces; and maintaining robust, inclusive and active women's and feminist movements.

By increasing and encouraging women's representation in formal politics through electoral reform; introducing gender quotas; using regional and international gender equity agreements and coventions; international advocacy and democratising political parties.

Strategies for women transforming political spaces

Increasing the numbers of women in politics is crucial but not enough. Women once in power need to become effective political actors, to transform political space and be held accountable alongside men, for gender equity and social justice.

Elected women need to be supported to become effective political actors, through training and mentoring; creating safe political spaces; networking and forming political alliances; sharing information; and engaging with the media.

Accountability for addressing gender inequities cannot be demanded only from women representatives. Integrated and concerted action from governments; political parties; international institutions; civil society; social movements; and women's and feminist groups, is essential if political systems and processes are to become more transparent; participatory; and accountable to women's needs and gender equity.

Greater accountability can and has been achieved through effective lobbying and engagement with policy makers and practitioners responsible for trade negotiations and development funding; democratising political parties; using 'citizens' manifestos'; and tackling corruption in governments and political parties.

Introduction:
Just Politics

One World Action facilitated Just Politics: Women transforming political spaces, a week-long international Dialogue, in November 2007. The event brought together regional, national and local government officials, civil society representatives, grassroots colleagues, women's rights advocacy workers and activists, academics, journalists, and One World Action staff. The Dialogue involved three days of collective discussion in London and two days of advocacy activities with European Commission officials in Brussels. It sought to facilitate a democratic sharing of ideas about the most effective ways to strengthen the political participation of women from a range of different backgrounds.

The Dialogue emerged from a One World Action seminar held in March 2007, The Politics of Democratic Governance: Organising for Social Inclusion and Gender Equity, which explored barriers to political participation experienced by women and marginalised groups, and the strategies available to move forward. Following on from this event, the Dialogue provided an opportunity to explore what difference having more women in positions of political power has made, and how women's effective and progressive engagement in political decision-making can be supported and strengthened.

Key questions addressed in the Dialogue included: What factors make it possible for women to be effective political actors? How best can women be supported in politics to promote sustainable and equitable change? Have women been able to make a difference in politics? Whom should we hold accountable for gender discrimination, the feminisation of poverty, unfair trade agreements and existing social injustice in various countries? How can the accountability of international institutions, governments, political parties, and individual political actors be improved? What is the role of international lobbying in this process?

Gender equity

Gender equity is about being just to women and men. To ensure justice, measures must be put in place to compensate for the historical, political, economic and social disadvantages that prevent women from enjoying and exercising their full human rights.

Drawing primarily on discussions from the Dialogue, this report examines salient challenges, trends and strategies with respect to women's political participation. It is concerned specifically in examining how transformative women's political leadership – that is, leadership which seeks to address gender inequity and social injustice through advocacy of gender-sensitive policies, practice and programmes – might be encouraged and supported. It is hoped that this report will lay the foundation for ongoing discussion, learning and action concerning women's transformative political participation.

Transformative women's political leadership

Leadership which seeks to address gender inequity and social injustice through advocacy of gender-sensitive policies and programmes.

Background and context: Why now?

Initiatives and campaigns to strengthen women's political participation and to promote gender-sensitive political transformation have been engaged with over a long period of time by a wide spectrum of actors. Arguments and strategies have changed and evolved, achieving varying levels of transformation across different institutional and geo-political contexts. So, why return to the issue now? The contemporary international context presents new and changing opportunities and constraints with respect to women's transformative political participation and leadership.

Democratisation and decentralisation

A range of international and national directives and frameworks, including the implementation of electoral gender quotas, are being used explicitly to ensure greater gender equity in political representation. At the international level, the vast majority of the world's states have signed up to proposals for gender equity contained in the Beijing Platform for Action, the Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and most recently, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Gender equity in political participation is also being promoted and implemented through a range of regional, national and local-level initiatives.

Global processes of decentralisation and democratisation are also opening new spaces for women's political involvement. Within many countries, governments are becoming increasingly decentralised at a formal level. Women are slowly claiming their rights and making their voices heard on a range of social, economic and political issues. For example, over the past decade, thousands of women have been elected to the panchayat in India. Women were elected to nearly 30 percent of seats in South Africa's national, provincial and local legislatures. Furthermore, there are many examples of civil society organisations, activist groups and social movements mobilising to enable women's transformative participation in political life, and to promote greater governmental accountability for gender issues.

Continuing marginalisation

Yet, despite the growing numbers of women being elected to office, women remain under-represented in both national and local governing bodies throughout the world. As of October 2007, only 17.4 percent of parliamentarians were women worldwide. Only six countries in a list of 60 have managed to reach 30 percent or more women's representation in both the lower and upper houses (see annex 1). The UK in fact comes a lowly 53 in this list with only 19.7 percent in the lower house and 18.9 percent in the upper house! Interestingly, of the top 10 countries which have the highest women's representation in formal politics, four are Southern countries.

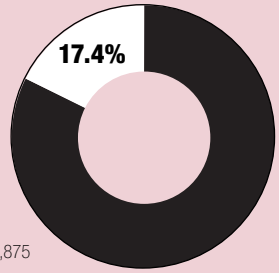
The under-representation of women in formal politics remains particularly pronounced for marginalised groups of women. In the UK, for example, while black women make up five percent of the population, only 0.3 percent of MPs are black women. Indigenous, dalit, migrant, poor, disabled and HIV-positive women are also largely marginalised from representation in formal political structures in their countries.

Even when women are elected to positions of power it does not mean that they are participating in conditions of equity. On the whole, women remain absent from the upper echelons of power within formal politics at both national and local levels. They are frequently given marginalised roles and responsibilities (usually in areas that are already perceived as feminized such as social care) and thus often remain excluded from most high-level decision-making, as well as from economic policy making, which can be highly gender differentiated in outcome (Pedwell and Perrons, 2007: 20).

World Average (2007): Women MPs in Parliament

Percentage of Women MPs in Parliament
(Lower and Upper Houses Combined)
(Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2007)

Total MPs:	**43,926***
Men:	**35,425** **82.6%**
Women:	**7,450** **17.4%**



* Gender breakdown known for 42,875

Laura Romero

"There are very few women in power and the few women Mayors are often in the smallest and poorest towns. They have very few resources to launch any initiatives, let alone those that address women's needs! Women are often in Council but only to serve the coffee!"
Laura Romero, Member,
Colectiva Feminista, El Salvador

Deepening gender inequities and constraints on participation

A number of social, economic and political constraints are hampering the achievement of women's transformative political participation and the pursuit of gender equity. There is a clear paradox between the deepening of democratic institutions, practices of good governance and calls for gender equity on the one hand and the neo-liberal context that makes the realisation of these political rights more difficult on the other.

When government services, such as healthcare and education are cut in favour of promoting 'individual responsibility', it is usually women who end up bearing the responsibility. This often functions to increase women's traditional burden of care, thus further constraining their capacity for political participation (Pedwell and Perrons, 2007).

In many parts of the world, exclusionary trade policies and agreements are intensifying the 'feminisation' of poverty through privileging large corporations and thus pushing local and small-scale producers especially women producers out of markets. Furthermore, crucial decisions associated with trade negotiations (such as those promoted by the EU and the World Trade Organisation) are routinely taken behind closed doors, thus minimizing consultation among many of those who are affected by trade policies. Like trade negotiations, decisions about development aid and public budgets are also not taking adequate account of gender concerns and thus risk reproducing prevalent gender inequities.

Neo-liberalism

Neo-liberalism is associated with a range of economic policies which heighten economic instability, resulting in reduced wages; de-unionisation; elimination of workers rights; no price control; cutting public expenditure on social services and reducing safety-nets for the poor; reducing government regulation of anything that could reduce profit; selling state-owned enterprises, goods and services to private investors; and replacing 'public and community good' with 'individual responsibility', thus forcing the poor to find solutions to their own problems.

Moreover, in many parts of the world, including 'the West', religious fundamentalisms are constraining women's political participation. Speaking with reference to the relationship between religious fundamentalisms and women's political participation in Indonesia, for example, Ani Soetjipto from Indonesia, expresses concern with the adoption of Sharia law in parts of Indonesia: "In East Java a democratically elected woman candidate was not able to take office because of protests from religious leaders". These and other barriers, which are discussed further in Part I, highlight the need for continuing efforts to promote gender equity in political participation and to hold policy makers accountable for gender justice.

Ani Soetjipto

"Women have to dress a certain way, not go out at night and are not allowed to be in positions of power. The understanding is that politics is not women's business."
Ani Soetjipto, Consultant,
Asia Foundation, Indonesia

Why more women in politics? Do women make a difference?

Why advocate for greater numbers of women representatives in politics? Are women more likely than men to pursue gender-sensitive policies or programmes? In addressing these questions we can distinguish between two basic understandings of political representation – descriptive and substantive – which underscore different (yet interconnected) arguments for the need to increase the number of women in formal political structures.

Descriptive representation

Descriptive representation refers to the numerical proportion of women (compared to that of men) in any formal political structure. Those advocating greater gender equity in electoral politics draw on the notion of descriptive representation to argue that because women make up 50 percent or more of the population in most countries, governing bodies should do better to mirror this in the gender composition of elected representatives. Ensuring the election of more women candidates is thus seen as an important component of democratic governance and human rights. However, it is clear that achieving greater descriptive representation of women as a group does not necessarily result in equal access for all women, but rather often those who are privileged with respect to socio-economic advantages, education and other factors.

Descriptive representation

The numerical proportion of women (compared to that of men) in any formal political structure.

Substantive representation

The act of representatives (i.e. women and men MPs) advocating for certain groups (i.e. women).

Substantive representation

Substantive representation refers to the act of representatives (i.e. women and men MPs) advocating for certain groups (i.e. women). Campaigns to increase the number of women in formal political structures have sometimes combined descriptive and substantive representation, assuming that female representatives will be more likely to address 'women's issues'. However, as history has shown, there is no guarantee that women representatives will be more likely to pursue gender-sensitive programmes and policies simply because they are women. Indeed, many women who are elected to positions of political power end up 'miming' the traditional political roles of men.

Furthermore, women are differentiated by race, ethnicity, nation, culture, class, caste, sexuality, ability, religion, and HIV-status, among other variables. Women's different social locations and experiences mean that they have a range of varied needs and political interests. These differences can conflict and contribute to political outcomes not of benefit to all women. If we simply assume that women political representatives will be more likely to address 'women's issues' or to approach politics in particular ways, we risk reproducing problematic ideas about gender which subordinate and constrain women within politics. We also risk abandoning the responsibility that all members of government have for promoting gender equity. That being said, there is evidence that greater numbers of women (and marginalised groups) in political structures and spaces can transform those spaces – and wider social and political contexts – in progressive ways (Bird, 2005; Bochel, 2000; Meyer, 2003; Puwar, 2004; Childs, Lovenduski & Campbell 2005), as is discussed further in Part II.

Sandra Kabir

"It is important that we don't put women in politics into a gender box of only being able to understand and promote women's issues."
Sandra Kabir, Labour Party,
Former Councillor, Brent Council, UK

Towards transformative politics and leadership

Achieving gender-sensitive political transformation requires the election of candidates who are specifically committed to transformative gender-oriented goals (and this may include gender-sensitive and progressive women and men). It is thus important to advocate a dual approach which examines not only that which facilitates the election and continued tenure of women representatives in local and national politics, but also, how political representatives can be supported to address gender inequities and ensure that gender-sensitive policies and programmes are implemented and monitored.

Dual approach to transforming political spaces

A dual approach to transforming political spaces is required which:

1) Facilitates the election and continued tenure of women representatives in local and national politics.
2) Examines how gender-sensitive policies and programmes can be implemented and monitored.

Part I:
Increasing women's political participation

Increasing women's meaningful participation in politics requires efforts both to address the barriers (social, political, economic, cultural, religious etc.) which constrain women's political involvement, and initiatives to enable women to strengthen their capacity to participate within a range of political spaces, both formal and informal.

Addressing barriers to participation

Both top-down action on the part of policy makers and bottom-up action from grassroots social actors are required to effect lasting gender-sensitive transformations. While attention to the dangers of neo-liberal economic policies and social and geo-political contexts (and the differences between women within particular contexts) remain crucial, it is possible to identify a number of key constraints to women's involvement in political life.

Key constraints on women's political participation

- Exclusionary trade policies and processes
- Lack of women's voices in development funding decisions
- Heightened security regimes and curtailed civil liberties
- The feminization of poverty
- Women's 'double burden'
- Traditional gender norms and values
- Gender-based violence

The One World Action publication, The Politics of Democratic Governance: Organising for Social Inclusion and Gender Equity (Pedwell and Perrons, 2007), discussed a number of key barriers, including neo-liberal, social and economic policies; feminization of poverty; women's double burden; traditional gender norms and values; and gender-based violence. The publication emphasised that international, national and local policies and programmes that address the feminization of poverty and improve women's economic situation are crucial to promoting women's effective political participation.

The feminization of poverty

The majority of the 1.5 billion people living on 1 US dollar a day or less are women. In addition, the gap between women and men caught in the cycle of poverty has continued to widen in the past decades. Women living in poverty are often denied access to critical resources such as credit, land and inheritance. Their labour goes unrewarded and unrecognized. Caught in the cycle of poverty, women lack access to resources and services to change their situation (United Nations, 2000)

Contesting power relations within the home, community and workplace which disproportionally associate women with responsibility for domestic work and caring duties – thus reinforcing women's 'double burden' of paid economic employment and work in the home – is also key. Furthermore, an ongoing task must be the constant challenging of the narrow definition of 'politics' that exclude and marginalise women. The persistence of gender-based violence, as well as gendered forms of racist, casteist, homophobic and disablist violence, must also be tackled with urgency.

Institute of Politics and Governance (IPG), Philippines

ipg is an education, training and research centre for ngos, people's organisations and local governments. It focuses on promoting participatory democracy, people-centred development and good local governance in The Philippines. ipg is also the secretariat of the Barangay-Bayan Governance Consortium (bbgc), a civil society response to the challenges of decentralisation that were created by the adoption in 1991 of the Local Government Code. Through their three main programmes which focus on, good governance; active citizenship; and women in governance; ipg have successfully influenced government policy, promoted political engagement, increased the participation of women in politics and helped contribute to more empowered and sustainable communities.

The remainder of this section addresses three additional constraints on women's political participation: exclusionary trade policies and processes, lack of women's voices in development funding decisions, and heightened security regimes and curtailed civil liberties.

Exclusionary trade policies and processes

Decisions about international and regional trade agreements continue to be made behind closed doors. The crucial need to establish increased transparency, wider consultation, greater accountability, and more effective gender analysis within international and regional trade negotiations were among the key issues raised by One World Actions' partners during advocacy and lobbying activities with officials from the European Commission's Trade Cabinet in Brussels, held as part of the Just Politics Dialogue.

Jen Albano

"My concern is how economic agreements can be made more accountable to state and non-state actors, particularly to women's organisations in villages, as well as local government officials and the parliament."
Jennifer Albano, Executive Director, Institute for Politics and Governance, Philippines

Addressing the gender inequities associated with international and regional trade policies with European Commission officials, Emily Sikazwe from Women for Change in Zambia comments, "We have had agreements before but I would like to find out how you have been accountable to the women of Africa for the impact they have had. You are excited about Economic Partnership Agreements, but I wonder, will maternity mortality rates drop? Will HIV rates drop? Will the commodification of labour really help African women?"

Similarly, Helen O'Connell from One World Action, adds "If the EU has no hidden agenda, why then are the negotiations not open?" From this perspective, maintaining pressure on regional and international bodies to open trade negotiations up to wider consultation from a variety of stakeholders, including women's, feminist and grassroots groups concerned with social and economic justice, remains crucial.

Women for Change (WfC), Zambia

Women for Change aims to empower rural communities, especially women, to contribute towards sustainable development and to eradicate all forms of poverty in Zambia. The organisation's core objectives include:

- Providing practical support to women and girls living with and affected by HIV/AIDS.
- Strengthening the capacity of people's associations and community groups to deliver more effective development, awareness-raising and advocacy programmes on issues related to gender and HIV/AIDS.
- Advocating for the formulation and implementation of gender-sensitive and just national policies, laws and programmes responsive to the demands and needs of HIV/AIDS affected rural communities.
- Enhancing traditional leaders' knowledge of human rights and skills to manage their affairs in a democratic and gender-sensitive manner.

Lack of women's voices in development funding decisions

International donors are increasingly using new means of disbursing aid, for example through direct budget support, whereby funds are given directly to national partner governments, or through supporting large-scale sectoral programmes, such as healthcare, education or water. The 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness emphasised the necessity for Southern governments to take ownership of development funding and make their own decisions. However, there remains a significant lack of gender analysis with respect to the operation of these new donor funding modalities. Women's organisations who are excluded from budget processes insist that what prevents gender equity and justice is the lack of accountability, transparency and capacity in relation to gender mainstreaming.

Participants in the Just Politics Dialogue voiced such concerns to representatives from the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) at the discussion days in London and to the European Commission's Europe Aid representatives during advocacy and lobbying activities in Brussels.

Emily Sikazwe

"Direct budget support from donors is subjugating and destroying women's movements in Zambia. Our government is male-dominated and limits political space for women and yet they are receiving direct budget support from donors such as DFID."
Emily Sikazwe, Executive Director, Women for Change, Zambia

Just budgets

One World Action's Just Budgets Project is a groundbreaking initiative that examines how gender budget analysis can be used to make sure donors and governments keep their policy promises on women's rights and gender equity, throughout the complex aid delivery system. The goal of the project is to identify useful ways to measure aid effectiveness in relation to gender equity and poverty reduction goals. Working in partnership with civil society organisations in four Southern African Countries (Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda), it seeks to analyse:

- Achievements and challenges facing gender budget initiatives.
- The ability of civil society organisations to engage effectively both in national and local budget and donor processes.
- The impact and effectiveness of aid by applying gender budget analysis to new aid modalities, such as direct budget support.

The project will develop recommendations and action plans that will be presented to policy makers, practitioners and donors within the four focus countries, as well as in the UK and at the EU level.

In response to these concerns, Emma Grant from DFID's Effective States Team emphasises that DFID's direct budget support programme builds in conditionality around three areas: human rights, poverty reduction and public sector reform/anti-corruption. As she explains, "We use direct budget support as a tool in countries where we consider the government has reached a certain level of good governance. In Ethiopia when human rights protestors were killed we stopped direct budget support and looked for other methods". Grant stresses that continuity and reliability of aid are important and that direct budget support is an effective way of maintaining balance and scrutiny.

She believes that DFID is continually "working towards building domestic accountability within the countries it funds, through involving government, civil society organisations, media and international partners". Nevertheless, the need for advocacy and lobbying initiatives such as One World Actions' Just Budgets Project, which maintain pressure on international donors to pay closer attention to the gender inequities associated with development funding regimes, remains vital.

Association of United Communities of Usulatan (COMUS), El Salvador

COMUS uses a strong gender perspective to advocate for the rights of disabled people in the municipality of San Francisco Javier, El Salvador. The organisation has worked to support women in the region in gaining access to different political structures, such as the municipality development committees and community development councils. They have supported women in participating in municipal elections and have provided training to both female and male community leaders on gender and attitudinal change. As a means to address gender discrimination in schools, COMUS has facilitated an education programme that trained 52 female and male teachers in gender theory.

Heightened security regimes and curtailed civil liberties

Heightened security frameworks in the context of the 'War on Terror' and a range of other regional and national conflicts are functioning in many countries to curtail civil liberties and constrain women's (and marginalised groups') political participation. Laura Romero from the Colectiva Feminista in El Salvador describes how "A recent law introduced in El Salvador to combat terrorism, is curbing political participation, especially the right of people to organise and protest". In Bolivia, as Maria Eugenia Valverde Rojas from ACOBOL points out, "restrictions on citizenship in the context of increased security measures have emerged as a significant constraint to women's (and especially migrant women's) political activity". ACOBOL is working specifically to address this issue ahead of the upcoming national elections in Bolivia. The effect of curtailed civil liberties limiting political space is also a problem in the UK and other western, industrialised countries.

Maria Eugenia Valverde Rojas

"A key problem in Bolivia is a lack of ID cards. One cannot do much without an ID card and if women don't have this document, they can't exist, vote or participate in politics. Unfortunately the government has done very little to improve this situation."
Maria Eugenia Valverde Rojas, Director, ACOBOL, Bolivia

Enabling women to participate in political life

Efforts to enable women to participate more substantively in political life need to address formal and informal politics at international, regional and local levels, as well as in the community and in the home. Particular consideration should be given to involving marginalised groups of women, especially poor, dalit, ethnic minority, indigenous, disabled, HIV-positive, migrant, and lesbian women in politics.

Raising awareness

Enabling women to raise their awareness of their right to have an equal voice in political life and to strengthen their capacity to make their voices heard are important first steps. It remains important to challenge the enduring 'public-private' divide, 'which unwittingly casts women's struggles for social justice and entitlements to the margins of political activity' (CPLG, 2007: 5). This necessitates enabling women to address the relations of power which structure their homes and communities. As Emily Sikazwe from Women for Change in Zambia comments, "For me the issue of participation starts at home. If women can make decisions in their own homes, they will make them in the community, as well as at local, national and international levels".

Education, training and participatory spaces

Education, training and capacity-building activities are crucial to enabling women's meaningful participation in politics. Programmes targeted at women who have had little or no involvement in organised political processes might concentrate on informing women about how to register to vote in local and national elections.

Further initiatives might seek to encourage women to engage in other political processes like local and national government consultation exercises; community-based organisations' meetings; activities of trade unions, feminist and women's groups and other social movements.

Creating and maintaining a wide range of participatory spaces can be an effective way of maximising participation among those who are routinely marginalised from a particular activity. Zohra Moosa from the Fawcett Society, advocates the development of 'citizen's juries' which would bring groups together to discuss a particular issue and develop a citizen's agenda (around a particular budget, service, priority issues etc.). From Moosa's perspective, "such participatory spaces would highlight that you don't have to be an elected representative to get your voice heard".

With respect to women's participation in formal politics, education, training and mentoring initiatives can help potential women candidates become familiar with local and national political processes. They can also provide capacity-building initiatives to develop women's confidence and hone their leadership skills.

Daphne Gondwe

"Women living with HIV and AIDS suffer from a lack of confidence, fear, stigma, and intimidation from political parties. It is necessary to build their capacity and to strengthen their confidence so that they can participate effectively in politics."
Daphne Gondwe, Chairwoman,
Coalition of Women living with HIV and AIDS, Malawi

Coalition of Women Living with HIV and AIDS (COWLHA), Malawi

COWLHA is the first of its kind in Malawi. It is an organisation that is led by women living with HIV and AIDS, aiming at putting women at the heart of responses to HIV and AIDS in both policy and practice. Through research, advocacy, capacity building and the development of gender action groups, COWLHA campaigns to put the rights of women living with HIV and AIDS high on the political agendas of Malawi and the international community. COWLHA's four main objectives are:

- Encouraging and supporting women in the formation and development of self help groups and networks.
- Ensuring that HIV-positive women have accessible and affordable health care.
- Carrying out advocacy for fundamental human rights of all women living with HIV and AIDS, including women in prisons and commercial sex workers.
- Educating and training health care providers and the community at large about women' needs and the risks that they face.

Working with civil society and women's movements

Women's and feminist groups have played a crucial role in pushing forward changes in political processes towards wider participation and gender equity. With respect to Bolivia, Maria Eugenia Valverde Rojas from ACOBOL describes the success the group has had in using the national Law of Popular Participation "as a vehicle to empower women and to involve a wide range of people and civil society groups at the local level". In El Salvador, the Colectiva Feminista campaigns for political changes such as reform to the electoral code which could lead to greater levels of political participation for women. These cases highlight the importance of maintaining robust and active women's and feminist movements to drive processes of transformation towards greater participation and gender equity across a range of national and international contexts.

Colectiva Feminista, El Salvador

Colectiva Feminista's objectives are to strengthen, promote and support women in standing up for their rights. They provide training in leadership skills and support women in gaining political office, and once elected to maintain a women's rights focus in their work. Colectiva Feminista also lobbies for gender equity in local development at municipal and national levels. The organisation works closely with the National Association of Women Councillors and Mayors of El Salvador and the Union of Salvadorian Women's Organizations, which bring together more than 30 local women's organisations.

Increasing women's representation in formal politics

Increasing women's representation in formal politics is one important aspect of maximising women's political impact. A range of strategies to promote greater gender equity in representation at national and local levels can be employed, as discussed below.

Strategies to promote greater gender equity in formal political representation

- Reforming electoral systems
- Gender quotas
- Gender equity directives and conventions
- Organising and capacity building
- International advocacy
- Democratising political party structures and processes for greater gender equity
- Improving citizen-state accountability

Reforming electoral systems

The type of electoral system in use in a particular national context can have a significant bearing on the success of efforts to facilitate greater gender equity in formal political representation. Proportional representation systems have been identified as the most likely to increase the representation of women representatives in national and local governance structures (Dahlerup, 2007; International IDEA, 2005; Tremblay, 2006). Proportional representation systems aim to achieve a close match between the percentage of votes that groups of candidates obtain in elections and the percentage of seats they receive in legislative assemblies. By contrast, plurality voting systems, such as the 'First Past the Post' system utilised in the UK, have disproportional seat representation results from the division of voters into electoral districts.

Proportional representation and Plurality voting systems

Proportional representation systems aim to achieve a close match between the percentage of votes that groups of candidates obtain in elections and the percentage of seats they receive in legislative assemblies.

Plurality voting systems such as the 'First Past the Post' system utilised in the UK, have disproportional seat representation results from the division of voters into electoral districts.

It is possible for countries to also have a mix of both proportional representation and electoral districts, like in Ireland. 'Although 'there is no guarantee that a proportional representation system will lead to an immediate increase in women's representation, research increasingly indicates that it is a step in the right direction' (International IDEA, 2005: 251).

Gender quotas

Gender quotas in formal politics have been advocated as 'an effective instrument for achieving gender balance in political institutions, which is considered essential for democratic development' (Dahlerup, 2007: 73). Approximately 40 countries have introduced some kind of legislated electoral gender quotas in order to increase women's political representation, while in another 50 countries, individual political parties introduced their own gender quotas. 'This means that about half the countries in the world apply some type of electoral gender quota today' (Dahlerup, 2007:78).

Political parties in the UK have used a range of measures such as 'all women shortlists' (candidates must be selected from a list made up only women); 'twinning' (constituencies are paired and a woman and a man are selected for the twinned constituencies); and 'zipping' (women and men are placed alternately on the list of candidates), while countries such as India, Pakistan, Botswana, Bangladesh, Taiwan and Tanzania use the system of 'reserved seats' (a percentage of seats are reserved exclusively for women).

Although controversial, electoral gender quotas can provide an effective means of increasing the descriptive representation of women in formal political systems. In Costa Rica, for example, the implementation of gender quotas in 1996 resulted in a historical leap in the number of women MPs from 19 to 34 percent (Dahlerup, 2007: 77).

Similarly, 'the quota policies within the four main political parties in Germany have had noticeable effect in raising the number of women members and increasing the number of women in positions of responsibility within the party' (Meyer, 2005: 417).

Employing quotas to establish more democratic and equitable structures and processes of candidate selection within political parties is particularly important as it is often political parties who are the 'gatekeepers' of political representation. However, 'quota rules alone are not enough. The quota must be embedded in the selection and the nomination processes of political parties from the very beginning and there must be some form of sanction for non-compliance with the quota requirement' (International IDEA, 2005: 251). Moreover, 'pressure from women's and feminist organisations is needed to ensure a successful implementation of quotas' (251-2).

Gender equity agreements, conventions, organising and capacity-building

Organising and capacity-building of women and men who are aware of their rights and become human rights champions, are central to holding governments accountable for facilitating greater gender equity in political representation as part of their commitment to international human rights and gender equity agreements and conventions. International frameworks, including the UN's Beijing Platform for Action and CEDAW, have been employed specifically to lobby for the use of gender quotas in electoral politics. Furthermore, the UN Millennium Development Goal 3 seeks specifically 'to promote gender equality and empower women'.

Key international directives promoting gender equity

- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (1979)
- Beijing Platform for Action (1995)
- UN Millennium Development Goals (2000)
- UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000)
- Beijing + 10 (2005)

Regional and national legislation and frameworks can also be drawn on to support and 'legitimise' efforts to achieve greater gender equity in formal structures. Within local government, for example, the Charter of Equality for Men and Women within Local Life was agreed by local authorities in 2006 across Europe. The 'Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa' (2004) reaffirms the African Union's commitment to 'continue, expand and accelerate efforts to promote gender equity at all levels'. New gender equity legislation applying to the public sector, including government, has also been implemented at the national level in a wide range of contexts. In the UK, for instance, the Gender Equality Duty applies to the entire public sector and will be monitored and supported by the Commission of Equality and Human Rights.

Lobbying for the development, maintenance and adequate funding of local, national, regional and international civil society and governmental women's rights organisations and institutes, can also play an important role in promoting gender equity in political representation. Working to facilitate the appointment of progressive women and gender-sensitive men who might act as effective 'gender champions' within relevant international and national bodies is vital.

International advocacy

Advocacy for gender equity in formal political representation on the part of international bodies can serve as an important catalyst and support mechanism for regional, national and local processes of political transformation. In a post-colonial context, however, it remains crucial to approach international intervention with careful attention to transnational relations of power and local issues of ownership and sustainability. As Emily Sikazwe from Women for Change in Zambia comments, "change from external forces can be helpful to the cause of women but we need to be careful about how sustainable that change can be. Change should grow organically".

Democratising political party structures and processes for greater gender equity

It is clear that mainstream political parties, many of which remain hierarchical and male-dominated, often provide inhospitable environments for the pursuit of gender-sensitive policies and programmes. In many contexts, despite wider trends towards decentralisation in political structures, power is becoming concentrated in the hands of a small elite group at the top of party structures and key political decisions are being made behind closed doors without sufficient consultation.

No easy assumptions can be made that parties on the left will necessarily be more democratic internally than those on the other side of the political spectrum. Amanda Williamson from the International Development Research Centre, South Africa, observes that in South Africa there has been a centralisation of power and closing of doors within the African National Congress. She goes on to say that "Women councillors who have been elected to make a difference and to raise practical issues and resources for services, feel very much neutralised within the party".

Increasing the accountability of political parties for addressing gendered inequities requires efforts to democratise decision-making structures and processes within political parties and to raise awareness among party members about gender issues. Progressive women and men representatives need to work internally to push for greater democracy, transparency and accountability within political parties. Furthermore, through 'naming and shaming', civil society and grassroots organisations can play a crucial role in maintaining pressure on parties to open up processes of decision-making. International organisations and umbrella bodies, such as Liberal International and International IDEA, can also make a significant contribution to mobilising and supporting democratising processes within political parties.

Improving citizen-state accountability

Mobilisation on the part of civil society, women's and feminist organisations, and activist groups can provide an important source of pressure on States to address democratic deficits which function to exclude women from political representation and participation. Such bottom-up action can encourage national and local governing bodies to remain accountable to commitments they have made to widening political participation through decentralised structural processes and participatory governance, including specific gender equity policies. Ensuring that such reforms are implemented and actively monitored remains a crucial means of improving citizen-state accountability with respect to the imperative to widen political representation and participation, particularly that of women. Lobbying for the allocation of adequate funds to support the implementation of participatory reforms – and to promote attention to gender equity within such reforms – is crucial. Amanda Williamson from the International Development Research Centre, South Africa, observes that "An effective strategy has been tracking decentralisation programmes down to the local level. Funding is conditional on ensuring women are involved and this has carved out spaces at the local level to ensure that women actively participate".

Part II:
Women transforming political spaces

Facilitating the entry of a greater number of women into formal and informal politics is crucial but not, in itself, enough. In order to address the possibilities for meaningful political transformation, we need to ask how women can become effective political actors at a range of different levels, across international contexts. We also need to address how greater accountability for pursuing gender equity and social justice can be demanded and ensured of all political actors, systems and structures.

Critical gender mass: Do numbers make a difference?

The concept of critical gender mass has been a consistent theme within debates concerned with increasing women's representation within formal political structures. Critical gender mass refers to the necessary percentage of women representatives in a legislature for transforming the legislative context from one in which gender-sensitive policy is unlikely, to one in which opportunities for implementing gender-sensitive policy are increased. While 30 percent has been the proportion most articulated within discussions of critical gender mass, *'a shift is taking place from demands for 30 percent or minority representation, to a more radical demand for 50 percent or gender balance in politics'* (Dahlerup, 2006: 515).

Critical gender mass

The necessary percentage of women representatives in a legislature for transforming the legislative context from one in which gender-sensitive policy is unlikely, to one in which opportunities for implementing gender-sensitive policy are increased.

Critical gender mass, descriptive representation and substantive representation

The notion of critical gender mass is linked to assumptions regarding the relationship between the descriptive and substantive representation of women in formal politics – that women representatives will be more likely to advocate for 'women's' and/or gender-sensitive issues and policy. This idea 'is based not on a belief in an essential link between sex and representation but on the way in which women experience the world and how this affects their actions if elected as political representatives' (Grey, 2006: 493).

A number of studies have indicated links between the number of women elected into formal politics and the degree to which gender-oriented issues are addressed within such spaces (Baden, 2000; Bird, 2005; Bochel, 2000; Meyer, 2003; Childs, Lovenduski & Campbell, 2005).

> Women MPs introduced topics into parliamentary debate that, according to established views on gender relations, would normally belong to the private sphere. They also raised feminist policy issues more frequently in comparison to men, including the protection of motherhood, the improvement of abortion and divorce laws, social security, questions of sexual self-determination, and female wages.
> Birgit Meyer (2003: 416)

Research has also shown that women's political participation and representation in decision-making can lower levels of women's poverty (Baden, 2000). From the perspective of Jennifer Albano from the Institute for Politics and Governance in the Philippines, "When you have progressive women within local level politics, it is much easier to effect change, to transform and create more spaces for other women, excluded groups and to implement more progressive policies".

One World Action's partner organisations provide further inspiring examples of successful efforts by women in formal and informal politics to transform oppressive political structures and fight for greater gender equity and social justice. ACOBOL in Bolivia has used the country's law of Popular Participation to facilitate the increased involvement of women and marginalised groups in local level politics, and this has enabled more progressive laws to be passed. In Mozambique, the human rights organisation MULEIDE, launched a 'Women's Manifesto' which was presented to national government and they also developed a draft law on domestic violence. TGNP in Tanzania has mobilised to change patriarchal laws relating to civil liberties, sexual violence and land rights. In Malawi, the Coalition of Women Living with HIV and AIDS, has set up a 'gender action group' within local government and has developed a legal team to formulate bills on property grabbing, marriage rules and domestic violence.

Women for Change in Zambia have contested patriarchal laws forbidding women from registering their children on their passport without a signature from the father, laws forbidding women to visit hotels unescorted, as well as problematic marriage and property legislation.

All this has been possible due to the strong 'inside-outside' networks and alliances that the organisations have built up and nurtured over time with progressive women and men who are already in politics.

MULEIDE, Mozambique

An interdisciplinary group of members who are specialists in different social disciplines (e.g. lawyers, psychologists, teachers, doctors, social workers), MULEIDE promotes respect for human rights, and in particular women's rights in Mozambique. It focuses on issues of violence against women, gender inequities in society and government, government policy deficiencies in protecting women's rights, stigmatization of people living with HIV and AIDS and the psychological, physical and emotional abuses suffered by trafficked women and young girls. MULEIDE provides services to women in rural communities through their legal assistance programme and various grassroots projects, including basic business skills training and voter education.

Women, diversity and conflicting expectations

There remain problems, however, with the assumption (suggested by those who are uncritical of the concept of critical gender mass) that women representatives will necessarily be more likely than their male colleagues to represent the interests of women. It is clear that women are not a homogenous group and 'every female legislator will have cross-cutting identity characteristics that affect her worldview' (Grey, 2006: 493). Furthermore, women politicians often find that they are caught between two sets of conflicting expectations. They have to prove that they are just like male politicians and that they will be able to make a difference when elected. They may also encounter significant conflicts between party loyalties and the desire to address 'women's interests'. As formal politics (as well as political culture more generally) remains a highly masculinised space in most (if not all) countries, women politicians risk marginalisation and exclusion if they 'are seen to represent only "women's issues" (or perhaps "feminist interests")' (Grey, 2006: 493). There is also the possibility that increased numbers of women in formal political structures will coincide with a backlash against feminist ideals, which can function to constrain discussion and advocacy of gender-sensitive issues and policies (see Temblay, 2006: 499 and Childs and Krook, 2006: 522-523).

Critical acts and safe spaces

Thus, with respect to critical gender mass, 'there is little evidence that 30 percent is a magical cure-all for ensuring the representation of women in national politics' (Grey, 2006: 492). Nevertheless, it is clear that the concept of critical gender mass has proven extremely useful in making concrete gains in the "real world", as it insists that a few token individuals are not sufficient for provoking large-scale policy change (see Childs and Krook, 2006). The notion of critical gender mass is most useful, however, when it is analysed in its relationship to other key factors enabling the substantive representation of women's interests and gender issues in formal politics, namely 'critical acts' and 'safe spaces' (Grey, 2006; see also Childs and Krook, 2006).

Community leaders putting forward their demands to local and national government representatives, PRIA, India

Critical acts, including the discussion of 'women's issues' in parliament and the promotion of gender-sensitive policy, may be enabled by a range of factors, including representatives' links with women's and feminist groups and movements, support from relevant civil society organisations, the wider ideologies of dominant political parties, and international advocacy with respect to particular issues. Safe spaces for gender-sensitive advocacy and action may be formed within formal political structures when women representatives with shared political perspectives attain minority status within a particular party. They may also be created through the development of alliances between women working in different political parties or among women active in formal and informal politics, as will be discussed further below.

Supporting women to be effective political actors

How can women politicians be supported most effectively to transform traditional political spaces for greater gender equity and social justice? Part I of this report discussed strategies to promote women's increased entry into a range of political spaces. However, women representatives still remain marginalised within formal political structures at local and national levels. This section, therefore, addresses some key strategies enabling women to become effective political actors once elected to office.

Strategies enabling women to be effective political actors

- Training and mentoring for women in politics
- Learning, using and changing the rules
- Creating political spaces, alliances and networks
- Information-sharing and dialogue
- Working with the media

Training and mentoring for women in politics

One of the greatest challenges that women representatives face upon being elected to office is learning 'the rules of the game'. In many contexts, women politicians tend to enter politics from backgrounds in community activism and development, in contrast to men who are more likely to climb formal political ranks, gaining significant knowledge of political processes and rules along the way. Training and mentoring programmes for women representatives new to political office can play a crucial role in preparing women to become knowledgeable and skilled political actors.

Etta Rosales

"I had so much work to do to keep up with the traditional politicians. If you have come from an activist or teaching background, it is hard to compete. I needed to learn the tricks of the trade and I had to fight with my party to give me these skills and knowledge."
Etta Rosales, Former member of the Philippine Congress who served three terms in the House of Representatives as a representative of the Akbayan Citizen's Action Party

Eileen Kinnear

"It is important for the party to invest in training women candidates. This not only creates a strong political message but also enables women to have the ability to effect change once elected."
Eileen Kinnear, Conservative Party, Councillor, Harrow-on-the-Hill, UK

Learning, using and changing the rules

Learning and using 'the rules' of particular political structures and spaces are important steps in a process towards changing those structures and spaces. Women can reform the inherent 'institutional masculinity' which characterizes most legislatures by implementing a 'rules strategy': 'learning the rules, using the rules and changing the rules' (International IDEA, 2005: 252). A number of One World Action's partner organisations provide training and capacity-building to women politicians to enable them to learn, use and change the rules of formal political structures. For example, ACOBOL in Bolivia and Colectiva Feminista in El Salvador offer training to women in positions of political power to enable them to be better informed about local, national and international conventions and agreements and to develop skills of negotiation and public speaking. This enables women to confidently address gender equity and women's rights issues when the opportunities arise.

Changing the rules

When it comes to changing the rules of political systems for greater gender equity, International IDEA (International IDEA, 2005: 252) suggests that political representatives might consider:

- Addressing the establishment of national machinery to support women's causes and to monitor the implementation of policies and recommendations
- Changing the candidate selection rules for their parties, especially with regard to leadership positions
- Establishing mechanisms within parliament which would give women MPs priority in areas where they are under-represented or are less vocal in, than their male counterparts
- Instituting quotas in different committees in parliament
- Providing special incentives for initiatives outside parliament which sponsor and support women's issues and women's representation (e.g. women's leadership training in schools, media programmes on women politicians)
- Expanding legislation to include emerging issues of interest to women

Creating political spaces, alliances and networks

Creating safe political spaces and productive political alliances have been crucial in enabling women to pursue gender-sensitive transformation. Through intra- and cross-party networking, women elected to local and national political office have mobilised to increase women's participation and to make political processes more attentive to gender-oriented issues and concerns. For example, Sandra Kabir, Labour Party, former Councillor, Brent Council, UK, recalls how "Women Labour councillors used to get together to discuss the priority issues that we felt were important. For example Brent Council had the highest rate of teenage pregnancies in any borough and we tried to address this through working with the health committee". The development of caucuses and steering groups that enable progressive women and men representatives to unite over issues can be very effective for addressing gender-oriented concerns.

Alliances between progressive women and men in formal and informal politics (including women who are part of women's and feminist movements) have also proved productive in this regard. For instance, through linking women in formal and informal politics, the Tanzania Gender Networking Programme has effected significant changes in laws around civil liberties, sexual violence, and land rights in the country.

Local government members and representatives of CEM-H in the Municipal Women's Office in Nacaome, Honduras

Tanzania Gender Networking Programme (TGNP), Tanzania

TGNP is a civil society organisation that promotes and applies gender equity objectives through policy advocacy and mainstreaming of gender and pro-poor perspectives at all levels in Tanzanian society, including the public and governmental sectors. TGNP's Activism, Lobbying and Advocacy programme contests gender-insensitive laws and policies in Tanzania. They promote more gender-sensitive laws and policies though policy analysis, coalition development, campaign activities, and engaging in electoral processes and voter education. The Training and Capacity Building programme seeks to equip a range of stakeholders, especially those working at the local level, with knowledge and capacity to apply gender analysis to various aspects of the development process.

Information-sharing and dialogue

Information-sharing and dialogue among groups of progressive women and gender-sensitive men is essential for generating knowledge of political issues, approaches, tools and strategies. Such activities can also create a foundation for transformative alliances and coalitions across national, regional and international contexts. A number of organisations are facilitating such knowledge exchange in a range of innovative ways. For example, International IDEA has initiated a new project, International Knowledge Network of Women, which is a web-based network that helps women come together to discuss salient political issues. It offers a resource library where you can upload information, including 740 resources, studies and practical training tools. Furthermore, in Tanzania, TGNP's Information Generation and Dissemination project seeks to inform the population on issues of gender, democracy and development as a means to realize women's empowerment and engender social transformation. The project coordinates and manages information and communication between like-minded civil society organisations within the country, in the region and internationally.

Working with the media

Engaging with the media can be an important strategy for women to maximise their impact and to increase their effectiveness as political actors. Women involved in formal and informal politics can engage with the media to contest negative or stereotypical portrayals of women and women politicians, and to challenge oppressive ideas about gender categories and roles. Civil society and activist groups can use the media to demand and ensure accountability from politicians and governments with respect to gender equity. Women politicians and activist groups can also use the media to build a strong public profile and communicate key political messages.

In this vein, Jeanette Arnold, Labour party representative in the Greater London Assembly, UK, explains how implementing a strong media and communications strategy has been key to her effectiveness in local government and her ability to serve as a role model for other women. ACOBOL in Bolivia, pursues an extensive communications programme, with broadcasts in all the main Bolivian languages to complement their efforts to promote women's political participation in decision-making within municipal government.

Jeanette Arnold

"I work to put my image out there because I want other black and minority ethnic women to see and know that there is a black woman on the Greater London Assembly. I want to inspire other women and to act as a role model so that they know that it is possible."
Jeanette Arnold, Labour Party,
Member of Greater London Assembly, UK

The Bolivian Association of Women Councillors (ACOBOL), Bolivia

ACOBOL is organised in each of Bolivia's nine governmental departments. As one of the strongest associations of women councillors in Latin America, many of whom are indigenous women, ACOBOL has undertaken innovative work on gender-based violence and issues concerning women in public office. They promote women's political participation in decision-making processes in order to ensure the inclusion of a gender perspective in municipal development planning strategies. ACOBOL also supports elected women in office, especially with respect to women's political rights as laid down in the various legal codes. An extensive communications programme, with broadcasts in all the main Bolivian languages, including Aymara and Quechua, complements their work.

Issues of accountability

Women representatives: Negotiating accountability

When women representatives are elected to office it is often expected that they will then represent 'women's interests' and pursue gender-sensitive policies and programmes. However, as discussed previously, women representatives often become caught in the middle between expectations that they will be accountable to the specific interests of the women they are seen to represent and demands that they are accountable to the political parties of which they are members. Political parties may support women candidates to indicate that the party advocates gender equity. However, after elections, they can be very strict in insisting that women representatives tow the party line – which may not explicitly address (or may even be incompatible with the achievement of) particular gender equity concerns.

Women's groups which may have supported women candidates in being elected to office may in turn become frustrated when their radical political vision is not pursued through the representative's action within formal political structures. As Laura Romero from the Colectiva Feminista in El Salvador explains, "the women's movement is focussed on helping women to enter political spaces but when they do achieve this, the women can be totally absorbed by the political party that initially gave them the opportunity. Often the women comply with blind obedience to the party".

Building and maintaining post-election links with women's and feminist groups can thus provide women representatives with a foundation of support, as well as increased incentive to pursue gender-sensitive policies and programmes. For example, Temblay (2006: 498) notes with respect to New Zealand that, beyond reaching a critical gender mass of women MPs in parliament, explicit recognition of gender issues by the country's left-leaning women politicians and their support for women-friendly legislation were likely to be related to their links with feminist organisations. Links with such groups may provide women representatives with the courage and support to advocate for women's issues and gender equity, even when such action departs from traditional party lines. Yet for women representatives, accountability to their parties can also be seen as a potentially productive channel for the pursuit of gender-sensitive goals.

Ruth Polling

"Accountability to your party can be seen as a positive. Key to this is a manifesto or electoral message and this can take the personal pressure off you because you are part of something bigger."
Ruth Polling, Liberal Democrat Party, Councillor, Executive Member of Islington Council, UK

Widening accountability

It is vital however, that accountability for addressing gender inequities is not something that is demanded only of women representatives. Seeing women politicians as exclusively responsible for gender issues, perpetuates a problematic association of women representatives with typically 'feminised' areas of political activity, thus constraining women's wider political activity and mobility. It also effectively removes this responsibility from men and wider political systems and structures as a whole. The focus therefore needs to be on developing strategies for holding all politicians, policy-makers and relevant institutions accountable for addressing gender issues and inequities.

Ruth Meena

"Why are we still asking if women have made a difference in politics when we don't ask the same questions of men?"
Ruth Meena, Chairperson of Board, Tanzania Gender Networking Programme, Tanzania

Strategies for maximising accountability

Both top-down and bottom-up action is required to ensure that political systems and processes become more transparent, participatory and accountable. As Rosa Estela Anzora Ruano from COMUS in El Salvador stresses, "Extensive organising, information dissemination, training and advocacy have to be carried out at the local level. We can't talk about change if we don't create the capacity at the grassroots level".

Strategies for maximising accountability of all political actors, processes and systems

- Demanding increased transparency of international institutions and processes
- Holding national governments accountable to the constitution, legislation and declarations
- Holding political parties accountable to manifestos and promises
- Addressing corruption within governments and parties

Demanding increased transparency of international institutions and processes

As discussed earlier, civil society organisations, women's groups and other grassroots movements need to maintain pressure on international bodies to ensure increased transparency, wider consultation and greater accountability within international and regional trade negotiations. Advocacy from the bottom-up is also crucial to put pressure on donor nations and institutions to pay greater attention to the gendered dimensions of development funding, including direct budget support and other forms of new aid modalities.

Holding national governments accountable to constitutions, legislation and declarations

Organised and informed women and men who are aware of their rights are an essential factor in holding governments accountable to their commitments to international, regional and national directives and legislation with respect to gender equity. Another key factor in maintaining a high level of accountability is national, regional and international alliances and networks that act as pressure groups. Further research and advocacy are required to determine the most appropriate measures and indicators for monitoring progress towards gender equity and social justice in particular contexts. Efforts should also be made to establish networks of actors (i.e. women's and feminist organisations, academic institutions, politicians etc.) who might work together to monitor progress and ensure accountability.

Holding political parties accountable to manifestos and promises

In contexts where gender equity and social justice issues are on the political agenda, civil society organisations, women's and feminist groups and other grassroots actors can play a significant role in pressing political parties to remain accountable to their election manifestos. One key tool that has proved successful in a range of contexts is the development of voters' or women's manifestos which draw explicitly on the language of existing government commitments to hold parties accountable to the promises they have made. As Ruth Meena from TGNP in Tanzania explains, "We developed a voters' manifesto that strongly referred to the constitution, government commitments and the commitments made by the political parties themselves. This became a valuable tool to make politicians accountable".

The media can be a powerful tool in efforts to hold governments and parties publicly accountable to their promises and commitments with respect to gender issues. A key strategy employed by the Fawcett Society in the UK, for instance, has been to use national newspapers to provide a public record of the specific commitments of national party leaders with respect to gender issues.

As Zohra Moosa from the Fawcett Society explains, "In the UK we ask political parties to explain what they are going to do for women as part of their election manifestos. We let them know that we will publish their letter and responses in the media as a way to expose them and to encourage action. It is really important to get them to say this publicly, but it is also useful in holding them to account afterwards". Manifestos can also be employed before and during elections to put pressure on governments and political parties to address salient gender issues which have not been included in the agenda.

Rafa Valente Machava

"We have elections in 2008 and we are saying that if the legislation that we drafted on domestic violence is not passed before the election, then we women will not vote."
Rafa Valente Machava, Executive Director, MULEIDE, Mozambique

Addressing corruption within government and political parties

In contexts where governmental corruption is rife, efforts to democratise and hold political parties accountable to the promises they have made may not be enough. Corruption allows crucial decision-making processes to be taken out of the public domain and therefore reduces the opportunities for women and civil society to influence them. Specific and urgent attention must be focused on exposing and addressing deep-seated problems with corruption at a number of levels. Where political parties have created disenchantment and corruption, women's organisations can emerge to play an even more significant role.

Rosa Estela Anora Ruano

"Political parties might be ideal forums when they function effectively, but in Central America where they dominate and transform political landscapes for their own benefit, it is more difficult. Many political parties are corrupt enough to eliminate and subordinate the power of women."
Rosa Estela Anora Ruano, Executive Director, COMUS, El Salvador

National Association of Women Councillors and Mayors of El Salvador (ANDRYSAS), demanding more political space for women

Part III:
Just Politics Agenda

This final part of the report is a set of recommendations which are a synthesis of the key strategies, approaches and tools for enabling women's transformative political participation and leadership that were discussed during the Dialogue process.
It is hoped that these recommendations may inform future lobbying and advocacy by women's groups, feminist movements and civil society organisations in South and North.

1 Addressing barriers to women's participation

a) Contesting the public-private divide which casts women's struggles for social justice and entitlements to the margins of political activity; and awareness-raising activities to contest narrow definitions of 'politics' that serve to exclude and marginalise women.

b) Developing, implementing and monitoring international, national and local policies and programmes to address women's poverty and to improve their economic status.

c) Addressing the persistence of gender-based violence and providing support to women, and to marginalised groups who experience violence.

d) Contesting neo-liberal policies which transfer responsibility for providing social services from the state to the individual and therefore to women.

e) Addressing attitudes and power relations within the home, community and workplace which associate women disproportionally with responsibility for domestic work; and lobbying for the development, implementation and up-take of policies designed to promote greater gender equity in parental leave, on-site childcare, and work/life balance.

f) Promoting a diverse range of role models, with special reference to poor, dalit, ethnic minority, indigenous, disabled, HIV-positive, migrant and lesbian women, who can disrupt traditional gendered models of political actors.

2 Enabling women to participate in political life

a) Supporting women to raise their awareness of their right to have an equal voice in political life and to build their capacity to make their voices heard.

b) Education, training and mentoring initiatives to strengthen women's confidence and leadership skills and to help potential women candidates to become familiar with formal political processes and systems at local and national levels.

c) Encouraging women to engage in voting, local and national government consultation exercises, community-based organisations and meetings, trade unions, feminist and other social movements etc.

d) Developing, maintaining and adequately funding, local, national regional and international civil society and governmental women's rights organisations and institutes.

e) Maintaining robust women's and feminist groups and movements to drive progress towards greater participation and gender equity.

3 Increasing women's representation in formal politics

a) Ensuring electoral gender quotas of at least 30% whilst promoting 50 Plus (half or more) women's representation in formal political systems.

b) Using different types of quota systems such as all women shortlists, twinning, zipping and reserved seats to increase the number of women in formal politics.

c) Reforming electoral systems by promoting proportional representation systems, which are generally the most likely to increase the representation of women in national and local governance structures.

d) Ensuring that quotas are embedded in the selection and the nomination processes of political parties and enforcing sanctions for non-compliance.

e) Working to democratise decision-making processes within political parties and to raise awareness among party members of gender issues.

f) International party political organisations and umbrella bodies mobilising and supporting democratising processes within political parties.

g) Initiating international advocacy to support regional, national and local processes of political action and transformation.

4 Supporting women to be effective political actors

a) Implementing training and mentoring programmes for women representatives who are new to political office, including training programmes within political parties.

b) Creating political spaces, alliances and networks by promoting intra- and cross-party networking and the development of women's caucuses and steering groups that encourage women and men representatives to unite over salient gender issues; and information-sharing and dialogue to generate knowledge of political issues, approaches, tools and strategies that will lay the foundation for transformative alliances.

c) Developing and maintaining 'inside-outside' alliances between progressive women and men gender champions in formal and informal politics, especially with women involved in women's and feminist movements.

d) Using the media to demand and ensure accountability from political actors with respect to gender equity and to communicate key political messages; and contesting negative or stereotypical portrayals of women (including women politicians) and gender roles in the media.

5 Maximising accountability to women

a) Women organising and holding national governments accountable to international human rights and gender equity conventions and agreements (i.e. CEDAW, Beijing Platform for Action, UN Resolution 1325 etc.).

b) Maintaining pressure on national and local governing bodies to remain accountable to decentralisation reforms through effective funding, implementation and monitoring of participatory governance processes and programmes, including gender equity policies.

c) Lobbying for increased transparency, wider consultation, greater accountability and more effective gender analysis within all decision-making, particularly international and regional trade negotiations, development funding decisions and new aid modalities.

d) Developing and utilising appropriate indicators to measure progress on gender equity goals.

e) Civil society organisations, women's and feminist groups and other grassroots movements pressing political parties to remain accountable to their election manifestos and promises and to open up decision-making processes to civil society scrutiny; and building networks responsible for monitoring progress and to ensure accountability.

f) Developing voters' or women's manifestos and using the media, to hold political parties accountable to election promises and to put pressure on government to address critical gender issues.

g) International bodies, women's and feminist groups and grassroots movements, exposing and maintaining pressure on governments and political parties to address deep-rooted problems of corruption.

Conclusions and ways forward

Increasing women's meaningful participation in political life requires efforts both to address the constraints (economic, social, cultural, religious, etc.) on women's political involvement, and initiatives to empower women and build their capacity to participate within a range of political spaces, both formal (national and local) and informal. Particular consideration should be given to developing strategies to include marginalised groups of women in a wide range of political spaces and processes.

Increasing women's representation in formal politics is one important aspect of maximising women's political participation and impact. A range of strategies to promote greater gender equity in representation at national and local levels can be employed, including reforming electoral systems, implementing gender quotas, organising and strengthening the capacity of women and men who are aware of their rights and who will hold governments accountable to international directives, drawing on regional and national gender equity agreements and conventions, international advocacy and democratising political parties.

Although seeking to elect a critical gender mass (usually 30 percent, but women's organisations are beginning to demand 50 Plus – half or more women's representation) of women into formal and informal political structures is crucial, it is not, in itself, enough. The notion of critical gender mass is most useful when it is analysed in its relationship to other key factors enabling the substantive representation of women's interests and gender issues in formal politics, namely 'critical acts' and 'safe spaces'. Training and mentoring programmes for new representatives, creating productive political alliances, information-sharing and dialogue and engaging with media are all strategies which can support women to be effective and progressive political actors once elected. Building and maintaining links with women's and feminist organisations can also provide women representatives with support and incentive to pursue gender-sensitive change.

It is vital however, that accountability for addressing gender-oriented concerns and pursuing gender sensitive policies and programmes is not something that is demanded only of women representatives. This not only constrains women's wider political activity and mobility, but also effectively removes responsibility and accountability from men and wider political systems and structures. Both top-down and bottom-up action is required to ensure that political systems and processes become more transparent, participatory and accountable.

On the one hand, governments, political parties and regional and international bodies need to commit to promoting meaningful participation of diverse groups of women in political life and addressing gender issues across all areas of policy. On the other hand, civil society organisations, women's and feminist groups, and other grassroots actors need to maintain pressure on national and local governments to address gender issues, honour their commitments to international and national gender equity agreements and conventions and open their political structures and processes to more equitable participation and greater scrutiny.

It is hoped that the Dialogue and this report, and in particular the Just Politics Agenda, will provide some incentive and guidance for ongoing discussion, information-sharing, learning and action with respect to facilitating women's transformative political participation and leadership.

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Annex 1

World Classification 2007:
Women Representatives in Parliament (Top 60 ranking nations)

		LOWER OR SINGLE HOUSE				UPPER HOUSE OR SENATE			
RANK	COUNTRY	ELECTIONS	SEATS*	WOMEN	%W	ELECTIONS	SEATS*	WOMEN	%W
1	Rwanda	09/2003	80	39	48.8	09/2003	26	9	34.6
2	Sweden	09/2006	349	165	47.3	–	–	–	–
3	Finland	03/2007	200	84	42.0	–	–	–	–
4	Costa Rica	02/2006	57	22	38.6	–	–	–	–
5	Norway	09/2005	169	64	37.9	–	–	–	–
6	Denmark	02/2005	179	66	36.9	–	–	–	–
7	Netherlands	11/2006	150	55	36.7	05/2007	75	26	34.7
8	Cuba	01/2003	609	219	36.0	–	–	–	–
8	Spain	03/2004	350	126	36.0	03/2004	259	60	23.2
9	Mozambique	12/2004	250	87	34.8	–	–	–	–
10	Belgium	06/2007	150	52	34.7	06/2007	71	27	38.0
11	South Africa	04/2004	400	131	32.8	04/2004	54	18	33.3
12	Austria	10/2006	183	59	32.2	N/A	62	17	27.4
12	New Zealand	09/2005	121	39	32.2	–	–	–	–
13	Iceland	05/2007	63	20	31.7	–	–	–	–
14	Germany	09/2005	614	194	31.6	N/A	69	15	21.7
15	Burundi	07/2005	118	36	30.5	07/2005	49	17	34.7
16	United Republic of Tanzania	12/2005	319	97	30.4	–	–	–	–
17	Uganda	02/2006	332	99	29.8	–	–	–	–
18	Switzerland	10/2007	200	59	29.5	10/2007	36	6	16.7
19	Peru	04/2006	120	35	29.2	–	–	–	–
20	Belarus	10/2004	110	32	29.1	11/2004	58	18	31.0
21	Guyana	08/2006	69	20	29.0	–	–	–	–
22	Andorra	04/2005	28	8	28.6	–	–	–	–
23	The F.Y.R. of Macedonia	07/2006	120	34	28.3	–	–	–	–
24	Timor-Leste	06/2007	65	18	27.7	–	–	–	–
25	Afghanistan	09/2005	249	68	27.3	09/2005	102	23	22.5
26	Namibia	11/2004	78	21	26.9	11/2004	26	7	26.9
27	Grenada	11/2003	15	4	26.7	11/2003	13	4	30.8
28	Viet Nam	05/2007	493	127	25.8	–	–	–	–
29	Iraq	12/2005	275	70	25.5	–	–	–	–
29	Suriname	05/2005	51	13	25.5	–	–	–	–
30	Lao People's Democratic Rep.	04/2006	115	29	25.2	–	–	–	–
31	Ecuador	10/2006	100	25	25.0	–	–	–	–
32	Lithuania	10/2004	141	35	24.8	–	–	–	–
33	Australia	10/2004	150	37	24.7	10/2004	76	27	35.5

		LOWER OR SINGLE HOUSE				UPPER HOUSE OR SENATE			
RANK	COUNTRY	ELECTIONS	SEATS*	WOMEN	%W	ELECTIONS	SEATS*	WOMEN	%W
34	**Singapore**	05/2006	**94**	**23**	**24.5**	–	**–**	**–**	**–**
35	**Liechtenstein**	03/2005	**25**	**6**	**24.0**	–	**–**	**–**	**–**
36	**Lesotho**	02/2007	**119**	**28**	**23.5**	03/2007	**33**	**10**	**30.3**
36	**Seychelles**	05/2007	**34**	**8**	**23.5**	–	**–**	**–**	**–**
37	**Honduras**	11/2005	**128**	**30**	**23.4**	–	**–**	**–**	**–**
38	**Luxembourg**	06/2004	**60**	**14**	**23.3**	–	**–**	**–**	**–**
39	**Tunisia**	10/2004	**189**	**43**	**22.8**	07/2005	**112**	**15**	**13.4**
40	**Mexico**	07/2006	**500**	**113**	**22.6**	07/2006	**128**	**22**	**17.2**
41	**United Arab Emirates**	12/2006	**40**	**9**	**22.5**	–	**–**	**–**	**–**
42	**Philippines**	05/2007	**237**	**53**	**22.4**	05/2007	**23**	**4**	**17.4**
43	**Bulgaria**	06/2005	**240**	**53**	**22.1**	–	**–**	**–**	**–**
44	**Eritrea**	02/1994	**150**	**33**	**22.0**	–	**–**	**–**	**–**
44	**Senegal**	06/2007	**150**	**33**	**22.0**	08/2007	**100**	**40**	**40.0**
45	**Ethiopia**	05/2005	**529**	**116**	**21.9**	10/2005	**112**	**21**	**18.8**
46	**Estonia**	03/2007	**101**	**22**	**21.8**	–	**–**	**–**	**–**
46	**Republic of Moldova**	03/2005	**101**	**22**	**21.8**	–	**–**	**–**	**–**
47	**Croatia**	11/2003	**152**	**33**	**21.7**	–	**–**	**–**	**–**
48	**Pakistan**	10/2002	**342**	**73**	**21.3**	03/2006	**100**	**17**	**17.0**
48	**Portugal**	02/2005	**230**	**49**	**21.3**	–	**–**	**–**	**–**
49	**Canada**	01/2006	**308**	**64**	**20.8**	N/A	**100**	**35**	**35.0**
49	**Monaco**	02/2003	**24**	**5**	**20.8**	–	**–**	**–**	**–**
50	**Poland**	10/2007	**460**	**94**	**20.4**	10/2007	**100**	**8**	**8.0**
50	**Serbia**	01/2007	**250**	**51**	**20.4**	–	**–**	**–**	**–**
51	**China**	02/2003	**2980**	**604**	**20.3**	–	**–**	**–**	**–**
52	**Dem. People's Rep. of Korea**	08/2003	**687**	**138**	**20.1**	–	**–**	**–**	**–**
53	**Dominican Republic**	05/2006	**178**	**35**	**19.7**	05/2006	**32**	**1**	**3.1**
53	**United Kingdom**	05/2005	**646**	**127**	**19.7**	N/A	**751**	**142**	**18.9**
54	**Trinidad and Tobago**	10/2002	**36**	**7**	**19.4**	10/2002	**31**	**10**	**32.3**
55	**Guinea**	06/2002	**114**	**22**	**19.3**	–	**–**	**–**	**–**
55	**Slovakia**	06/2006	**150**	**29**	**19.3**	–	**–**	**–**	**–**
56	**Latvia**	10/2006	**100**	**19**	**19.0**	–	**–**	**–**	**–**
57	**Venezuela**	12/2005	**167**	**31**	**18.6**	–	**–**	**–**	**–**
58	**France**	06/2007	**577**	**107**	**18.5**	09/2004	**331**	**56**	**16.9**
58	**Nicaragua**	11/2006	**92**	**17**	**18.5**	–	**–**	**–**	**–**
59	**St Vincent & The Grenadines**	12/2005	**22**	**4**	**18.2**	–	**–**	**–**	**–**
60	**Sudan**	08/2005	**436**	**79**	**18.1**	08/2005	**50**	**2**	**4.0**

* Figures are based on information provided by National Parliaments by 31 October 2007 (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2007).

Annex 2

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Women's full participation in political life is the only guarantee of their rights being protected and upheld.

We believe that when women are involved in politics, their voices and views are heard. Economic and social decisions will then be directly informed and influenced by women's rights and their diverse needs.

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