

STRATEGIC GUIDE

# POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN: FRAMEWORK FOR STRATEGIC ACTION



LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN  
(2014 - 2017)



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# UNITED NATIONS ENTITY FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN (UN WOMEN)

## **Regional Office for the Americas and the Caribbean, Panama Office**

UN Women is the UN Organization dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, UN Women was established to accelerate progress on improving their living conditions and meeting their needs worldwide.

UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programs and services needed to implement these standards. It stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on five priority areas: increasing women's leadership and participation; ending violence against women; engaging women in all aspects of peace and security processes; enhancing women's economic empowerment; and making gender equality central to national development planning and budgeting. UN Women also coordinates and promotes the UN system's work in advancing gender equality.

This Guide is a product of the UN Women Regional Office for the Americas and the Caribbean. It has been written by Irune Aguirrezabal Quijera, Leadership and Political Participation Advisor for the Americas and the Caribbean.

In the process of developing this guide, we are grateful for the contributions by country and program offices through multiple consultations carried out in the regional meetings (LAC Women Political Participation Task Force). We also recognize the support by former Regional Director, Moni Pizani, who conducted the document's consultation process with civil society experts and experts at Headquarters, as well as the valuable recommendations by Anna Coates, Acting Regional Director, Elizabeth Villagómez, Regional Advisor for Economic Empowerment, Laura González, Regional Evaluation Specialist, and Carlos Rodríguez, Regional Communications Specialist. Maria Rosa Alberte Arteaga, a student from the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid interning at UN Women, drafted the bibliography and a list of acronyms.

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# PREAMBLE

*Promoting women's leadership and political participation at all levels is one of the goals pursued by UN Women as an integral part of its efforts to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women.*

*Despite undeniable gains in terms of legal and institutional progress towards more women in decision-making, pervasive structural factors still hinder or limit the full exercise of women's political rights in the region. This is reflected in cultural attitudes based on patriarchal models, gender stereotypes and traditional roles of men and women, deficiencies in women's political and economic empowerment, as well as the dramatic data available on gender violence.*

*Conversely, it is possible to change those same structural factors that exclude women precisely through the quantitative and qualitative increase in women's participation and leadership in areas of political decision-making. Their involvement in decision-making is a precondition for the public agenda to incorporate new dimensions in public policies that contribute to put an end to the vicious circle of discrimination and gender inequality.*

*More women with a voice and influence in political decision-making means more public decisions with a gender and ethnic perspective, which leads to a better, more inclusive governance that recognizes women's diversity. This promotes their political, economic and social empowerment, equal access to opportunities and resources, more safety, greater prevention and efficiency of the justice system against gender violence, as well as more guarantees to achieve the realization of women's political rights.*

*The region of Latin America and the Caribbean is experiencing a historical moment with a gradual increase in women's participation in areas of political decision-making. A strong regional commitment to substantive equality and parity can also be observed at the policy level, particularly since the Quito Consensus*

*called for the achievement of institutional parity at all levels — national, regional and local — as an objective for Latin American and Caribbean democracies. However, progress is not homogeneous; large disparities exist between countries, as well as between groups (especially indigenous women and women of African descent, rural women and women with disabilities), and between levels of governance, with a very uneven and still lacking presence of women at the sub-national and local levels.*

*Within this contrasting landscape, it is our belief that the current context in Latin America and the Caribbean offers opportunities for coordinated and effective action to overcome the barriers that continue to identify political power with men. To this end, UN Women presents this document entitled "Political Empowerment of Women: Framework for Strategic Action in Latin America and the Caribbean (2014-2017)", in order for women to lead and participate in political decision-making at all levels, stemming from the conviction that women's equal representation contributes to representative democracy, good governance and sustainable development.*

*We encourage all countries in Latin America and the Caribbean to lead the process towards gender equality and women's political empowerment. We also invite our partners and allies to join UN Women's commitment to promote women's political participation and consolidate women's citizenship as an intrinsic and inseparable part of a real, effective and inclusive democratic process in Latin America and the Caribbean.*

**UN Women Regional Office for the Americas and the Caribbean**

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Latin America and the Caribbean: democracy, economic development, inequality. Gender equality, women's empowerment and the Post-2015 Agenda.

The region of Latin America and the Caribbean is undergoing a period of remarkable economic growth and is characterized by the presence of stable democratic systems. However, a closer look reveals uneven wealth redistribution in most countries, with high rates of inequality and social exclusion. These factors have a greater impact on women, indigenous populations and populations of African descent, as well as youth.

Social inequality is exacerbated by the pervasiveness of gender inequality, a great remaining challenge to overcome. This inequality is also very present in the field of politics and in the public sector as a whole. Its origin is often rooted in various types of factors linked to the traditional dichotomy that identifies the public sector as a masculine setting, while the private life, particularly household and family care, is considered the place for women. The countries of Latin America and the Caribbean are no exception.

Undeniable progress has been made in the area of political participation, but these achievements are unequal, heterogeneous and insufficient. The political reform processes are an excellent opportunity to advance towards representative parity.

Advances in the region are the result of several circumstances and processes: a significant cultural change that has led to women's increased access to resources, prestige and the recognition of their capabilities in society; the extension of the international legal framework embodied in a strong regional commitment; increased public awareness about gender inequality and its implications for sustainable development; and a burgeoning feminist movement that after years of advocacy, has managed to introduce the gender agenda in debates concerning representative democracy.

According to the 2014 Women in Politics Map prepared jointly by the IPU and UN Women, at 25.7%, the percentage of female representatives in legislative assemblies in the Americas is the highest in the world and in recent years, a significant number of women have been at the front of the Executive branch in their respective countries.

The diagnosis is, however, far from satisfactory. Women's political participation is inadequate – nowhere near substantive equality and representative parity – with very heterogeneous data between countries and within each country, in addition to a lack of women holding public office in local or sub-national government bodies. This situation is further aggravated by the social inequalities affecting indigenous women and women of African descent. Furthermore, women still have fewer resources and less access to support networks in order to participate in political decision-making. Their economic dependence on men, unpaid household work, the salary gap between men and women and the persistence of gender-based acts of violence, including in the field of politics, are barriers to their political empowerment.

Recognizing the interdependence of all these imbalances and deficits that exclude women from sustainable development, UN Women has called for a specific goal on gender equality and women's empowerment in the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Objectives Agenda.

As part of the consultations regarding this process, at the end of this document the progressive report cites nineteen priority areas of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development.<sup>1</sup> Among them, priority area (5) on "Gender equality and women's empowerment" includes women's equal participation in decision-making, policies promoting

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<sup>1</sup> Open WG on Sustainable Development. The mandate of this working group derives from the General Assembly Resolution 66/288 of 27 July 2012, which endorses the document of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development "The future we want" in order to ensure a transparent and inclusive intergovernmental process to achieve consensus on the Post-2015 agenda.

gender equality and gender-disaggregated data. In addition, most other areas have mainstreamed a gender equality perspective. In particular, priority area (19) on “Peaceful and non-violent societies, capable institutions” explicitly refers to inclusive and participatory decision-making.

## **Objective of the Guide and Framework for Regional Strategic Action. Global Strategic Plan. Regional decentralization. Heterogeneity between countries.**

Women’s participation in political decision-making is imperative for the advancement of a real and effective democratic political culture that contributes to good governance and the achievement of sustainable development.

The objective of the Guide “Political Empowerment of Women: Framework for Strategic Action in Latin America and the Caribbean (2014-2017)” is to advance towards parity democracy as a means to transform gender relations and to promote and implement women’s rights within the international and regional human rights framework in order to ensure their full political participation on equal terms with men, without any discrimination, in public office and decision-making at all levels — local, sub-national or state level.

This implies that women, regardless of their ethnicity or any kind of disability, can vote in all elections; be elected to all positions of popular suffrage; participate in public policy design; play all kinds of roles in government administration; participate in non-governmental organizations; and represent their Governments at the international level.

The region’s Framework for Strategic Action is aligned with UN Women’s Global Strategic Plan (2014-2017) which sets out six expected outcomes, including “*that women lead and participate in decision-making at all levels.*” The six outcomes must be addressed interdependently and comprehensively, in line with the specific objective proposed for the Post-2015 Agenda.

This Guide is part of the new UN Women regional architecture based on decentralization, with the aim of achieving greater field-based efficiency in identifying and responding to the challenges of each country. UN Women is present in the region

through the Regional Office for the Americas and the Caribbean, based in Panama, ten country offices, a Multi-Country Office for the Caribbean, and five program offices. Furthermore, in accordance with UN Women’s universal mandate, the Entity can and should provide assistance to any country that requests it.

The development of this Guide takes into account the heterogeneity as well as the strong disparities between countries, most notably between the Latin American States and those of the English-speaking Caribbean. Nonetheless, the document offers a coherent regional analysis and seeks common opportunities and synergies, although its application must be adjusted and adapted to each country’s context.

## **Guide for the Creation of Strategic Alliances. Outcome of regional consultations and analysis. Beneficiaries.**

The end users are, firstly, the UN Women offices in the region, but also the United Nations system, civil society, our partners, donors and all those interested in exploring the area of women’s political participation in the region. A network of strategic alliances capable of creating synergies among all stakeholders is key for the achievement of women’s political empowerment.

The Framework for Strategic Action is the result of a regional deliberation process. Developed by UN Women’s Regional Office, it is the outcome of a consultation process with our offices regarding their own experiences and lessons learned in the area of political participation (including UNIFEM’s past work) with civil society as well as an analysis of the experience of the entire United Nations system in the region.

The main beneficiaries of the strategic action are all women and girls in the region, although the impact should benefit society as a whole, engaging both men and women in the changes proposed. Specifically, it takes into account the inclusion of indigenous women and women of African descent, who not only face a double discrimination but also a double challenge in the recognition of their individual and collective identity. The challenges faced by women with disabilities in exercising their political rights are also recognized.

The Framework for Strategic Action reflects a broad structure composed of networks and alliances in the region as well as four intervention strategies. Meanwhile, it identifies five strategic objectives to achieve progress towards parity democracy and women's empowerment that are in line with UN Women's objective to enable women to lead and participate in political decision-making at all levels.

## Structure of the Strategy

The Guide *“Political Empowerment of Women: Framework for Strategic Action in Latin America and the Caribbean (2014-2017)”* contains an introduction, three chapters and conclusions.

### Introduction

Two converging scenarios in Latin America and the Caribbean provide excellent opportunities: a time of remarkable economic growth and widespread democratic stability. Nevertheless, social inequality and the lack of equal participation directly affect women. Through the region's democratic reform processes and in each election, UN Women strives to generate significant advances towards representative parity as a goal to transform gender relations and achieve gender equality and women's empowerment.

### Chapter I. “International Normative Framework: women's political rights.”

Normative advances are listed, both in the international legal framework and the specific normative environment in Latin America and the Caribbean, reflecting significant progress embodied in the Regional Consensus. Emphasis is placed on the need to ensure the recognition, guarantee and protection of rights by States

### Chapter II. “Conceptual framework and diagnosis of women's political participation in Latin America and the Caribbean.”

This chapter addresses, on the one hand, the importance of women's leadership and participation in politics. It analyzes the structural causes that influence and act as barriers to the full exercise of women's political rights. On the other hand, it

analyzes some of the historical and political factors that have influenced and determined women's role in the field of politics in the region, as well as the importance of local or sub-national levels to achieve sustainable progress on gender equality. Finally, the presence and participation of women in politics is diagnosed through the use of data.

### Chapter III. “Framework for Strategic Action in Latin America and the Caribbean.”

UN Women has an organizational structure with a strong presence in the region. UN Women's capabilities and technical and political skills to provide direct support to governments, partners, regional or sub-regional organizations and to develop this strategy rely on the Regional Office, the programmatic presence and/or official representation in sixteen countries in the region (including a Caribbean Multi-Country Office).

The consolidation of networks and strategic alliances in the region is an integral element of UN Women's mandate. Agreements and Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) have been signed with regional and sub-regional organizations and the UN system entities. This process of alliances will be further developed to generate synergies in order to be more effective and efficient, identifying strategic partners, both regionally and within each country.

UN Women employs four intervention strategies in its work to promote progress in women's political rights and empowerment: building bridges, coordinating and leading; generating knowledge; providing technical assistance; and developing skills.

Five strategic objectives to advance towards parity democracy and women's empowerment are identified, based on the normative and conceptual framework and on the political participation analysis:

- i. Promote parity representation through affirmative action; a debate towards parity democracy; an analysis of electoral systems that promote women's participation; law enforcement by the Electoral Management Bodies; and the alleviation of imbalances that can generate funding needs for women politicians.

- ii. Integrate a gender perspective in policies, actions and institutions, with more sex-disaggregated data and analysis on the progress and difficulties in women's political participation.
- iii. Strengthen women's leadership through training; creating or strengthening women politicians' caucuses and networks; strengthening the role of women's movements; and including young women as key actors for change.
- iv. Encourage political parties to integrate substantive equality and parity democracy in their statutes, organization and operations.
- v. Fight discrimination, gender stereotypes and political violence through media awareness and legislation to prevent harassment and political violence against women.

Finally, UN Women presents a results-based Regional Action Plan to achieve women's political empowerment, aligning the outcomes and outputs established in the Global Strategic Plan with the

actions and the five regional strategic objectives that take into account the normative, political and historical context of Latin America and the Caribbean.

## **Conclusions**

The transformation of gender relations and putting an end to sexist culture requires a multidimensional and comprehensive approach. As part of an holistic response to address the parity challenge, this Guide to women's political empowerment provides a normative, conceptual and strategic contribution to overcome the economic, social, cultural, political and institutional gaps that prevent women's empowerment. We invite all Latin American and Caribbean countries as well as all partners working for women's rights in the region to collaborate with UN Women in developing the framework for strategic action to achieve parity democracy and women's empowerment in the region.

## **Annex: Examples of UN Women interventions in the region.**

# INTRODUCTION

The present Guide for *“Political Empowerment of Women: Framework for Strategic Action in Latin America and the Caribbean (2014-2017)”* stems from the historical, political, economic, social and cultural context in Latin America and the Caribbean. The regional context allows us to understand the progress and challenges facing the region in order to ensure gender equality and move towards parity democracy as a precondition to sustainable development and the democratization of their societies.

There are two scenarios that converge providing excellent opportunities in Latin America and the Caribbean: a time of remarkable economic growth and widespread democratic stability. As a result, the region currently holds leadership in several intergovernmental processes: Colombia chairs the Economic and Social Committee (ECOSOC), Bolivia leads the G77 group of nations, and Antigua and Barbuda will assume the presidency of the 69th Session of the UN General Assembly. Similarly, Brazil will lead the World Trade Organization and Peru will host the climate negotiations of the Twentieth Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 20).

The country average in the region, from an economic perspective, is characterized by middle-income economies. However, a closer look reveals poor wealth redistribution in most countries, with high rates of inequality and social exclusion. According to the 2010 Human Development Report for Latin America, ten of the fifteen most unequal countries in the world are in Latin America and the Caribbean. The greatest impact of such social inequality is borne by women, indigenous populations and populations of African descent, as well as youth.

The region currently has more and better public policies on social protection, as well as stronger and more integrated economies. The World Bank estimated a regional average growth of 3.5% in 2013. During the last decade, seventy three million people have escaped poverty, expanding the middle class by more than 50%.

On the other hand, the population’s urbanization trend is particularly noteworthy in Latin America. According to data from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 80% of the population in the region lives in cities and it is

estimated that by 2050, this proportion will rise to 90%. Most countries’ Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is generated in urban centers. This calls for centering our attention at the local level, on the role of women in local government and public policies concerning gender. In addition, it underlines the need to explore the reasons that lead to such migration, the shortcomings of rural areas being a key factor. The greatest impact of these shortcomings is suffered by women in terms of education, health, communication, violence, political rights and participation, labor and land, etc.

After decades of turmoil, democratic stability in the region is another remarkable feature in most countries. However, they are now subject to new demands by citizens, who no longer conceive democracy as simply a political regime alternating through periodic elections. Instead, society aspires for democracy to become a way of life embodied in a new social contract which extends the concept of citizenship under the principles of inclusion, equality and universality. Precisely, in this new democratic political culture, the proposed parity democracy is conceived as a new “social contract” between men and women to govern democratic societies, which requires the full participation of women in decision-making and gender equality as a requirement, a commitment and an outcome.

Democracies in Latin America and the Caribbean still owe a debt to women and their aspirations to exercise full citizenship. Profound gender gaps persist, often deeply rooted in political, institutional, economic, social and cultural factors that prevent or limit the full exercise of women’s political rights.

In response, UN Women advocates women’s participation as essential in building a new democratic political culture that gives voice to

women in all their diversity, including indigenous women, youth, women of African descent, women with disabilities, etc. In this regard, it is both relevant and timely to promote gender equality and women's rights as a central instead of a marginal element in the reform processes of state institutions, as well as all the political reforms underway throughout the region.

The region has advanced significantly in terms of women's citizenship rights. According to the OECD's 2010 *Atlas of Gender and Development*, among the developing world, the region of Latin America and the Caribbean has achieved more progress in terms of formal recognition of women's rights both in aligning its legislation with the international legal framework, as well as in adopting policies and programs to close gender gaps and extend women's rights to justice programs, decision-making and resources.

These developments and progress must have undoubtedly influenced the current process, which places the Americas<sup>2</sup> at the head of the world's regions in terms of some indicators on women's political participation. The *"2014 Map of Women in Politics"*<sup>3</sup> shows that the Americas lead the world ranking in terms of women parliamentarians (25.7%), women ministers (22.9%) and women at the highest level of the Executive branch, with five Heads of State or Government.<sup>4</sup>

Nevertheless, as discussed in the following chapters, despite progress, substantive equality in opportunities and resources for access to political decision-making and parity democracy are still a distant reality.

Democracy in the region has different meanings for men and women. It's enough to look at who holds leadership and decision-making positions in the State powers and institutions throughout the region at all levels of governance. Despite women's exemplary leadership in the Executive branch in several countries, the decision-making of so-called "hard" departments remains mostly in the hands of

men, while women are assigned "soft" departments like health, social affairs, education, women's issues, etc. Therefore, while there has been progress in general, the situation is very heterogeneous between countries, with some clearly below the average, and far from parity and substantive equality.

One of the main objectives of this guide to *"Political Empowerment of Women"* is to break the cycle that perpetuates gender gaps that prevent the development of a full democracy and the achievement of a true transformation.

When referring to this region, the former Executive Director of UN Women, Michelle Bachelet, has repeatedly stated that *"when a woman enters politics, the woman changes, but when many more enter politics, politics change."* The more women integrate parliaments that oversee public policies and budgets and the more women lead government decisions, the greater the opportunities will be for public agendas to incorporate measures, mechanisms and policies that transform roles, stereotypes, prejudices and structural factors that are the underlying cause of gender inequality.

Therefore, we propose to go beyond increasing women's representation in decision-making positions. In addition to temporary affirmative action measures, such as quotas, we advocate for a permanent goal of representative parity. The result of a parity process must be substantive equality between men and women. A process that involves much more than the political aspect, since it implicates a transformation of gender relations, with shared responsibility between men and women in all spheres of life, both public and private.

UN Women has identified five strategic objectives that require coordinated action to overcome the challenges of women's political participation in Latin America and the Caribbean. Facing these challenges on a continuous and sustainable manner, we try to advance towards the goal of substantive equality of results and representative parity.

2 We refer to the area of the Americas as the whole continent, which also corresponds with the division carried out by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). UN Women's regional office directs the action framework for Latin America and the Caribbean.

3 The *"2014 Map of Women in Politics"* is a joint IPU and UN Women project: [#sthash.RYw2Xasj.dpuf](http://www.unwomen.org/es/news/stories/2014/3/progress-for-women-in-politics-but-glass-ceiling-remains-firm)

4 For the purpose of the information contained herein, the update deadline is June 2014.

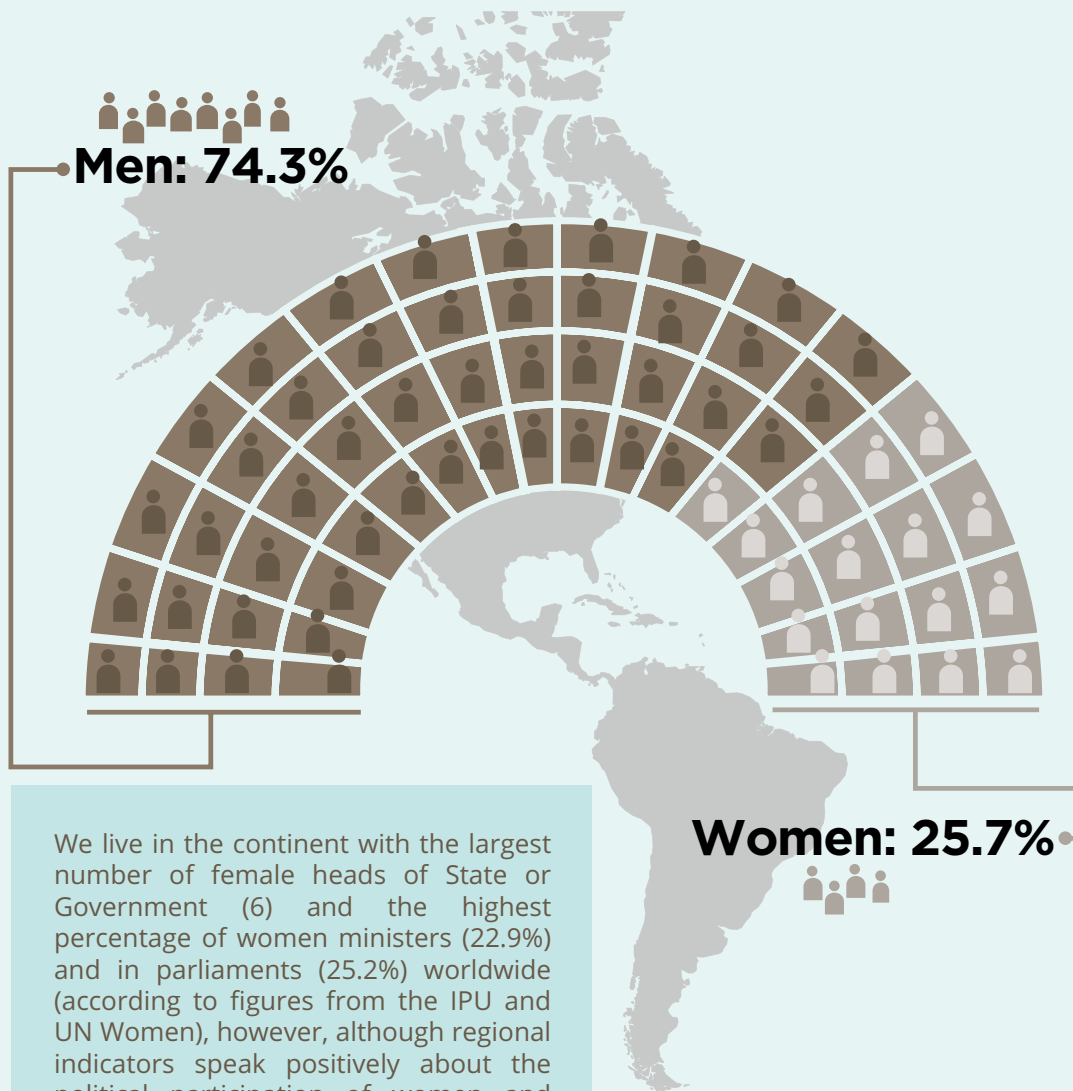


In recent years, as a result of economic growth, international cooperation in the region has decreased, with implications for both civil society and international agencies working towards development and democratic consolidation in the region. In light of the continued relevance of the challenges faced by the region, this decrease in cooperation should spur greater efforts to promote coordination among all stakeholders working to achieve sustainable development and a more

inclusive and broader democracy in Latin America and the Caribbean.

This Guide aims to leverage synergies and efforts by all relevant stakeholders involved in the region, at all levels, in order to carry out the profound and necessary transformations to achieve women's political empowerment in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Representation of men and women at legislative assemblies in the Americas, according to the Women in Politics Map 2014 created by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and UN Women.



We live in the continent with the largest number of female heads of State or Government (6) and the highest percentage of women ministers (22.9%) and in parliaments (25.2%) worldwide (according to figures from the IPU and UN Women), however, although regional indicators speak positively about the political participation of women and clearly show the progress of a historic battle, a closer look at each country in the region, shows very different realities.

# CHAPTER I

## NORMATIVE FRAMEWORK: WOMEN'S POLITICAL RIGHTS

“Inequality and women’s low political representation in the legislative, executive and judicial branches, as well as in political party leadership, are a critical indicator of shortcomings of our democracy and our rule of law.” (2011)

José Miguel Insulza, Secretary General of the Organization of American States (OAS)

# NORMATIVE FRAMEWORK: WOMEN'S POLITICAL RIGHTS

## 1.1. International Legal Framework

Women's right to political participation includes women's right to full access and participation in political and public life, including participation in the effective exercise of political power and in the process of decision-making in all areas of public and political life, on equal terms with men and without any discrimination.

The recognition and protection of women's right to participate in political decision-making are widely supported by international law in conventions, declarations and resolutions on human and political rights.

If one were to divide the advancement process of women's human and political rights, three phases could be established.

In the first phase, men and women's equal rights to participation in public and political life are recognized.

Article 21 of the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** of 1948 recognizes that (1) *"Everyone has the right to participate in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives";* (2) *"Everyone has the right of access, on equal terms, to public service in his country";* (3) *"The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage, and by secret vote or by other equivalent procedure that guarantees the freedom of the vote."*

The 1952 **Convention on the Political Rights of Women** recognizes that (Article 1) *"Women have the right to vote in all elections";* (Article 2) *"Women will be eligible for all elective public bodies, established by national law, on equal terms, without discrimination";* (Article 3) *"Women have the right to hold public office and perform all public functions, established by national law, on equal terms with men, without discrimination."*

Article 25 of the **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights** of 1966 recognizes that *"Every citizen shall, without any of the distinctions mentioned in article 2 and without unreasonable restrictions the following rights and opportunities: (a) participate in the management of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives; (b) to vote and be elected at genuine periodic elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression and the will of the electors; (c) to have access, with general terms of equality, to public service in his country."*

A second stage and turning point occurs in 1979 with the adoption of the **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)**. This is the main instrument for ensuring equality between women and men because of its wide scope (it includes all women's rights) and its legally binding nature, requiring States Parties to implement temporary affirmative action measures to promote the advancement of women and gender equality.

This Convention is an international treaty adopted by the United Nations General Assembly to protect and promote the respect of women's rights. It clearly defines what constitutes an act of discrimination against women and provides a comprehensive program of work to achieve gender equality. In doing so, it recognizes that as a result of historical discrimination, women are not on equal terms with men and therefore some laws that intend to formally promote equality may in fact produce greater

inequality for some women. Therefore, the CEDAW is based on the concept of substantive equality, which focuses on the results and material impact of gender laws and policies. This is the quintessential legal instrument for the promotion of public policies on gender equality. Articles 4, 7, 8 and 14 address issues related to equality in political participation.

Article 4 states that *“temporary special measures aimed at accelerating de facto equality between men and women shall not consider discrimination.”*

Article 7 declares that *“States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in political and public life of the country, in particular, it shall guarantee to women equal terms with men, the right to : (a) vote in all elections and public referenda and to be eligible for all organisms whose members are subject to public elections; (b) participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government; (c) participate in non-governmental organizations and associations concerned with the public and political life.”*

Article 8 declares that *“States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure to women, on equal terms with men and without discrimination, the opportunity to represent their Governments at the international level and to participate in the work of international organizations.”*

The Convention requires governments to incorporate the CEDAW's definition of substantive equality in their legal framework and in consequence to review their legal instruments and constitutions thoroughly to ensure that the legal framework as a whole supports gender equality. Indeed, governments are responsible for the impact of all laws and should monitor compliance to ensure that women do not suffer any discrimination.

Article 17 of the CEDAW establishes the **Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women** as an oversight body of CEDAW with the purpose of examining the progress made by States Parties. Of the twenty recommendations issued by the Committee to this day, three are directly related to women's political rights.<sup>5</sup>

States Parties have committed to submit national reports, at intervals of at least four years, on measures implemented to meet their obligations upon ratifying the treaty. In many cases, UN Women works directly with national mechanisms to provide technical assistance in the preparation of official reports to be submitted to the CEDAW Committee.

Moreover, under the **Additional Optional Protocol** of 1999, the Committee has the authority to evaluate the countries' effective compliance with respect to the Convention. The Optional Protocol's consultation procedure allows the Committee to initiate and conduct investigations on women's rights' violations committed within the jurisdiction of a State Party. The communication procedure provides that any citizen of a State Party may submit a complaint for the violation of the rights protected under the Convention directly to the Board. The Committee's jurisprudence is reflected in the decisions issued in response to citizens' complaints that suggest corrective, anti-discriminatory and protective measures that the State Party has to apply in order to rectify.<sup>6</sup>

Since 1990, ECOSOC<sup>7</sup> has advised States on specific goals to increase the percentage of women in leadership positions; 30% in 1995 and 50% in 2000.

The Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995 produced a major transformation by focusing on the need to shift the attention from women to the concept of gender. The outcome of the conference was embodied in the **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action**<sup>8</sup>, which, among other things, calls on governments to take actions to ensure balanced representation of men

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5 General Recommendation no.5 proposes the use of special temporary measures by States. General Recommendation no.23 lists the implications for States in implementing Article 7 of the CEDAW, including measures in all spheres of a country's public and political life as a broad concept, as well as the legislative, judicial, executive and administrative branches. General Recommendation no.25 reiterates the implementation of special measures in education, economy, politics and employment.

6 Reports of States Parties to CEDAW in: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/sessions.htm>

7 ECOSOC Resolution (E/RES/1990/15).

8 Beijing Declaration and Platform, part G: Women in power and decision-making, pp. 79 et seq.

and women in public office. Subsequent revisions of Beijing +5, +10, +15 and +20 have made advances by introducing measures that incorporate public policies with gender equality to increase the participation of women in politics.

Since 1996, under resolution 1996/6, the Economic and Social Council extended the mandate of the **Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)**<sup>9</sup>, the leading international intergovernmental body dedicated exclusively to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. In consequence, the CSW would assume a leading role in monitoring and reviewing progress and difficulties encountered in the implementation of the Declaration and Platform for Action, as well as gender mainstreaming in activities of the United Nations.

During the Commission's annual session, representatives of United Nations Member States, civil society organizations and UN entities meet for two weeks in the United Nations Headquarters in New York to discuss progress and gaps in the implementation of the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, (the main global policy instrument on gender equality), the 23<sup>rd</sup> Special Session of the General Assembly in 2000 (Beijing +5) and lastly, to discuss emerging issues affecting gender equality and women's empowerment. Member States agree on measures to accelerate progress in this area and to promote the enjoyment of women's rights in political, economic and social spheres. The conclusions and recommendations of each session are referred for follow-up to the Economic and Social Council. UN Women supports all areas of the Commission's work and facilitates participation of all (both male and female) civil society representatives.

As a result, the Commission adopts multi-year work programs whose aim is to assess progress and make further recommendations to accelerate implementation of the Platform for Action. The recommendations are presented as negotiated and convened conclusions on a priority theme determined by the resolution (the 2009 resolution established the priority and assessment issues for the 2010-2014 period).

In 2000, the General Assembly adopted the **Millennium Declaration**<sup>10</sup>, an ambitious agenda for reducing poverty, its causes and manifestations, as well as the **Millennium Development Goals** (MDGs). **MDG3** calls States to "promote gender equality and empowerment of women. Gender equality also implies equal representation in public and political life."

The third phase would begin after the adoption in 2011 of the historic **General Assembly** resolution relating to women's political rights. **The resolution on women and political participation** (A/Res/66/130), which reiterates the concern over the marginalization of millions of women in decision-making processes at all levels, reaffirms that "*the active participation of women, on equal terms with men in all levels of decision-making, is essential for the achievement of equality, sustainable development, peace and democracy.*" The resolution urges States to take diverse and comprehensive measures to ensure the participation of women on an equal footing, and it calls for the United Nations system and other international and regional organizations, within their existing mandates, to provide greater assistance to States in their national efforts to implement such measures (Article 6, 7, 8 and 9).

After the **Security Council** adopted **Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security** in October 2000, four other resolutions have since been adopted: 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010) and 2122 (2013). These instruments provide a legal and policy framework that recognizes the importance of women's participation and the inclusion of gender perspectives in peace negotiations, the planning of humanitarian work, peacekeeping operations, as well as peacebuilding and governance.

In addition to the specific international legal framework on women's political rights, we also need to take into account the international commitments affecting the rights of girls and women, which should also serve as a normative source, including:

- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, 1965;

<sup>9</sup> It is a functional commission dependent on the Economic and Social Council.

<sup>10</sup> General Assembly Resolution (A/RES/55/2) on the Millennium Declaration, 2000, MDG3.

- The Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989;
- The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, 1993;
- The Vienna Declaration and Program of Action adopted at the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights;
- The El Cairo Program of Action of the IV International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), 1994;
- The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2000;
- Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, 2000;
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006.

Finally, in light of its relevance to the regulatory progress on women's political rights and gender equality, the development of discussions and consultations<sup>11</sup> on Beijing +20 and the preparations for the CSW 59, as well as the Post-2015 Agenda on Sustainable Development, will be closely followed, analyzed and supported.

## 1.2. Legal Framework in Latin America and the Caribbean

The region of Latin America and the Caribbean stands out for its abundant normative development accompanied by a significant institutional framework that promotes women's political rights.

On the one hand, progress has been made through the Organization of American States. Thus, Article 1 of the 1948 **Inter-American Convention on the Granting of Political Rights to Women** states that *"the High Contracting Parties agree that the right to*

*vote and to be elected to national office shall not be denied or abridged by reasons of sex."*

Article 23 of the 1969 **American Convention on Human Rights** states that *"every citizen shall enjoy the following rights and political opportunities: (a) to take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely elected representatives; (b) to vote and be elected in genuine periodic elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and by secret ballot, that guarantees the free expression of the will of the electors; (c) to have access, under general conditions of equality, to public service in his country."*

The **Inter-American Commission on Human Rights** has repeatedly stressed that the participation and adequate representation of women at all levels of government is a necessary prerequisite for the strengthening of democracy in the Americas.<sup>12</sup>

The **Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women** (Convention of Belém do Pará) of 1994 states in Article 4 that *"every woman has (j) the right to equal access to public service in her country and to take part in the conduct of public affairs, including decision-making."*

The **Inter-American Democratic Charter** of 2001 recognizes that democracy is essential for stability, peace and development in the region and one of the objectives of the OAS is to promote and consolidate representative democracy, with due respect to the principle of non-intervention. Article 9 calls for *"The elimination of all forms of discrimination, especially gender, ethnic, and race discrimination, as well as diverse forms of intolerance, the promotion and protection of human rights of indigenous peoples and migrants, and respect for ethnic, cultural and religious diversity in the Americas contribute to strengthening democracy and citizen participation."* Article 28 provides that *"States shall promote the full and equal participation of women in political structures of their countries as a fundamental element in the promotion and exercise of a democratic culture."*

<sup>11</sup> There are several processes in place; because of its importance in the region, we emphasize the preparations for the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples in 2014.

<sup>12</sup> See, e.g. IACHR, Report 2011: "The Road to Substantive Democracy: Women's Political Participation in the Americas", Annual Report 1999." Considerations regarding the compatibility of affirmative action measures designed to promote the political participation of women with the principles of equality and non-discrimination", Chapter V; IACHR, Report of the Inter-American Commission on the Status of Women in the Americas, OEA / SER.L / V / II.98, doc. 17, October 13, 1998; IACHR: "The violence against women and discrimination in the armed conflict in Colombia," OEA / Ser. L / V / II. Doc. 67, October 18, 2006.

The **Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM)** was the first multilateral organization for women within the OAS. Over the years it has expanded its mandate and today it is the principal hemispheric forum for women's rights and gender equality<sup>13</sup>. This Commission links commitments on women's international human rights with effective public policy at the level of OAS Member States, in order to support women's full political, economic and social citizenship<sup>14</sup>. In its endeavor, the CIM collaborates with women mechanisms in each country as well as with other agencies, such as the Network of Women Parliamentarian of the Americas which is part of the Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas (COPA), or with UN agencies in the region, and the CIM promotes research to generate interesting knowledge products<sup>15</sup>.

In light of its work to promote compliance with women's political rights, the **Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)** also has a major initiative to promote women's representation and leadership through the Program for the Support of Women's Leadership and Representation (PROLEAD), led by the Gender and Diversity Unit. This is the main IDB initiative to promote women's civic and political participation in Latin America and the Caribbean.

On the other hand, the **Regional Conferences on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean** have contributed to very significant policy advances that have resulted in so-called Consensus. The role of national mechanisms for the advancement of women and the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) have been crucial to promote and strengthen these regional conferences.

The X Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, otherwise known as the

**Quito Consensus**, was held in Quito, Ecuador, from August 6 to 9, 2007. It was signed by representatives of thirty-four Latin American countries. It recognized parity between men and women as one of the driving forces of democracy: *"parity is one of the key driving forces of democracy, which aims to achieve equality in the exercise of power in decision-making, in the mechanisms of social and political participation, in diverse types of family relationships [...]"* It also established objectives to assess and revert the negative effects of structural adjustments; ensure gender parity in politics; and it established gender as an unavoidable instrument for the definition and implementation of public policy.

The XI Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, or **Brasilia Consensus**, held between July 13 and 16, 2010 in Brasilia, Brazil, involved thirty-three Latin American countries. Among other actions, this Consensus calls authorities and governments in the region to strengthen women's citizenship and to enhance their participation in decision-making processes and in the echelons of power. It recommends promoting and strengthening State policies that ensure the respect, protection and fulfillment of all human rights of women and to take all necessary measures, including legislative changes and affirmative action policies to ensure parity, inclusion and ethnic and racial representation in all branches of government, with the objective of strengthening democracies in Latin America and the Caribbean.

In 2013, the region achieved a breakthrough with the adoption of the **Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development** at the first Regional Conference on Population and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, held from August 12 to 15. This consensus urged the adoption of a number of priorities to strengthen the implementation of

13 In 2011 and 2012 the First and Second Hemispheric Forums on "Women's leadership for a citizens' democracy" took place. Also, to advance in the fulfillment of their commitments, the Member States of the OAS adopted the "Declaration of the Inter-American Year of Women," "Women and Power: For a World of Equality", CIM / DEC 10 (XXXV-O / 10).

14 In the framework of the project "Capacity building for leadership and impact on public policies for gender equality", CIM published "A Citizens' Democracy: Visions and debates from the perspective of women's rights in the Americas", 2012. <http://www.oas.org/en/cim/leadership.asp>

15 UN Women has signed a collaboration agreement with the CIM to promote hemispheric dialogue for women's rights and aspirations in the center of governance. Thus, support was provided to the two hemispheric forums and to the dialogue between presidential candidates (Dominican Republic, 2012).



the Cairo Program of Action and its subsequent development actions. Gender equality is identified among these actions and the resulting agreements consist in promoting parity and other mechanisms to ensure access to power in electoral systems as a precondition for democracy; promoting gender-sensitive budgeting; strengthening mechanisms for women and gender mainstreaming in public policies; and adopting legal and institutional measures to prevent and punish violence against women in politics, among others.

Finally, the XII Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic) between 14 and 18 October 2013, resulted in the adoption of the **Consensus of Santo Domingo to advance gender equality**, which focused on the relation between economic autonomy and women's rights, especially in the context of the digital economy and information society. Furthermore, agreements on gender equality and women's empowerment for political participation and decision making, as well as mechanisms for the empowerment of women, were agreed upon.

These Consensus, although not legally binding, have enormous political value. They are a very effective reference tool for use by national parliaments or other public authorities, women's movements or civil society regional or sub-regional organizations, in their quest to promote the political rights of women.

### 1.3. Towards effective implementation of international and regional commitments

The significant international and regional normative advances in Latin America and the Caribbean must be reflected in the governments' commitments to promote gender equality in good governance and women's access to politics.

This international normative framework, reflected and reinforced in Latin America and the Caribbean, should encourage governments to take responsibility for reforming the constitutional and legal frameworks, removing the obstacles that prevent or restrict the exercise of women's rights on political participation, as well as to promote the development of public policies to advance women's rights and political empowerment, and to increase budgetary allocations for the same goals.

Despite the normative advances and in order to avoid merely rhetorical complacency, experience has taught us that a rigorous follow-up is necessary to enforce compliance with international or regional commitments through national implementation legislation. As stressed in a UN Women report *"although progress has been made in the vindication of women's rights before the law, for most women in the world, the laws have yet to lead to greater equality and justice"*<sup>16</sup>.

The conversion of international and regional agreements and commitments into recognition, guarantee, protection and effective exercise of rights requires a process of legislative harmonization, awareness and information, prevention, access to effective justice, sanctions and ending impunity.

Implementing legislation and the access to effective justice are crucial. States may subscribe ambitious international commitments, translating them into magnificent conventions, agreements, consensus or resolutions, but if there is no ownership on the part of national parliaments and if a harmonization of national legislation is not conducted in accordance with international commitments, achievements will soon be worthless. Therefore, it is a priority for States to incorporate international obligations concerning women's political rights and gender equality. Only by doing so can we achieve the recognition, guarantee and protection of rights, ensuring they are translated into concrete, solid and sustainable progress to promote women's participation and leadership in decision-making in each and every country.

16 Report by UN Women: "Progress of the World's Women: in Pursuit of Justice" 2011-2012.

UN Women supports States by offering technical assistance to ensure the effective implementation of women's political rights. The various UN Women offices in Latin America and the Caribbean have a decisive role in achieving an intergovernmental consensus to promote advances in women's rights and their empowerment, both internationally and regionally, starting with a constant dialogue with the governments, parliaments and diverse women politicians' networks of each country. In addition,

they must support the implementation and raise awareness about those norms and commitments. Likewise, and going beyond secondary laws, it is imperative to establish and guarantee the conditions necessary for women to have access to justice. Training and awareness raising for prosecutors and lawyers in the judicial sector is indispensable, for without their cooperation, the effectiveness of legislation would be highly improbable.

# CHAPTER II

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND DIAGNOSIS OF WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

“The more women in all their diversity get involved in decision-making that affects their lives, the stronger democracy will become. But not all political participation of women is exhausted in Parliament. Many women begin their political life in community management, in city halls and councils, or other levels of government. And it is precisely at the local level that overwhelmingly low levels of participation exist in many countries; we cannot forget the importance of municipalities for the exercise of citizenship and the development of our leadership.”

Michelle Bachelet, former Executive Director of UN Women and Deputy Secretary General of the United Nations, and currently, President of Chile.



The Presidents of Chile, Michelle Bachelet, and Argentina, Cristina Fernández, during their participation at the BRICS UNASUR Summit in Brasilia. Photo: Presidency of the Republic of Chile.



Dilma Rousseff, President of Brazil, addressing the participants during the inauguration ceremony of the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. Photo: United Nations.

# CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND DIAGNOSIS OF WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

## 2.1. Why is it important for women to lead and participate in political decision-making?

- » *Political participation of women contributes to democratic legitimacy, good governance and sustainable development.*
- » *It generates very positive multiplier effects, changing gender stereotypes.*

Frequently, discussions in favor of parity and quotas involve questions about something as essential as why it is important for women to participate and lead in policy-making decisions in their respective countries or communities. We can summarize the reasons into three main arguments.<sup>17</sup>

First, it refers to the argument of representative democracy; even democratic legitimacy. Indeed, democracy should represent all groups in society and women constitute half of the population in general terms. It is only fair that women are represented equally in political decision-making, in all branches of government as well as political parties and social organizations at all levels – national, subnational and local.

Of course, the system's legitimacy derives not only from the physical presence of women in these spaces, but the actual effective opportunities that elected women have to represent the interests of millions of women. Therefore, in addition to requiring more women in the various political decision-making spaces and organs, it is also necessary to

promote equal access to political power structures and the same opportunities for men and women to have political careers in all hierarchical levels of organizations.

Similarly, it is not enough to produce a quantitative increase of women in decision-making, but rather a qualitative participation allowing for their voices and interests to be heard not only in the "soft" or traditional policies (Social Affairs, Women, Children), but also in so-called "strategic" affairs or areas of the State (Interior, Finance, Security, Infrastructures, etc.).

The second argument relates to how women's equal participation (as voters, candidates and elected representatives) leads to greater prospects for development, effective democracies and good governance. Given that women make up half the population, the only way to be assured that their interests, concerns and priorities will be taken into account when identifying, planning and implementing public policy is for women to be equally represented when it comes to public policy

<sup>17</sup> Arguments based on the document "Why we need more women in politics." UN Women Leadership and Governance. Background Note, December 2012.

decision-making. Experience has shown that the presence and participation of women in areas where the political agenda is decided have contributed to incorporate traditionally neglected issues that benefit society as a whole, such as parental custody, legislation against gender violence, sexual and reproductive health, measures to create jobs and women's economic empowerment, safety in public areas, education, water management, etc. This does not mean that all women represent the same ideas or interests, as each woman brings her own vision, but they are indeed all affected by reasons of gender.<sup>18</sup>

In addition, the participation of women in the decision-making process contributes different – or at least complementary – ideas and ways of doing things than men to address the challenges facing society, given the different roles and experiences women and men derive from differentiated learning. This argument is of great interest to deepen the theory of change, as the participation of women contributes to modifying mental frameworks<sup>19</sup> on which we traditionally base our decisions and that have perpetuated gender inequality and discrimination for centuries, some of which are even reflected in the use of a different vocabulary. A comprehensive vision of democracy and good governance entails a political debate that taps into all of society's options and knowledge, of men and women from all walks of life. Basing policy decisions on the full range of capabilities is also a smart choice.

Regarding the connection between women's political participation, transparency and good governance, this link was reflected in the 2001 World Bank report on "Engendering Development"<sup>20</sup>. Although most may see a more obvious relationship between the forms of male domination linked to patronage and corruption, a direct link between gender and corruption is less obvious.<sup>21</sup>

Thirdly, there is a powerful argument for promoting women to occupy high office in politics: the multiplier effect to empower more women in all dimensions of their lives. The fact that there are women political leaders helps generate new women prototypes and role models, different from the traditional, that are extremely useful in eradicating discriminatory bias against women. Women leaders reinforce the concept of the female citizen versus the female victim – suppressed, vulnerable and economically dependent.

Furthermore, evidence has shown that a critical mass of women active in parliaments, ministries or local governments is an incentive to attract more women, because these workplaces are waking up and adapting their *gender sensitivity* with new schedules, facilities, nurseries and various sorts of measures that make those spaces more accessible to women, but also foster joint responsibilities between men and women in reconciling work and family life.

In addition to having more women leaders, it is important that both women and men develop *transformative* forms of leadership, so that they do not reproduce the traditional male formula of leadership, but rather new models that balance the male and female roles and reconcile the responsibilities of men and women in all aspects of their lives.

Therefore, part of the debate centers on whether women who enter politics should give priority to the gender agenda. UN Women encourages the participation of both men and women in political decision-making to understand and incorporate the gender perspective into their work, as well as gender mainstreaming in all policies and public institutions. Hence, gender training is essential for both men and women politicians. It would be contradictory to demand or expect women to possess certain

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18 Anne Phillips, "The Politics of Presence", Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 66.

19 Books such as *The Political Brain* (Andrew Westen), *The Political Mind* (George Lakoff) or *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (Daniel Kahneman) show that people think primarily in terms of frames and metaphors, to the point that, if the facts do not fit into our mental frameworks, distortion occurs as a reaction to preserve such frameworks. Hence the importance that women contribute in decision-making from their own conceptual and cultural frameworks

20 [http://www.wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2001/03/01/000094946\\_01020805393496/Rendered/PDF/multi\\_page.pdf](http://www.wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2001/03/01/000094946_01020805393496/Rendered/PDF/multi_page.pdf)

21 Goetz, Anne Marie (2007) *Political Cleaners: Women as the New Anti-Corruption Force?* *Development and Change*, vol. 38, no. 1, pp. 87-105; Sung, H (2003) *Fairer Sex or Fairer System? Gender and Corruption Revisited*.

political values, merit, qualifications or to engage in specific areas other than those of their male peers for the simple fact of being women.

## 2.2. Reasons that still limit and prevent the full exercise of women's political rights

- » *To be able to transform gender relations it is imperative to address the structural causes underlying gender inequality.*
- » *A comprehensive assessment with a multidisciplinary focus is needed to achieve a firm and sustained impact towards substantive gender equality.*

Why are there fewer women than men in politics? It is not uncommon for political parties themselves to argue that women are not interested in politics. This argument is used to explain why they are not equally represented in the institutions and in the same parties as men. Some evidence denies such a conviction, based on indicators like women memberships in political parties (even higher than those of men) or their involvement in social organizations to improve the conditions of their communities.

Feminist political theory has delved into the relationship between citizenship and gender; and theoretical output has been substantial.<sup>22</sup> Some contributions on women's citizenship acknowledge a controversial relationship between women and political power.<sup>23</sup> To a large extent, we can see that in addition to glass ceilings which consist on limits imposed by the institutions or rules, there are the so-called concrete ceilings, self-imposed by women themselves and that relate to their own prejudices or fears about their capacity or empowerment. Thus, an ECLAC study including interviews with

women politicians in the region found *"fear and distrust towards the exercise of power because it is foreign to them, and because of the link the concept has with power, authoritarianism and imposition"*.<sup>24</sup>

In the words of Amelia Valcárcel, *"the relationship between women and the idea of power cannot be said to be easy"*. Hence, questions arise that delve into the obstacles to women's political participation. What is the relationship between women and the power interactions that build social relations? Do women recognize power as positive or negative? Is the relationship between women politicians and power different than with male politicians? Is there a different exercise of women in power? Do women use power differently than men?

The reasons that explain the persistent deficit in political representation between men and women are numerous and depend on the historical, economic, political, social and cultural contexts of each country. It is necessary to analyze the structures of power and in particular party organizations (determinants for attracting candidates and their selection for inclusion on lists), the situation of women in all spheres of their lives (economic gaps, vulnerability, lack of security and freedom, lack of support for combining the family dimension with a profession in politics), as well as women's attitudes concerning power as a result of other cultural or social factors.

Precisely, in light of the lack of women's involvement in politics, it is clear that we must examine the factors leading to this situation. Abundant literature denounces the existence of multiple obstacles (some more obvious, others more subtle) such as political-institutional, economic, social, cultural, psychological, among others, that limit or prevent women's participation in political life, both in their access as well as their tenure in areas of political decision-making.

<sup>22</sup> From prestigious theorists such as Hannah Arendt, Seyla Benhabib, Nancy Fraser, etc.

<sup>23</sup> Norris, P. (1991): "Gender Differences in political participation in Britain: Traditional, Radical and revisionist model ", in *Government and Opposition*, vol. 26, no 1, p. 56-74: In summary, Norris takes a journey through the history of the different perspectives which have addressed the relationship between women and politics, to observe the evolution of such a relationship and to classify literature as: classical (1950-1960, which sets out how women are less interested in conventional politics), critical (1970 onwards, mostly literature argues that it is not that women participate less, but do so differently) and revisionist (1980 onwards, which says that the gender differences begin to fade).

<sup>24</sup> Line Bareiro, Oscar Lopez, Clyde Soto, Lilian Soto: "Electoral systems and women's representation in Latin America" ECLAC, Women and Development Series, No. 54, 2004.

We can enumerate several causes systematically found throughout Latin America and the Caribbean without delving too deeply into each country's specificities:

- Stereotypes and widespread prejudice in society as a whole, with the belief that politics and the public realm are for men, while the domestic and private sphere would be the natural place for women (prevailing prejudices in more traditional and local levels);
- Everyday reality that makes women's involvement in political activities difficult due to lack of time, schedules poorly adapted to women's needs given their dedication to family care (due to the lack of responsibility on the part of men);
- Lack of family and spousal support, in addition to social pressure against women's participation in areas of political representation; at times, some religions oppose the public sphere and women's participation in that field;
- The incidence of teenage pregnancies and maternity, which leads to increased drop-out rates, job vulnerability and reduced economic autonomy;
- Harassment, violence and discrimination against women in general and particularly in politics;
- Barriers relating to socio-economic inequalities, gaps in economic revenue and education levels between women and men, with greater emphasis on indigenous women;
- The sexist structure and culture of political parties, often inaccessible to women, especially in management structures at all levels, from local to state;
- Restricted media access for women to present political proposals and gain equal political visibility with men, as well as a sexist portrayal of women by the media;

- Fewer opportunities to access networks and backing required to mobilize and build support for financing candidates;
- Deficiencies in training for public management;
- Lack of self-esteem and assertiveness;
- In specific cases, such as women with disabilities, lack of accessible formats and means prevent their participation, even in voting, as well as their access to public administration and public affairs management.

Any strategy aimed at increasing women's political participation must integrate these structural factors, after conducting the appropriate analysis and adaptation to each context and country.

In analyzing how to promote women's political rights, it is unavoidable to address the other dimensions of gender equality necessary for the full exercise of women's rights: the dimension of security and freedom, linked to gender violence; the economic dimension related to resources and opportunities; and the dimension of influence and power in public and private spaces. In all cases, it is imperative to maintain a holistic view, for only through a multidimensional approach can we make strong and sustained progress in order to achieve substantive gender equality.

### **2.3. Historical and political factors that have positively influenced women's political participation**

» *Historical and political factors over the last fifty years have led to an unmistakable improvement in women's citizenship.*

» *Feminist movements, while opposing the dictatorships, joined the wave of democratization, thus linking the democratic process to the struggle to overcome inequalities.*



» *The wave of democratization coincides and capitalizes on the international momentum for gender equality.*

The evolution of women's political rights in Latin America and the Caribbean is the result of a long process consisting of diverse and converging elements, including greater public awareness about the importance of gender equality for the common good and for the development of a more inclusive democracy. Not by chance, historical and political factors over the last fifty years have led to an unmistakable improvement of women's citizenship<sup>25</sup>. This is undoubtedly reflected in the data relating to women's representation in the legislative and executive branches.

The normative process in the region has gone hand in hand with a cultural change that has reconsidered women's role and abilities, gradually weakening the dichotomy between public/male and private/female spaces that have hindered women's participation in decision-making in the public sector.

Despite the diversity among countries in the region, certain factors<sup>26</sup> that have been present, mainly in Latin America or *Hispanic America*, can be identified to explain the evolution of women's political participation to present time, while recognizing the progress made and warning against remaining barriers and challenges.

First, over the past thirty years, Latin American countries have experienced a process of democratic recovery and reinforcement after a long period of military dictatorships and armed conflict. This process has forged women's specific leadership. In some countries like Chile, Guatemala, Argentina, Bolivia and Colombia, women workers organized themselves around labor rights and social issues, but were also actively involved in opposition

movements, attaining great importance in some resistance movements. At this stage, women were also leaders of human rights movements.<sup>27</sup>

In this context, the feminist or women's movement in the region has played a crucial role, enabling women to acquire extensive experience. Their activism at this stage also served as a legitimization instrument to break into the political arena and present their demands of active political participation and presence.

Secondly, this process has coincided with a growing incorporation of the gender equality discourse in the region, following the example of international developments. Thus, the First World Conference on Women, held in Mexico in 1975, gave rise to the United Nations Decade for Women (1975-85). Subsequently, it led to the commitments that arise from the Beijing Declaration and Platform of 1995. This new framework was widely adopted at the regional level through the regional Consensus of Quito, Brasilia, Montevideo and most recently Santo Domingo. This has allowed the region to link the discussions relating to the quality of democracy with the need to overcome social, economic, cultural and political inequalities. Consequently, it was possible to integrate women's demands of political participation as part of the discussion and the struggle for democratic restoration, while also linking development and international cooperation policies.

Thirdly, during the 1990s, women from various countries in the region actively participated in the drafting of new constitutions and electoral laws, as well as in the institutionalization of the State.<sup>28</sup>

Moreover, Latin America was the first region to unanimously sign and ratify the CEDAW, and in the least amount of time. This region also stands

<sup>25</sup> For a general overview of the state of the Americas, see "Women's citizenship in the democracies of the Americas" (2013). The result of a joint effort between the Inter-American Women's Commission, International IDEA and UN Women, it takes note of remarkable progress on women's citizenship rights in the Americas. It includes studies on women's citizenship in Latin America, the Anglophone Caribbean and Canada and covers other areas of life that do not take into account the classical notion of citizenship - including gender, multiculturalism, multi-ethnicity, sexual and reproductive citizenship and global citizenship, among others.

<sup>26</sup> Participación política de las mujeres en América Latina. Informe regional. Latin American Association of Development Promotion Organizations (ALOP), October 2007.

<sup>27</sup> In 1981, the family associations of disappeared detainees were regrouped in the Latin American Federation of Associations of Relatives of the Detained-Disappeared (FDEFAM), with a strong female leadership that advocated for the respect of human dignity and social justice.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*.

out for the creation and strengthening of national mechanisms to promote a gender perspective in most countries. Technical and financial support from international cooperation facilitated this process to a great extent. The Equal Opportunity Plans that link the various branches of government and guide gender mainstreaming in public policy as a whole have supported this institutionalization. The creation of transnational networking mechanisms for the advancement of women, as was the case of the Women and Development Unit of ECLAC, allowed the creation of room for dialogue, exchange and learning through regional conferences on women.

Finally, as both cause and effect of the aforementioned factors, the region's countries have been at the forefront in the adoption of temporary affirmative action measures, such as systems that collect fees or minimum quotas for women's representation in the nomination or election of appointed and/or elected candidates.

In the English-speaking CARICOM countries, women had an equally important role during the independence processes of the Caribbean countries. However, they have not achieved the same results as their counterparts in Latin America. This is due to several factors: the prevalence of a majority as opposed to a proportional electoral system, which affects the chances of successful implementation of quota systems; an excessive concentration of power in the hands of the ruling party and a weakening of other State institutions; the deficient incorporation of women into the leadership structures of political parties, as well as the dependence on private funds for electoral campaigns, both of which are detrimental to women.<sup>29</sup> Geopolitical circumstances and language barriers have not enabled a closer approach between women's movements and authority networks (electoral, parliamentary, and municipal) of the English and Dutch speaking countries of the Caribbean with those in Latin America.

In conclusion, these factors have contributed to a more positive diagnosis and assessment of women's political participation in the region,

as compared to any other time in the past, as well as higher to the world average on several indicators. However, women still endure a sexist culture in addition to pervasive and widespread discrimination throughout the region, with severe restrictions on their economic independence and reproductive rights, as well as high rates of gender violence and abuse in a society where man takes little responsibility in housework, raising children or caring for the elderly. With little power within political parties and very low representation at the local government level, the desired goal of substantive equality is nowhere near a reality.

## 2.4. Women's political participation in local and sub-national governments

- » *From a gender perspective, the structure and operation of local and sub-national governments is crucial if we consider their demographic, economic and social significance.*
- » *Gender stereotypes and discriminatory social attitudes may be stronger at the local and rural levels.*
- » *Despite the proximity policy and women's experience in informal politics, there are few women councilors and even fewer women mayors.*

It is quite common to describe women's political participation by referring to politics at the state level. The process of democratic reform also implies a territorial decentralization to bring political decision-making closer to citizens. From a gender perspective, the structure and operation of local and sub-national governments is crucial if we consider their demographic, economic and social significance.

The municipality or local government (whose name varies depending on the country) is the primary

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<sup>29</sup> Where are the Women? The Link between Descriptive and Substantive Representation in Jamaica, Guyana, and Suriname (2014). Estudio del PNUD de las autoras Annette L. Tjon Sie Fat y Monique Essed-Fernandes.

unit of government in local communities. It is also the territorially-based political-administrative institution closest and most visible to the people. It must directly address the population's multiple and various public affairs of everyday life in towns and cities. The vast heterogeneity of municipalities in Latin America and the Caribbean<sup>30</sup> makes it difficult to recognize and consider the differences among them. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify and assemble common issues and trends in addressing gender issues.

Municipalities or local governments in the region have evolved in line with advances in democratic regimes. They have gone from being service providers to government entities with real powers and significant capacity to transform the most immediate social, economic, cultural and political reality of citizens. Local policy therefore manages important power resources, and local public policies are increasingly decisive in achieving transformations.

Given the trajectory of women entering politics (often from informal politics or grassroots associations), the local level can generate new democratizing and development dynamics.

#### **i. Barriers to women's equal access**

Although the municipality is the government's representative body closest to the citizens linked to the affairs of everyday life, paradoxically, it has not facilitated women's access to positions of municipal power. The municipalities in the region are mostly headed by men. This contrasts with the fact that it is common for women to have initiated their political careers from a prominent involvement in grassroots movements, school cooperatives, religious congregations, networks and alliances that originate at the local level.

The lack of data disaggregated by sex for electoral monitoring at the local level is one of the difficulties in fully understanding the problem. Frequently, the percentage of women who apply, even the ones who are elected, remains unknown, as do the

reasons for abandoning their position. However, ECLAC's measurements on the progress of political participation at the local level show a lower presence of women at the state level. A recent UNDP study<sup>31</sup> that discusses the progress of women's participation at the sub-national level in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean found that *"it is not common to find women holding municipal power and even less so in large cities, nor women in senior positions in the municipal administration, nor an equal number of women and men councilors."*

The barriers women are facing to local political participation are similar to those we see in other levels, but gender stereotypes and discriminatory social attitudes seem to be stronger, even to the point of harassment and violence. The pressure may be greater in smaller and rural municipalities. Women's underrepresentation is even more negative for indigenous women, and secondly, for women of African descent. A triple form of discrimination arises from fact of being female, poor and indigenous.

#### **ii. The local level as a context of opportunity**

Local governments can be an entry point for women's political empowerment, especially if they can set up the appropriate processes that enable women to pursue a political career. The local level can become a learning process for women to acquire knowledge and experience that could propel them to national politics and hold offices in political parties.

In light of its proximity, women's political participation at this level has a direct impact, helping to enhance society's perception about women's skills and capabilities in the management of public policies, thereby eliminating negative stereotypes.

Women politicians can earn a reputation based on social support at the local level, either because they have previously participated in community organizations or because they maintained strong communication links and openness with the public during their tenure. In fact, after the dictatorial

<sup>30</sup> The International Union of Local Authorities (IULA), whose Latin America office is based in Quito, Ecuador, estimated in 2013 that there are approximately 16,000 municipalities in Latin America.

<sup>31</sup> Report of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) "How much progress have we made? An analysis of women's political participation in sub-national governments in Latin America and the Caribbean", March 2013.

regimes, many feminists in local government found inspiration for action and change, and it is still true that many women who lead with informal politics in their communities have become elected officials, especially as councilors.

The existence of initiatives from women associations and networks at the municipal level in several countries has shed great public visibility on women with local authority in the region. This path began in the early nineties and its structures have been very effective in confronting the patriarchy which still dominates the local environments and is linked to patronage and corruption.

Although these networks respond to very different circumstances, valuable common lessons and trends can be drawn to address change, new opportunities and the challenges of local governments in each country. We can classify these networks into two types: on the one hand, for example, the national networks (in most countries) such as the Paraguayan Network of Women in Municipal Government (RPMM), the Women's National Network of Local and Regional Authorities of Peru (RENAMA), the Costa Rican Network of Women in Municipal Government (RECOMM), the Association of Women in Municipal Government of Ecuador (AMUME), the Association of Mayors, Councilors and Councilwomen of El Salvador (ANDRYSAS), the Association of Councilors and Mayors of Bolivia (ACOBOL) or the Association of Women in Municipal Government of Guatemala (ASMUGOM); and, on the other hand, networks of sub-regional or regional scope, such as the Latin American Network of Elected Women Leaders of Local Governments Associations (Lamugol) or the newly created Ibero-American Network of Municipalities for Gender Equality.

## 2.5. Data on women's political participation in Latin America and the Caribbean

» *According to the IPU, the Americas is the first region in the world in terms of women parliamentarians with a participation of 25.7%.*

- » *Affirmative action measures, quota laws, voluntary quotas in political parties and parity laws are driving women's increased political participation in the region, although with differentiated impacts that require a detailed analysis.*
- » *Five women are now Heads of Government or Heads of State of their respective countries.*
- » *The women parliamentary caucuses, women councilor networks and women in municipal governments promote overall progress in conjunction with women's movements.*
- » *The regional Consensus of Quito, Brasilia, Montevideo and Santo Domingo have achieved progress in promoting political rights and representative parity.*

A set of data and other information that constitute an assessment of the enforcement of women's political rights in the region is presented below:

- Today, women's active and passive right to vote is universal in the region;
- Uruguay was the first country in the region to give women full civil rights and suffrage in 1917, allowing women to vote in 1938. Ecuador (1929), Haiti (1950), Mexico (1953), Honduras, Nicaragua, Peru (1955), Colombia (1957) and Paraguay (1961) followed suit, and so on with the rest of the countries;
- However, some women, mainly indigenous, are unable to exercise their right to vote for lack of national identification;
- The Americas region currently has the highest percentage of women parliamentarians, after the Nordic countries. The world average is 21.9% (21.3% in the lower house

and 19.8% in upper house or Senate). As of June 2014, women accounted for 25.7% of legislative bodies in the Americas (26.4% in the lower house and 25.8% in the Senate) according to the IPU, or 24.5% according to data from ECLAC;<sup>32</sup>

- In the English-speaking Caribbean, the average percentage is 15% of women parliamentarians. Exceptions are Guyana, which has 31.3%, and a quota law, and Granada, which has 33.3%;
- Only eight countries in the region have 30% or more women's representation in parliaments (lower house): Argentina, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, Granada, Guyana, Mexico and Nicaragua;
- Some countries in the region are among those with the highest level of female representation in the world: Cuba (48.9%), Nicaragua (42.4%), Ecuador (41.6%), Mexico (37.4%) and Argentina (36.6% in the lower house and 38.9% in the Senate);
- Conversely, some countries in the Americas are among the countries with the lowest rate of women's parliamentary representation in the world, such as Belize (3.1%), Haiti (4.2%), St. Kitts and Nevis (6.7%), Panama (8.5%) and Brazil (8.6%);
- In many countries, women have joined forces to influence their parliaments and governments by forming women parliamentarian caucuses. Their main tasks consist in promoting greater representation of women, raising awareness among elected women on the agenda for gender equality

and promoting gender mainstreaming in parliaments and in bills. They act as mechanisms to overcome partisan and ideological barriers, enabling women to reach consensus in favor of causes that transcend these differences. They also provide excellent opportunities to mobilize action among the various political groups and civil society. Their dynamism, formalization, and influential capacity are very diverse;

- Regionally, the Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas (COPA), ParlAmericas, as well as the Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas are organizations that promote interesting exchanges between women parliamentarians to foster progress in the region;<sup>33</sup>
- Regional parliaments such as the Latin American Parliament (Parlatino) and the Central American Parliament (Parlacen) constitute regional parliamentary forums that provide opportunities to advance in the fulfillment of women's political rights, promoting exchanges and commitments to gender equality, despite not being legally binding for the parliaments of the Member States;<sup>34</sup>
- Legislation regulating some type of quota system is widely reported in the region.<sup>35</sup> In Latin America, fifteen countries have introduced some form of quota for candidate registration in national parliaments: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Dominican Republic and Uruguay.

<sup>32</sup> Source: the first figure shows data from IPU (June 2014) and, the second, from the Gender Equality Observatory of Latin America and the Caribbean, ECLAC, (June 2014).

<sup>33</sup> A recent example was the Second Consultation with Women Parliamentarians of the Americas (Brasilia, October 2013), whose aim was to discuss and agree on the priorities of a regional legislative agenda for women's rights and gender equality.

<sup>34</sup> UN Women has set out its commitment to support and cooperate with both regional parliaments in each of the two framework agreements, which have produced mixed results.

<sup>35</sup> Source: Quota Project, website created in partnership between International IDEA, Stockholm University and IPU: <http://www.quotaproject.org/>

The incorporation of quotas in Venezuela does not result from legislation, but rather from the resolution of the National Electoral Council in 2005. In the Caribbean, Guyana and Haiti have adopted legislation on quotas;<sup>36</sup>

- In some countries such as Brazil, Chile, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Dominican Republic (upper house) and Uruguay, political parties have adopted voluntary measures to incorporate quotas in the registration of women parliamentary candidates. Although only voluntary, these can have an even greater impact, allowing more women on their parliament lists;<sup>37</sup>
- The impact of quotas in the region has been quite unbalanced. For example, Brazil has had a quota law since 1997, but women make up only 8.6% of its parliament (2010), while in Costa Rica, which adopted its quota law in 1999, women reached 38.6% representation in parliament (2010). The impact of quotas is positive in the election of more women, provided they are well designed and legislators and electoral management bodies take ownership and cooperate to achieve a “minimum” number of elected women in the election’s outcome;
- The debate on parity democracy is becoming increasingly important in the region. In the regional Consensus of Quito, Brasilia, Montevideo and Santo Domingo, governments have recognized representative parity as a democratic right that supports equality between women and men. Currently, five countries have incorporated state-level parity: Bolivia, Ecuador and Mexico in their Constitutions;

and Costa Rica and Nicaragua in their secondary laws;<sup>38</sup>

- Four women preside over legislative assemblies in their respective countries: Suriname, Bolivia, Ecuador and Chile;
- The participation of women at the local or sub-national level remains insufficient, as does the statistical information disaggregated by sex on candidates elected at those levels. The 2011 data from ECLAC places the average of Latin American women mayors at 10.2%, with only five countries in the region exceeding 20%. More recent data confirms that although the number of councilors has increased over the past decade and reached 25% in 2012, only 10% of women become heads of local governments.<sup>39</sup> In 2012, according to the UNDP, only two countries exceeded 20% of women mayors: Bolivia and Uruguay with 22% and 25.3% respectively;
- Since the nineties, associations of local women authorities or sub-state representatives have developed networks and initiatives for the promotion of women’s rights, both at the national and regional level. The newly created Ibero-American Network for Local Gender Agendas<sup>40</sup> is also an incentive for knowledge creation and mobilization to promote a greater participation of women at the local level;
- One of the most significant data of the region is the high percentage of women in the Executive branch. America has the largest number of women Heads of State or Heads of Government (IPU data), five as of June 2014. As of April 2014, there were six

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<sup>36</sup> However, its implementation is still pending agreement in both chambers.

<sup>37</sup> “Political Parties and Parity: The Pending Equation”, IDEA International and the IDB (2010).

<sup>38</sup> These same countries are included in the total of countries that have quotas.

<sup>39</sup> UNDP Study: “How much progress have we made? An analysis of women’s political participation in sub-national governments in Latin America and the Caribbean”, 2013.

<sup>40</sup> Created on the occasion of the II Ibero-American Summit of Local Gender Agendas, held in Aguascalientes, Mexico, on September 2013, organized by the Ibero-American Union of Municipalists.

women holding regional or State leadership: Cristina Fernández in Argentina, Dilma Rousseff in Brazil, Laura Chinchilla Miranda in Costa Rica, Portia Simpson-Miller in Jamaica, Kamla Persad-Bissessar in Trinidad and Tobago and Michelle Bachelet in Chile. This fact is particularly relevant considering that, globally, a total of eighteen women are heads of the Executive branch;

- The Americas also have the highest percentage of women ministers: 22.9%, compared with 16.75% worldwide (though the Nordic countries have 48.9%). All American countries have at least one woman in a ministerial position.<sup>41</sup> With fourteen women in government, Nicaragua has topped the global ranking of women in the executive government;
- Feminist movements in Latin America and the Caribbean have had an enormous impact. They have been the foundation for the defense and promotion of women's rights. In 2012, a Civil Society Advisory Group for Latin America and the Caribbean was established, which provides high-level political and technical advice, and acts as a link between UN Women and civil society in the region's countries (a model that is being replicated at the country level);
- Violence against women politicians occurs in many countries through various forms of social pressure, moral or physical harassment and at times even murder. Bolivia is the only country to have adopted specific legislation to prevent and eradicate this phenomenon. Several countries are currently debating legislative proposals in Parliament;
- Political parties in most countries are responsible for electoral lists and determine who and what position the candidates aspire to during the election. Reliable information on the participation of women in their structures is still insufficient. A 2010 IDB study that analyzed data from more than 90 political parties in the region concluded that women hold only 19% of the positions in national executive committees (NEC).<sup>42</sup> In some countries, political parties have agreed to measure their commitment to gender equality (as in Mexico, with the use of a "traffic light" system to measure each political party's commitment);
- The region stands out for its abundant normative development; in fact, all Latin American and Caribbean countries have ratified the CEDAW. However, the alignment of national legislation as envisioned by the convention remains a challenge that forces States to employ all means at their disposal, including greater financial resources, to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment. Hence, comprehensive and long-term planning is still necessary with affirmative action measures in favor of women and girls to help eliminate structural inequalities, discrimination and violence;
- For decades, the region has been developing a significant institutional framework for the promotion of women's political rights, although with different mandates, hierarchical authority, leadership and diverse results. In addition, national mechanisms for women dispose of forums for debate through supranational institutions such as the Inter-American Women's Commission of the OAS (CIM),<sup>43</sup> the Andean Advisory

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41 "Women's Political Map", 2014: <http://www.unwomen.org/es/news/stories/2014/3/progress-form-women-in-politics-but-glass-ceiling-remains-firm#sthash.RYw2XasJ.dpuf>

42 "Political Parties and Parity: The Pending Equation", IDEA International and the IDB (2010).

43 The CIM/OAS organized in 2011 and 2012 two Hemispheric Forums on "Women's leadership for a citizens' democracy" in 2011 and 2012, in collaboration with UN Women.

Council for Senior Authorities on Women and Equal Opportunities (CAAAMI ), the Council of Women Ministers of Central America (COMMCA) or the Intergovernmental Network of National Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women in the Andean Region (REMMA);

- Electoral Management Bodies of several countries (such as Mexico and El Salvador) have launched a process to create mechanisms that promote women's rights, such as technical gender units, in addition to affirmative action measures to promote a greater presence of women amongst officials

and judges. Several regional groupings or networks of such commissions/electoral management bodies include the promotion of gender equality among their tasks, such as the Latin American Network of Electoral Magistrates or the Inter-American Union of Electoral Organizations;

- The ECLAC<sup>44</sup> and the OAS<sup>45</sup> have greatly contributed to women's empowerment in the region, through political mobilization and support to women mechanisms in the countries for the promotion of women's political rights.

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<sup>44</sup> ECLAC's Gender Equality Observatory is a very useful and valuable tool to assess and adopt measures to promote the fulfillment of the women's political rights in the States.

<sup>45</sup> We underline the adaptation of the OAS' methodology for electoral observation with respect to gender equality, in which UN Women collaborated with the Department of Electoral Cooperation and Observation.



# CHAPTER III

## STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

“That which remains unknown and unnamed does not exist, and despite the progress achieved in past decades, in particular concerning knowledge on inequality between men and women through increasing information that allows us to visualize the asymmetries therein, it is still true that numerous gaps and grey areas remain in the production of data with a gender perspective”

UN Women report: “The state of information systems: statistics from Latin American electoral organs from a gender perspective” (2011).



Portia Simpson Miller, Prime Minister of Jamaica, during her arrival to Geneva to participate of the 50th Anniversary of UNITAR. Photo: United Nations.



Kamla Persad-Bissessar, Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, addresses the general debate of the 68th General Assembly of the United Nations. Photo: United Nations.

# STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

## 3.1. UN Women presence in the Americas and the Caribbean

This Guide on “Political Empowerment of Women: Framework for Strategic Action in Latin America and the Caribbean (2014-2017)” responds and is part of UN Women’s new regional architecture in favor of decentralization and the strengthening of regional offices and country offices.<sup>46</sup>

UN Women’s operational presence in the region is based on:

- The Regional Office for the Americas and the Caribbean, based in Panama;
- Ten country offices in Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Mexico, Paraguay, and Dominican Republic;
- A multi-country office based in Barbados;<sup>47</sup>
- Programmatic presence in five countries: Chile, Honduras, Nicaragua, Uruguay and Peru.

The UN Women Global Training Center has its headquarters in Dominican Republic.

The regional office’s priority is to provide technical and operational support to meet the requirements of the countries where the Entity has established country and multi-country offices. UN Women also works in other countries where it develops specific programs. However, the mandate of UN Women is

universal, and since no country has achieved gender equality, it must respond to assistance requests from any country or government in the region.

The regional office has interagency coordination functions at regional and sub-regional levels as well as cooperation and assistance functions to regional or sub-regional agencies. In doing so, it promotes mechanisms and activities that aim to create synergies and draw lessons to multiply catalytic effects in several countries.

The country offices act as catalysts and facilitate significant and positive change for women and girls in each country; they respond to the priorities established by the countries themselves, addressing the needs, opportunities and risks identified for each country. The various offices offer a wide range of technical skills; meanwhile the countries’ resources, political will and context are also very heterogeneous.

UN Women relies on the regional LAC Women Political Participation Task Force for the development of the Framework for regional strategic action. The task

<sup>46</sup> UNW / 2012/10, Report of the Executive Director on the regional architecture, which came into effect on 01/01/2013.

<sup>47</sup> The multi-country office covers the CARICOM countries: Antigua, Bahamas, Belize, Bermuda, Dominica, Granada, Guyana, Jamaica, Dutch Antilles and Aruba, St. Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Montserrat, Turks and Caicos, French Guyana, Puerto Rico.

force consists of a Coordinator, a Regional Advisor for Political Participation, under the direction of a Regional Director and the office Representatives and the focal points responsible for this area in each office.

## 3.2. Strategic networks and alliances in the region

In accordance with the mandate of UN Women, interagency coordination with the United Nations and with other key stakeholders, including the various regional and sub-regional mechanisms and organizations in Latin America and the Caribbean, is extremely important.

UN Women will expand its network of strategic partners with whom to coordinate the positioning, available resources, capacity building and knowledge creation required to implement this strategy, with the objective of achieving greater results-based efficiency and effectiveness and avoid duplication. In doing so, it will maximize synergies in the region and achieve greater success in advancing the rights and empowerment of women.

To this end, the previously signed agreements will be implemented and/or new agreements with regional organizations and other agents will be adopted. In addition, innovative partnerships will be forged with private companies and philanthropic foundations, and links to the Global Pact national associations will be established<sup>48</sup> to organize public-private activities and initiatives to promote empowerment and women's rights. Consultations will take place with the Civil Society Advisory Group for Latin America and the Caribbean and with women's movements and NGOs in the region.

### 3.2.1. Main allies at the regional level

- ▶ In the United Nations system:
  - PNUD;
  - ECLAC;

- UNFPA;
- High Commissioner for Human Rights;
- Interagency groups on Youth, Gender and the Post-2015 Agenda;
- ▶ Regional organizations and entities
  - Organization of American States (OAS)
    - › Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM);
    - › Department of Electoral Cooperation and Observation (DECO);
  - Latin American Parliament (Parlatino)
  - Central American Parliament (Parlacen)
    - › Block of Women Parliamentarians;
  - Central American Integration System (SICA)
    - › Council of Ministers for Women in Central America (COMMCA);
  - General Secretariat of the Andean Community (SGCAN)
    - › Andean Council of Senior Authorities on Women and Equal Opportunities (CAAAMI);
  - Ibero-American General Secretariat (SEGIB)
  - CARICOM<sup>49</sup>, mainly through:
    - › Council for Human and Social Development (COHSOD);
    - › Directorate for Social and Human Development: Development and Gender Unit;
    - › Counseling in Gender Justice;
  - Latin American Municipalists Union

<sup>48</sup> The Global Compact is a voluntary corporate citizenship initiative promoted by the United Nations, in which the companies commit to aligning their operations and strategies with ten universally accepted principles in four areas: human rights, labor standards, environment and anti-corruption.

<sup>49</sup> UN Women and CARICOM agreed on a partnership through a MoU in 2010.

- Ibero-American Municipalists Network
- Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)
- UNASUR
- Sub-regional and regional associations of electoral bodies: Association of Electoral Bodies of Central America and the Caribbean, Electoral Organizations Association of South America, Inter-American Union of Electoral Organizations, American Network of Electoral Judges
- The Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas (COPA)
- ParlAmericas
- ▶ European Union (EU)
- ▶ Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA);
- ▶ Cooperation agencies and governments;
- ▶ Civil Society Advisory Group for Latin America and the Caribbean and regional NGOs;
- ▶ Think tanks and experts (Ebert Foundation, National Democratic Institute, International Republican Institute, Women's Campaign Fund, among others);
- ▶ Universities or academic institutions (Ibero-American Institute of the Universidad de Salamanca, FLACSO, Center for Latin American Studies at Georgetown University, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid), the Ibero-American universities network;
- ▶ The Caribbean Institute for Women in Leadership (CIWIL);
- ▶ iKNOW Politics;
- ▶ Regional media and sources of public opinion;
- ▶ Business networks or businesses of regional scope.

### 3.2.2. Main partners in each country

- The Executive branch, executive agencies, National Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women;
- Legislature, parliamentary blocs or caucuses for the rights of women, Equality Commissions or similar, Technical Gender Units;
- Judiciary, magistrates networks;
- Electoral Organisms of the countries (EO);
- Entities of the United Nations; in particular, gender and governance focal points of UN entities;
- National committees to monitor the CEDAW (NGOs that prepare shadow reports);
- Networks of NGOs for women and women's human rights, including Civil Society Advisory Groups in the countries;
- Professional associations of lawyers and jurists;
- Delegation of the European Union;
- Embassies of OAS countries;
- Universities or academic institutions;
- Groups of international aid donors;
- Networks of women politicians;
- Networks of local women councilors and politicians;
- Media and journalist networks specialized on gender;
- Philanthropic foundations.

### 3.3. UN Women intervention strategies

UN Women utilizes four main intervention strategies. They employ mechanisms and tools that should produce a more efficient and effective action, avoid duplication and generate a multiplier effect, fostering greater transparency through the creation of spaces

to share information and to alert about emergency situations, risks or opportunities for action with our partners and strategic allies, governments, regional and sub-regional organizations, civil society, etc.

An important support element for the development of these intervention strategies is the UN Women Global Training Center, based in the Dominican Republic, which capitalizes on existing products and designs new ones. Moreover, the UN Women Regional Office plans to launch a new website in English and Spanish for Latin America and the Caribbean, which will disseminate knowledge products, activities, experiences, news, etc. about the region, with a section devoted to women's political participation.

UN Women's four intervention strategies consist of:

### **3.3.1. Building bridges, coordinating and leading<sup>50</sup>:**

- The UN Women mandate calls on the Organization to lead and coordinate the efforts of the UN system to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment and to defend the rights of women. This is justified by the need to ensure that gender equality has a strategic presence across the entire system, providing greater coherence, effectiveness and efficiency to the system's activities. UN Women understands that to do so, it is unavoidable and essential to build a web of networks, strategic alliances and synergies between the different partners, both at the policy level and in the field;
- Coordination efforts at the regional, sub-regional and country level, and diplomatic and negotiation abilities based on a profound knowledge of the situation and the political, electoral and legal context of each country;
- Create mechanisms for coordination, dialogue and inter-agency and inter-sectorial convergence for and with women's

movements, the UN system, donors, groups of women politicians, national and regional counterparts, parliaments, politicians, political parties, the media and the private sector;

- Adopt and develop cooperative agreements with various partners, act as the United Nations hub of knowledge on women's political participation in each country and on the programs and activities developed by other agents. Also, coordinate and lead strategic and technical partnerships, both public and private, to promote women's political participation at the regional level and in the countries.

### **3.3.2. Generating knowledge**

- Promote and support the production of publications, reports, methodologies and tools to promote women's political participation and political rights at the regional, sub-regional and national levels;
- Gather information and analyze the strategies, projects and activities that other entities and public or private agencies in the region develop to promote women's political participation, serving as a "regional knowledge hub" on the subject;
- Develop position papers, statements and recommendations to position and advance the strategic objectives and desired outcomes towards promoting the political participation of women;
- Evaluate data, developments and trends on women's political participation;
- Promote and support competent national and regional authorities in generating data, statistics and indicators on women's participation at all levels;

<sup>50</sup> In accordance with the "United Nations. System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women", adopted in 2012 by the Chief Executives Board.

- Create community tools based on practices that facilitate the sharing of experiences; promote the strategic use of ICTs to manage information and knowledge; and support the dissemination of technical information; in addition, create rosters and knowledge resources and mobilize public opinion to promote the political empowerment of women.

### 3.3.3. Providing technical assistance

- UN Women’s work should help support governments and public authorities in implementing their international commitments.
- Our national counterparts, governments, political parties, parliaments, civil society, networks, regional or sub-regional organizations and all of our allies from the United Nations system and others are recipients and/or allies to implement this regional strategy.
- Technical assistance, through technical and political advice to partners, and in particular governments, is inherent to the mandate of UN Women.
- Technical support for the development or reform of policy proposals, resolutions, reports to CEDAW or others; the formulation or development of public policy and/or mechanisms for promoting political participation; the design of training methodologies; the design or implementation of awareness-raising campaigns or strategies; the design and conceptualization of conferences, working groups, seminars or meetings of all kinds; or any other form of technical assistance that may be required by the governments to promote women’s political participation.

### 3.3.4. Developing and strengthening capabilities

- This is a highly demanded intervention strategy where UN Women can act as a bridge or facilitator and as a conduit of knowledge.
- Facilitate and promote the training of female and male parliamentarians, government officials, candidates from both domestic institutions as well as regional and sub-regional organizations, and civil society, at all levels, in a wide variety of issues related to women’s political empowerment to strengthen their technical and practical knowledge on public policy management.
- Develop instruments, tools, and technical methodologies; advocacy and awareness-raising campaigns; strengthen the capacities of networks and support areas for women; and capacity-building for advocacy in the political and normative framework.
- Develop integrated training projects capable of ensuring the creation of institutional mechanisms committed with sustainability, in order to foster knowledge while strengthening capabilities and institutions.

## 3.4. Five Strategic Objectives

The aim of this guide on *“Political Empowerment of Women: Framework for Strategic Action in Latin America and the Caribbean (2014-2017)”* is to amplify women’s voices and leadership so they can influence decision-making in public affairs at all levels. Their participation not only guarantees the exercise of women’s citizenship rights and improves the functioning of democratic systems in countries, but also results in a positive impact on the development agenda. In addition, we intend to move towards parity democracy as a goal to transform gender relations, promoting the welfare of society as a whole in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Experience shows that, prior to strategic planning to promote women's political participation, it is essential to produce a diagnosis of each country's political context. In particular, this analysis allows us to assess whether the scenario is favorable to change, with potential political will, as well as to identify possible synergies with networks and strategic partners. Thus, in the context of political reform, opportunities may open up in countries that could be very effective. And, in following the electoral cycle, it is important to pay attention to situations that may give rise to opportunities to promote options for organizational or legislative changes, or mobilizations and political debates that promote women's rights and empowerment.

UN Women's regional office in Latin America and the Caribbean has identified five strategic objectives that, addressed holistically through UN Women's leadership as well as that of other entities and partners, will help reach the expected results set out in the Global Strategic Plan to address the limitations women face in leading and participating in decision-making on the basis of substantive equality with men.<sup>51</sup>

### **3.4.1. Promoting parity representation: affirmative action**

- » *Temporary affirmative action measures, in particular quotas, have been very effective in increasing women's political participation in the region.*
- » *We need to assess their effectiveness, based on various elements and factors that intervene in the outcome.*
- » *Representative parity, a concept that transcends the political sphere, has been recognized in the regional Consensus of Quito, Brasilia, Montevideo and Santo Domingo.*
- » *Electoral systems are not gender neutral.*

» *The electoral management bodies play a major role in ensuring and promoting compliance with gender-sensitive electoral law as well as affirmative action measures.*

#### **i. History and effectiveness of affirmative action measures**

Faced with pervasive inequality in women's access opportunities to political decision-making and their permanence in such positions, both the CEDAW and subsequently the recommendations from the Fourth Beijing Conference of 1995 urged states to take affirmative action or positive discrimination measures to rebalance formal equality between men and women. They referred to temporary special measures of a transitional nature that were warranted as a result of the serious disadvantages that have historically limited women's access, opportunities and advancement in public and political life.

Since then, evidence shows that affirmative action mechanisms have facilitated women's access to positions in politics.<sup>52</sup> In this regard, a UNDP study (2013), concludes that "the gap between countries with equity measures and those without is 12 percentage points." Similarly, in the absence of legislation establishing a system of affirmative action, we know that voluntary measures can make a considerable impact when adopted by the political parties themselves.

Effective implementation of affirmative measures requires a legal basis, either in the constitution or in electoral law, or otherwise incorporated into the rules of political parties and their statutory regulations. There are multiple mechanisms or tools to develop different forms of affirmative action, such as: quotas, which refer to the minimum percentage of women's representation on an electoral list or part of the total number of candidates, or a proportional number of elected officials; training women candidates and/or elected women; financial assistance to candidates, especially in countries where electoral campaigns rely heavily on private

<sup>51</sup> See Annex for examples of UN Women interventions (past or ongoing) in the region, aimed at addressing each strategic objective.

<sup>52</sup> "El liderazgo político de las mujeres en América Latina: un proceso en construcción. Mapa de iniciativas y actores/as". Gloria Bonder and María Arboleda. Document financed by Spain's UNDP Fund, AECID and UNIFEM.



funding; a preference system without quotas; the assignment of goals and deadlines for the inclusion of women in certain positions; awareness campaigns; or incentive programs for political parties (reduced registration fee, bonus funding, etc.), among others.

Certain factors must be taken into account to assess the effectiveness of a quota system:

- The political will leading to the adoption of the quota system must be clear in the fact that quotas are not an end in themselves, but a tool towards the objective of substantive equality; therefore, the minimum quota established cannot be erected as a glass ceiling for women;
- It must be compatible with the electoral system in which it is implemented. The proportional system favors its effectiveness more than the majority system; therefore, the bigger the size of the constituency the more favorable it is to women;
- It is essential to decide whether quotas should be established at the beginning stage of the election (on the list of candidates) or if required at the time of the elections results (aiming for a percentage of elected women);
- The closed and blocked lists are more effective than open lists;
- The inclusion of position mandates for the assignment of women to eligible positions (for example, by alternating man/woman);
- The inclusion of clear sanctions for non-compliance by the parties and clear regulations for the entity responsible for enforcing such sanctions;
- The engagement and commitment of electoral management bodies to gender equality;
- Social support from political elites and women's movements is fundamental, while awareness campaigns are very useful to inform about the benefits of quotas.

- It is important to incorporate quota regulations in all elections (State, sub-national, local level, etc.) to achieve sustainable effects and permeate all levels of government.

Since Argentina's Quota Act pioneering initiative in 1991, and in line with the commitments made in Beijing, activists, women politicians and governments began to mobilize the region to guide the implementation of quota systems in their respective countries. Today, its implementation is widespread in the region. While several countries will apply quotas for the first time in the incoming elections or study new quota legislation to make it even more effective. Despite its widespread implementation, the results among countries remain heterogeneous and not always satisfactory, because the effectiveness of some measures is dependent on the aforementioned factors.

In any case, the region is still far from achieving 50% representation of women and men in public office. Reluctance persists, mainly on the part of political parties, as well as in certain networks and segments of public opinion who don't understand or are opposed to the principle of quotas. Hence, the need to promote awareness campaigns and provide technical assistance to strengthen the effectiveness of legislation containing the affirmative action measures.

## ii. Towards parity democracy

Democracy, more than mere a political system with free elections of its political representatives, is understood as a way of life (UNDP, 2004) which requires transparent, legitimate and inclusive processes. Democracy seeks to expand citizenship under the principles of inclusion, equality and universality. Hence, the inclusion of women with full rights on an equal footing and with the same opportunities as men should be inherent to the process of democratic culture reform that should lead to parity democracy.

The scope of the parity democracy concept<sup>53</sup> transcends the merely political. Therefore, it cannot simply be limited to increasing the percentage of

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<sup>53</sup> The concept of parity democracy reached a milestone at the European Summit "Women in Power" which adopted the Athens Declaration in 1992.

women's political representation, but must also promote a new social balance between men and women in which both assume shared responsibilities in all areas of their lives, both public and private.<sup>54</sup>

The commitment of Latin American and Caribbean countries to representative parity emerges strongly from the Quito and Brasilia Consensus, where it was recognized as a democratic right that supports equality between women and men.

To address this commitment in a comprehensive manner, political will and a multi-party and multi-sectorial commitment is crucial to achieve changes in behaviors that currently continue to perpetuate discrimination and inequality in society, overcoming the socio-economic, cultural, political and institutional gaps that women experience.

The lessons drawn from affirmative action, its positive effects, but also its limitations, have led several countries in the region to invest in parity. UN Women, along with other strategic partners, is committed to promoting progress towards substantive equality of results and parity democracy in the region.

### iii. Electoral systems

Electoral systems are not isolated events. They have an enormous influence on fundamental aspects of each political system, such as the political composition of parliaments, governance, citizens' electoral behavior and even who is or isn't elected President. Despite the critical nature of the electoral system, other factors such as the political context, the party system and the political history of the country itself intervene to generate trends that translate into concrete and foreseeable results.

Most of the Constitutions in Latin American countries refer to the electoral system, although the specific regulation is delegated to an electoral law.

Electoral systems can be classified according to several criteria<sup>55</sup>: one of the most popular

classifications is based on the electoral formula they employ: majority, proportional or mixed. Another classification takes into account their implicit goal. The majority electoral system is the one whose design tends to lead to under-representation of minorities while the main political force secures most positions in parliament, even if it does not receive an absolute majority of votes. The proportional electoral system aims to distribute the seats of the participating forces so as to reflect popular support; the parliament thus becomes a reproduction of the electorate's political composition. There are intermediate or mixed systems that strengthen bipartisanship in order to promote good governance. In general terms, it could be argued that majoritarian electoral systems tend to favor governance and undermine representativeness, while proportional representation systems tend to encourage representativeness but risk governance.

Elections show the progress or decline in women's representation in political offices in each country: *"Every election is a critical opportunity to advance towards greater participation of women as voters and candidates."*<sup>56</sup> In no way is it the responsibility of the United Nations system nor UN Women to suggest preference for one system over another. States are called upon to apply affirmative action measures and incentives to parties to promote women's political participation, regardless of the electoral system of a given country. Given the trends observed from the implementation of an electoral system and other factors that influence the election results, options for affirmative action are suggested that could improve results for greater participation of women.

The work of UN Women aimed at promoting women's political participation includes, in particular, efforts made in the framework of elections and electoral assistance.<sup>57</sup> This implies UN Women's commitment to the United Nations Electoral Assistance Policy as well as the involvement of the offices in technical assistance offered to countries and regional

<sup>54</sup> Of course, in no case is parity foreign to other variables that go beyond the condition of women, such as ethnicity, socio-economic status, age, mental or physical disabilities, among others.

<sup>55</sup> "Los sistemas electorales de América Latina". Los cuadernos de CAPEL, José Enrique Molina, 2000.

<sup>56</sup> Quote of John Hendra, UN Women Deputy Executive Director.

<sup>57</sup> Regarding electoral assistance and gender, see "Guidance Note: Gender and Electoral Assistance". Evaluation Section, UN Women (2012).

organizations. In this endeavor, UN Women, like other entities, programs and funds of the United Nations, observes the rules governing the type of electoral assistance and advice that can be provided in promoting the political participation of women.<sup>58</sup>

The work undertaken by UN Women offices includes comprehensive monitoring of the electoral normative framework and the data resulting from the elections; collaboration with other institutions to generate disaggregated data; an analysis of the barriers to women's political participation at all levels; the promotion of legal reforms and the implementation of affirmative action measures, etc. In this work, the offices collaborate with the UNCT and the Resident Coordinator of each country.

In the region, UN Women cooperation is particularly significant with the OAS, through the Department of Electoral Cooperation and Observation, to support the implementation of the "Methodology for gender mainstreaming in electoral observation missions" that systematically analyzes the participation of men and women in electoral processes at various levels, as voters; as candidates; within the structures of political parties; within the electoral process; and throughout the organization and administration of elections.<sup>59</sup>

#### **iv. The role of the Electoral Management Bodies**

A distinctive feature in all Latin American countries (including the Dominican Republic) is the existence of specialized electoral bodies with jurisdictional functions and, in the case of some of them, administrative as well. They are all independent of the Executive. Some countries have two electoral bodies; one with administrative powers, predominantly responsible for organizing the

elections, and the other with powers to resolve jurisdictional disputes arising in connection to such elections.<sup>60</sup>

Electoral management bodies<sup>61</sup> in the region are mainly responsible for upholding and protecting the political and electoral rights, guaranteeing a gender perspective as well as affirmative action measures, and enforcing international and inter-American standards. *"To the extent that women magistrates increasingly have a greater presence and participation in shaping these electoral management bodies, they constitute the best guarantee for the full delivery of electoral justice and the effective protection of citizens' political and electoral rights in the countries of the Americas, with a gender perspective, for the consolidation of our respective constitutional democracies."*<sup>62</sup>

In Latin America, the mobilization and knowledge diffusion efforts carried out through networks of electoral magistrates, as well as during the Meetings of Electoral Magistrates in Ibero-America<sup>63</sup>, are of great relevance.

Promoting an ongoing dialogue that builds trust with the electoral management bodies is considered a priority for UN Women, in addition to capacity building for the staff with specific-gender training, the provision of technical assistance to oversee gender units, and the promotion of affirmative action measures for their various structures and personnel.<sup>64</sup>

Some recent experience, as in the case of Mexico, represents a milestone and a turning point in the conduct of an Electoral Management Body to fully comply with the spirit and content of electoral law and positive action. In Mexico's 2012 presidential election, faced with the failure of two political parties

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58 DPA's policy directives, among others: "Promoting women's political electoral and political participation through UN electoral assistance" (FP/03/2013), "Principles and Types of UN Electoral Assistance" (FP/01/2012), "Guideline on United Nations Electoral needs Assessments" (FP/02/2012).

59 [http://www.oas.org/es/sap/deco/pro\\_metodo.asp](http://www.oas.org/es/sap/deco/pro_metodo.asp)

60 See the analysis on Electoral Management Bodies in Latin America by J. Jesús Orozco Henríquez: "Sistemas de justicia electoral en América Latina y estándares interamericanos sobre perspectiva de género". Revista Derecho Electoral, Costa Rica. No. 13 (2012)

61 The name of the electoral body varies: tribunal, court, jury, chamber, supreme council or board.

62 Ibidem.

63 See the declarations adopted in such meetings; UN Women participated in the most recent "Declaración de San Salvador del V Encuentro de Magistradas Electorales de Iberoamérica", adopted in that city on May 13, 2014.

64 We reiterate here what was said with respect to DPA's policy on electoral assistance.

to comply with the quota stipulated in Mexican law, a cross-party organization of women politicians, the Red de Mujeres en Plural, appealed to the maximum Electoral Tribunal of the Federal Judiciary (TEPJF). To give full effect to the principle of political equity contained in the intended gender quota, the tribunal forced the political parties to withdraw the submitted lists and to submit new ones. The ruling<sup>65</sup> stipulates mandatory gender quotas, as well as the integration of same-sex substitution formulas. This represented a resounding success that can be replicated in other countries.

#### v. Political funding

Electoral law cannot be gender neutral. Women set out from a situation of inequality: a woman that has never been elected needs to make herself known to the media, has less access to private sector networks and to funds for developing an electoral campaign, and is less known by the public. In addition, women have more difficulties in accessing financial resources because of inequality in wages and a continued economic dependence on men.

A survey conducted by the IPU in 2009 to more than 300 women parliamentarians from around the world concluded that the largest gap between men and women was the lack of funding to cover the cost of the campaigns, something that was confirmed in a subsequent evaluation by UN women targeting women from all continents.<sup>66</sup>

It is also true that the situation varies greatly between countries, since legislation that regulates or limits the cost of campaigns is quite uneven and heterogeneous and, therefore, while in some countries women are not affected by this obstacle, in others it represents a decisive impediment.

To assess the impact of the financial aspect in politics, several factors are critical: the electoral system (countries equipped with a proportional

electoral system with strong parties assume the main cost of the campaigns, while a majoritarian system delegates the responsibility of raising funds to the devices of each candidate); the length of primaries (created to provide greater transparency and legitimacy to parties), which unfortunately represents a new limit for women, making it more complex and often almost impossible to operate the quota system at this stage; funding, since the nomination of candidates by parties during primaries doubles the duration of the campaign, entailing an additional cost which is not usually borne by the parties. All these factors are more detrimental to women.

In Latin America, many countries have a proportional or mixed electoral system and they regulate both public and private funding. Although no single conclusion can be drawn that would apply evenly across all political systems, a tendency in the search of a balance between the will to guarantee funding to political parties, transparency and accountability can be observed across the board.<sup>67</sup>

The situation is much more fragile in the CARICOM countries, where a true need exists for women to be able to mobilize private funding. In that context, the electoral system is predominantly a majority one, which explains why some countries seek to design fundraising strategies for women, based on experiences such as EMILY's list in the United States, which has supported women candidates from the Democratic Party since 1995, mainly through fundraising.<sup>68</sup>

The debate around funding policy for parties and/or candidates, although of great importance to women, at times transcends the issue of gender, since it touches on the very core of democratic institutions. Organizations tend to direct their recommendations towards the objective of optimizing the use of resources to benefit the

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65 Ruling SUP-JDC-12624/2011

66 Evaluación a parlamentarias y activistas llevada a cabo durante la 57 sesión de la Comisión del Estatus de la Mujer en Nueva York, marzo de 2013, con miembros de la red de iKnowPolitics.

67 "Financiamiento de los partidos políticos en América Latina", INSTITUTO DE INVESTIGACIONES JURÍDICAS, Serie Doctrina Jurídica, Núm. 594. Pablo Gutiérrez y Daniel Zovatto, Coordinadores. México (2011): "se observa una tendencia clara en la región a buscar un equilibrio en la influencia del dinero en la política, así como a fortalecer los mecanismos de transparencia y rendición de cuentas."

68 EMILY stands for "Early Money is Like Yeast", created in the USA where, according to the cited analysis of 2014, the average cost of a campaign for a seat in Congress is of USD\$1.7 million, and of USD\$10.5 million for a seat in the Senate.

representative political system: establish limits on contributions, by source and by amount; create control and accountability mechanisms; look, to a certain extent, for instruments that improve the conditions of political rivalry to make it more equal, including affirmative action and incentives for parties applying them (in areas such as training for women, reducing registration costs at elections, etc.), awareness campaigns, reforms to political parties and their structures, etc.<sup>69</sup>

### 3.4.2. Integrating the gender perspective in policies, actions and institutions

- » *A gender-sensitive body is the one whose structures, operations, methods and work respond to the needs and interests of both women and men.*
- » *The parliament plays a key role in achieving legislative harmonization of international commitments to ensure that legislation does not discriminate and that it promotes gender equality.*
- » *Statistical data is essential to understand the real situation of women in the countries and thus be able to help decision-makers adopt adequate public policies that promote and guarantee women's political rights..*

#### i. Specific gender equality and mainstreaming policies and mechanisms

The adoption of special actions or policies for women, despite being steps in the right direction, have not produced by themselves the necessary changes in women's status, because they have been limited to a specific sector instead of permeating the entire public agenda. Realizing that previous strategies were ineffective or unable to achieve the established goals, gender mainstreaming emerges

as a strategy for the promotion and achievement of gender equality.

The concept of gender mainstreaming appeared prominently in the United Nations 3rd World Conference on Women (Nairobi, 1985) and was first incorporated starting with the 4th Conference of Beijing (1995).

Gender mainstreaming consists on infusing a gender perspective in each and every field, sector or action, in all stages and at all levels, by the actors involved in the adoption of public measures and policies, and including women in the process of decision-making.

A gender mainstreaming approach does not seek to substitute the specific gender mechanisms and policies, but rather complement them. For it to be effective, some conditions or requisites are necessary: a firm political will; the existence of laws on gender equality, institutions for the protection and defense of gender equality and specific policies on gender equality; disaggregated statistics; knowledge on the gender relations in each country, which requires permanent analysis and research; a commitment to reorganize the public administration, its structure and operation; human and financial resources and the participation of women in the public and political life.<sup>70</sup>

In addition to mainstreaming and gender equality policies, it is essential that public administrations create specialized gender mechanisms expressly in charge of pursuing the objective of equal opportunities between men and women, promoting the conditions for such equality and fostering the participation of women in cultural, political, economic and social life. These Women or Gender Mechanisms should have such degree of autonomy and hierarchical level to allow them to carry out their task. They are strategic allies of UN Women in each country.

An example of gender mainstreaming can be found when applied to budgeting, which does not imply separate budgets for women, but rather a distribution process and use of public resources

<sup>69</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>70</sup> Framework document for the administration of local equality policies, FEMP, Spain, 2006.

that benefits men and women in the same way. Such budgets are also useful to recognize the different ways in which women contribute to their societies and economies through unpaid work in the productive economy and their role as caregivers of their communities and families. Such budgets also allow governments to transform their commitments with gender equality and women's human rights into actions.<sup>71</sup>

In this sense, governments at the Montevideo Consensus expressed their commitment to "take measures to promote and strengthen the design, implementation and accountability of gender-sensitive budgets to achieve equal access to public sector expenditure, the inclusion of gender equality principles in the various stages of planning and budgeting, and the satisfaction of the specific social needs of women and men".

Since 2001, UNIFEM, and later UN Women, has promoted campaigns for the use of gender-sensitive budgets as a valuable tool for considering and alleviating existing inequalities through a better distribution of expenditure and revenues.<sup>72</sup>

Training for women politicians on planning, budgeting and public administration in general, as well as strengthening gender institutions, are inseparable elements to women's political empowerment.

## **ii. Gender-sensitive institutions. Parliaments**

The inclusion of women in the workplace and their access to public office (civil servants, elected officials, managerial positions), in addition to being a political right, has allowed them to develop and obtain resources and income. However, their personal and professional growth and development requires a new social culture to address the reconciliation between work and private life. Hence, the insistence that the parity debate transcends the merely political since it also addresses the rebalancing of every aspect of life.

If we consider the fact that a correlation exists between women's participation in areas of political decision-making and their inclusion in the labor market, we must demand public institutions to be gender-sensitive; in other words, through their structures, operations, methods and work, public institutions must respond to the needs and interests of both women and men. This applies to all levels of government – state, sub-national and local.

The creation of technical gender units in the various public institutions is crucial: electoral management bodies, ministries, local governments, parliaments, etc.

Given the role of parliaments, with legislative powers and responsibility for monitoring and rendering Governments accountable, it is a priority to develop gender-sensitive parliaments. Furthermore, they are the center of political debate and the expression of society's political pluralism represented in in each electoral period.

In a report by the Inter-Parliamentary Union about gender-sensitive parliaments,<sup>73</sup> several tasks that parliaments must attend to are defined so that their structures, operations, methods and work respond to the needs and interests of both women and men.

UN Women advocates for the approval by regional parliaments of gender equality laws and to ensure legislation isn't discriminatory; gender-sensitive budgets; gender mainstreaming in institutional operations, which also affects the operating rules of institutional organs to allow both men and women to reconcile their professional and private lives; laws against gender violence, including violence against women politicians; the creation of Gender Equality Commissions with the capacity and authority to evaluate in a binding way all legislative proposals from a gender perspective; or the creation of a technical gender unit to facilitate measures to adapt a parliament to the needs of reconciling political action and family life; the creation of women caucuses to raise awareness among elected women, give visibility to the critical mass of

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71 Archive documents from UNIFEM.

72 Currently, the Regional Office has a Regional Advisor for Economic Empowerment and a Regional Specialist on gender-sensitive budgets.

73 "Gender-sensitive Parliaments. A Global Review of Good Practice", document 64, Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2011

women and defend cross-party interests; candidate training; the promotion of the presence of women at the different levels of political representation; open dialogue with women's movements; etc.

### iii. Data on political participation disaggregated by sex

One of the major difficulties that public authorities face in producing a diagnosis of progress or regression in the area of political participation is the lack of consistent data and indicators, collected in a regular and reliable way by the public institutions of all countries in the region.

Statistical information is absolutely necessary to understand the real situation of women in each one of the State Parties to the CEDAW and, thus, be able to take adequate measures. This information must be available for access by the public authorities, international organizations, researchers, civil society organizations, media and the general population.

In the Quito Consensus, the States Parties agreed to *“develop permanent electoral policies encouraging political parties to incorporate women agendas in their diversity, the gender perspective in their contents, actions and statutes, and the equal participation, empowerment and leadership of women with the goal of consolidating gender parity as a State policy”* (25,1, viii). In addition, as a result of that Consensus, the ECLAC, together with other organizations of the United Nations system, such as UN INSTRAW (now part of UN Women), was asked to create the Observatory for Gender Equality, which would include data on women's political participation in the region, both at the national and local levels.<sup>74</sup>

UN Women considers the reporting of statistical data disaggregated by sex a priority. Hence, it promotes the systematization and dissemination of statistical data and indicators that inform the

design of public policies aimed at promoting gender equality. UN Women's report “State of information systems: statistics from Latin American electoral organs from a gender perspective” sought precisely to raise awareness among the institutions in charge so they may work on the reporting of information with a gender perspective; offer a general view of the state of official statistical production in the electoral field and of the design of indicators that include gender and ethnicity; and to identify specific recommendations for a research and work agenda together with the region's Electoral Bodies and National Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women.

The sub-national or local levels are among the most deficient in terms of information, hindering a detailed analysis of the real challenges and difficulties for women's political participation at those levels. The bodies who should collect and analyze this information, such as the national municipal associations, the political parties, the electoral bodies and other competent bodies often have difficulties in systematizing and updating the data.<sup>75</sup>

ECLAC's Observatory for Gender Equality is the region's main mechanism for collecting data on women's political participation. It complements the global information provided by the Observatory of women in parliaments of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (at the global level).<sup>76</sup>

UN Women strives to promote indicators or tools that offer more information on trends and risks in women's political participation. Thus, UN Women promotes the implementation of fifty-two gender indicators designed by the United Nations Expert Group on Gender Statistics, six of which relate to political participation. It collaborates with regional or sub-regional organizations in the reporting of

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<sup>74</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>75</sup> Among the relevant organizations, the Federation of Municipalities of the Central American Isthmus (FEMICA) includes data on women mayors by country. Other organizations, such as the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA) and the Federation of Women Municipalists of Latin America and the Caribbean (FEMUM-ALC) could contribute to facilitate access to updated information of women elected locally, through websites and electronic networks.

<sup>76</sup> The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), an international organization of inter-parliamentary cooperation at the global level, regularly offers data on legislative bodies about this indicator in “Women in parliaments: world classification”, <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm>. For Latin America and the Caribbean, the statistical data for gender equality can be consulted at ECLAC's Observatory for Gender Equality, <http://www.cepal.org/oig/WS/getRegionalIndicator.asp?language=english&page=06>, which in addition to the countries in the region, cover data from Spain, Portugal and Andorra.

data. In 2013, it provided technical assistance to experts from countries of the Andean Community in a process of identification of sub-regional indicators.

For the past two years, work has been conducted in the design of a regional project to monitor women's political participation. ATENEA is the "Monitoring System for the Political Participation of Women" that will be developed in Latin American countries, Dominican Republic and Haiti. This joint project of the UNDP, UN Women and IDEA International will provide a more integrated, permanent and comparative outlook on women's political participation. It is based on four pillars: Information (based on data collection from a standardized proposal of forty indicators that, in addition to providing a national outlook, help to inform a "Political Parity Index"), Analysis, Communication and Action. In 2013, a pilot project was conducted in Mexico, and from 2014 onwards the project will be implemented in several countries with the new consolidated tool.

### 3.4.3. Strengthening women's leadership

- » *Women's leadership has a very positive multiplier effect on the empowerment of all women and in promoting gender equality.*
- » *Reality keeps showing that "the more power there is, the fewer women there are".*

#### i. More women leaders: training

If leadership is understood as the capability and authority to influence a group's decision-making, then the lack of women leaders in politics is truly alarming. It suffices to look at the political power structures in the region to conclude that few women hold such positions. In fact, we can conclude that "the more power there is, the fewer women there are".<sup>77</sup>

Having more women leaders goes beyond quantitative representation; a qualitative leap matters enormously. The stakes require women to become part of the core political power, a space of authority where decisions are made on key aspects of citizenship and governance.

Hence, the relevance of the process that has led over the past twenty-five years to have more women elected as President or Prime Minister in the Americas: Violeta Chamorro (Nicaragua), Mireya Elisa Moscoso (Panama), Michele Bachelet (Chile), Christina Kirchner (Argentina), Laura Chinchilla (Costa Rica), Kim Campbell (Canada), Janet Jagan (Guyana), Portia Simpson Miller (Jamaica), Kamla Persad-Bissessar (Trinidad and Tobago) and Dilma Rousseff (Brazil) and, again, Michele Bachelet.

Today, five women are Heads of State or Government in the region.<sup>78</sup> In light of their significance, it is of great interest to observe and analyze how leadership at the highest level affects the political participation of more women throughout all levels and areas of government as well as within the gender agenda in those countries. The reality is that today, there is still a lack of women ministers, vice-ministers, mayors and directors, and few women are part of the political parties' governing structures.

The presence of women politicians in leadership positions is a central part of gender justice because it assesses women on an equal footing with men and entails an effective recognition of gender equality and the development of inclusive democracy.

Women's leadership has an extremely valuable multiplier effect on gender relations across all of society. First, it has a pedagogical effect by fostering the participation of more women in positions of political representation at all levels. Secondly, it inspires other women, young women and girls to aspire to such positions. Moreover, women politicians act as role models, they are perceived as citizens with power and

authority, as opposed to the image of dependent, vulnerable and victimized women,

thus contributing to a change in attitudes and prejudices in all spheres of society. Thirdly, it

<sup>77</sup> Quote reiterated by the former Executive Director of UN Women, M. Bachelet.

<sup>78</sup> Cristina Fernández, in Argentina, Dilma Rousseff, in Brazil, Portia Simpson-Miller, Prime Minister of Jamaica; Kamla Persad-Bissessar, in Trinidad and Tobago, and Michele Bachelet, in Chile.



generates more trust in the democratic system, which is perceived as more inclusive, reducing the dichotomy between the public (male) and the private (female); furthermore, it increases the probability that women's priorities be taken into account in decision-making. Lastly, it motivates men and women to advance the gender equality agenda as a central aspect in democracy.

One of the questions regarding women's leadership lies in identifying how women reach positions of political responsibility. We know that the political careers of men tend to be forged from the political parties themselves or through power relations based on years of work, resources or networks, in addition to a strong commitment with the political party, which requires investing dedication, financial resources and time in order to aspire to hold a relevant political position.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, history teaches us that women have been more active as leaders in informal politics, in the so-called "politics of necessity", than in formal politics. Thus, it is not unusual to find women present and participating in non-governmental organizations, popular urban organizations, service users, school or health committees or associations, etc. However, there is no direct correlation between women's ample participation and leadership in informal politics and their access to executive positions in the administration nor in positions of political responsibility. For this reason, it is necessary to analyze the trajectory of women who leap to politics: whether they come from social movements, how many years they remain in politics, whether they try repeatedly in electoral processes, whether they pass from the local, to the regional, and then to the state level, and whether their families support them or, on the contrary, if the personal cost is very high, etc.

Due to their particular proximity to the citizens' daily reality, local governments are the arena where women that hold positions of responsibility and political leadership can be considered as political elites, because they are pioneers in a predominantly male world, but also because of the position of power and influence that they hold which in turn reverts to political actions.

Offering support and endorsing the leadership of women candidates, office-holders or leaders

of non-governmental or social structures or organizations is a priority for UN Women. There is a great demand for training, with many possibilities in the form of South-South cooperation. It is fundamental to systematize the methodologies, activities, programs and engagement of institutions to provide them with a strategic and integrated direction, as well as to achieve the necessary continuity and sustainability.

Most of the demand concerns training for public policy management, gender-sensitive planning and budgeting, and public speaking. Undoubtedly, one of the most necessary skills in politics is discursive capacity. The lack of assertiveness and experience in public speaking complicates women's participation. In addition, the use of aggressive discourse, more characteristic of men, tends to be more common.

It is equally relevant that women's leadership be able to deliver a "transformative" outlook on power and leadership (as opposed to traditional leadership that replicates male-dominant models) that breaks free from the patriarchal dynamics and promotes gender equality, inclusion and women's empowerment.

## **ii. Strengthening women's caucuses and women politician networks**

In many countries in the region, women have joined forces to influence their parliaments and governments through the formation of caucuses of women parliamentarians. Their dynamism, status or level of formalization, functions and influential capacity are very diverse.

In general terms, their main commitments include: giving visibility to elected women and underlining the importance of attaining a "critical mass" to make changes; raising awareness among elected women about the achievements and challenges of the gender equality agenda; promoting a greater representation of women; as well as promoting gender mainstreaming in parliaments and legislative proposals.

These are very useful mechanisms to overcome partisan and ideological barriers and to reach consensus among women in favor of causes that transcend such partisan differences. Moreover, they provide excellent opportunities to mobilize

political will among distinct political groups, as well as with civil society.

Likewise, networks have been formed for the defense and coordination of alliances between women at the local level. The largest international organization of local governments in the world, United Cities and Local Governments, linked to the United Nations, has the objective, among others, to increase women's participation in representative bodies for local policy. It has endorsed the Worldwide Declaration on Women in Local Governments and the programs relating to women in local decision-making.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, the creation of associations and networks of "municipalist" women in various countries has given great public visibility to local women authorities.<sup>79</sup>

Indigenous women leaders, on the other hand, have organized themselves through various networks. Thus, the Continental Network of Indigenous Women of the Americas (ECMIA) assembles indigenous organizations of the three Americas and, since 1995, promotes the participation and visibility of women and indigenous youth as main actors in the defense and full enjoyment of their rights. "These women – as noted in the UNDP diagnosis<sup>80</sup> – defend an ideal community as a harmonious, complementary, representative and inclusive structure which denotes the diverse experience of indigenous women's participation and determines the obstacles and disadvantages they must face because of their ethnicity, social marginalization, cultural limits and widespread poverty. This condition, both shared and different, has led to the rise of representation and leadership experiences of indigenous women that bring into question women's movements as well as organizations and platforms of indigenous peoples. In this framework, the female indigenous population's experience of citizenship constitutes a fundamental contribution to the construction of more inclusive societies in the region; meanwhile, their individual trajectories, their diverse local expressions and the contexts in which they have developed remain relatively

*unknown inside and outside the respective borders of each country."*

Rural women have articulated their political agenda through the Network of Rural Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, RED LAC, with the objective of facilitating empowerment, organization and political advocacy processes. Their proposals center on the following priority areas: land, production and labor, water, violence, rights and participation, communication and ICT in rural areas.

Women with some type of disability can turn to advocacy associations for different groups of women with disabilities and issues related to the international Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The Regional Group for the Panama Declaration was established following the Regional Seminar on "The role of women, adolescents and girls with disability: the exercise of rights and inclusion in social development", celebrated in Panama City, on December 4 and 5, 2013

### **iii. Strengthening the advocacy role of women's movements**

- » *Women's movements have been a key driving force in refuting stereotypes and prejudice against women.*
- » *Their advocacy role is key in achieving sustainable advances in the region's gender agenda.*

Despite the countries' heterogeneity and the existing social and cultural differences in the region, "there are common elements that have influenced citizens' lives: a historic and cultural matrix of Western and Christian origin that imposes limits on women; precarious political institutions with discriminatory and exclusive elites; States with patronizing tendencies towards women".<sup>81</sup> This has all contributed to the rise of a booming feminist movement in the region that fights for change with great determination. In the words of Latin American feminism experts, "to understand the

<sup>79</sup> For a list of these networks, see the previous chapter.

<sup>80</sup> Diagnosis of indigenous women's political participation and leadership in Latin America. Bolivia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Peru. State of the matter. UNDP (2010).

<sup>81</sup> Women's citizenship in the democracies of the Americas". OAS/CIM publication with the support of IDEA International and UN Women (2013)



Meeting of women for parity in Uruguay. Photo: Cotidiano Mujer.



National Summit of Women Elected in Colombia organized by the Ministry of the Interior, UNDP, UN Women, International Cooperation Gender Group, NDI and IDEA International. Photo: UN Women.

*contributions of feminism to the contents of democracy and citizenship, it is necessary to stand on the horizon of modernity, whose ideas of freedom, equality and solidarity nurtured those concepts”.*<sup>82</sup>

In the regional process that has led to the current balance on political participation, the feminist movement has been instrumental; the different movements have contributed a variety of standpoints and have helped forge women's leaderships and render them visible in various countries.

Indeed, feminist movements in the region have been the key driving force to refute conventionalisms that defined the rigid limits that separate the private and public spheres, incorporating into the public debate notions such as family, sexuality, reproductive freedom, structures of political participation, economic rights, civil liberties, etc. These movements have played and continue to play a determining role in advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women in all dimensions of their lives. Their political advocacy is of enormous relevance to push forward legislative and public policy reforms with a gender perspective and to develop the governments' commitments on the rights of women.

On the other hand, women's organizations can also play an important role in encouraging the female vote in favor of women, by integrating in their lobbying and awareness-raising work the relationship between women's political empowerment and political trust towards women who are active in politics.

The constitution of the Civil Society Advisory Group for Latin America and the Caribbean is a reflection of the importance UN Women attaches to that collaboration with civil society.

UN Women supports these movements by facilitating a dialogue with the public authorities, strengthening their capacities or supporting their work to disseminate knowledge and awareness on gender issues. At a time when development assistance to the region has diminished, it is fundamental to support these movements so they may be able to

contribute to political debate with their capacity for political advocacy and their experience.

#### **iv. Promoting young women's inclusion and participation in politics**

Of the more than six hundred million people currently living in Latin America and the Caribbean, approximately 26% are young people between the ages of 15 and 29. This is precisely why investing in youth is fundamental, since it represents a unique opportunity for the region's present and future development and democratic governance.

The main challenges affecting the comprehensive development of the region's youth include: the lack of income, the social inequalities (poverty incidence affects 25% of youth), the difficulties in accessing decent employment (approximately twenty million young people in Latin America don't work nor study, the so-called "NEET" generation: 54% are women and 46% are men), the educational deficit, gender discrimination, insecurity and vulnerability to natural disasters.<sup>83</sup>

In the face of this outlook, it is not surprising that young men and women distrust the institutions and have a mixed perception of the opportunities to influence public policy. They have nonetheless a high level of motivation to participate in community affairs; for example, through the use of social media or awareness campaigns in areas of interest such as human rights, environmental protection, transparency, etc. often outside the formal and/or traditional channels.<sup>84</sup>

Young women face double and cross-sector discrimination based on their age and sex. They are more likely to be raped or sexually abused during childhood. Additionally, they are over-represented in the "hidden" economy of care services, assuming traditional and unpaid (and often undervalued) jobs as caregivers. In other words, young women are often considered to be worth less than (young) men. Such a combination of problems, which includes cultural, economic, social, religious, ethnic and racial factors, results in a situation of vulnerability

<sup>82</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>83</sup> UNDP report "Exploring the dynamics of youth's political participation in local governance in Latin America", July 2013. .

<sup>84</sup> Ibidem. Survey results from the UNDP study.

that harms young women and reduces eventual development possibilities for society as a whole<sup>85</sup>. Thus, the fact that Latin America and the Caribbean is the only region in the world where the adolescent fertility rate augmented in the past thirty years is of enormous concern.

Several useful conclusions can be drawn from the UNDP study to identify strategies that promote young people's participation: local contexts constitute spaces of emerging participation that should be encouraged; the participation of young people occurs through non-traditional participation models and through collective more than individual work, which entails difficulties in clarifying their demands and influencing the political agenda; women's leadership has great potential as an agent of change at the local level; transparency and accountability of public authorities attract young people, and vice versa.

UN Women supports the active participation of young women in political parties or akin organizations, in networks and non-governmental organizations that promote gender equality, and the development of their leadership and political lobbying skills, promoting public policies directed at youth and supporting dialogue. In the framework of the implementation of the Global Action Plan for Youth in Latin America and the Caribbean (2013-2016), created by the UNDG-LAC Interagency Group on Youth, in which UN Women participates, the political inclusion of young people is addressed in the process of political decision-making at the local, national, regional and international levels.

#### **3.4.4. Promoting political parties that favor substantive equality between men and women**

» *Political parties have an enormous responsibility in the area of equal opportunities.*

» *Political parties must integrate a gender perspective in their organizational, electoral and programmatic dimensions.*

##### **i. Political parties and parity democracy**

Political parties are key political organizations for democratic stability. They are necessary instruments for mediation between society and the echelons of power. In addition, they articulate political proposals that will be developed by representatives elected by the citizens.

Political parties have an enormous responsibility in the area of equal opportunities. In general terms, the trajectory of individuals wishing to access positions through public elections is developed in the political parties. The opportunity to foster equal empowerment of men and women in the organization and executive structures of these formations is in the hands of political parties. They can promote a greater participation of women in decision-making, broadening the processes of internal democracy in a way that allows programs to be the result of proposals and decisions made by men and women on equal terms.

Despite the lack of reliable and structured data on women's participation in political parties, we can affirm that the "bottle neck" that prevents the election of a greater number of women to public office lies precisely in political parties.<sup>86</sup> There is very little opening to the promotion of female leadership in political parties in the region, which is reflected in their internal structures at all levels and in political life in general.

The greatest difficulty in putting together intervention strategies to promote women's participation and gender equality in political parties often transcends gender issues. There are many diverse political formations: some encourage participation and access to leadership positions for those who can better reflect and represent the desires and needs of society, based on the candidate's merit and skills,

<sup>85</sup> Concept note from the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Forum (LAC): "Young women, leadership and governance. Sharing experiences at the global level", organized in Panama by UN WOMEN, UNFPA and UNDP (November 2012).

<sup>86</sup> "Political Parties and Parity: The Pending Equation". Study by the IDB and IDEA International that collected information from the ninety-four most important political parties in Latin America and that additionally conducted surveys to their leaders (2010).

while other formations are more sectarian and based on relations of friendship and patronage. There are as many possible combinations as there are political parties in between the two ends of the spectrum.

In the Quito Consensus, governments agreed to develop permanent policies so that “political parties integrate a gender approach in their contents, actions and statutes, as well as equal participation, empowerment and leadership to attain gender parity as a State policy.” In addition, political parties have adopted diverse strategies to promote the equal participation of women.

The conclusion should lead us to prioritize our efforts on these formations, however, this is not the case. For the efforts of UN Women and other allies to be sustainable in the field of women’s political empowerment, it is necessary to address gender mainstreaming with the political parties, tying it in with the concept of parity and inclusive democracy, and the entire political culture reform that responds to the principles of transparency and accountability.

## ii. Encouraging parties to integrate a gender perspective

Some authors such as Norris and Lovenduski have classified three types of strategies in use by political parties to address their commitment to gender equality: rhetorical (through declarations, speeches or resolutions); positive action (promoting the use of incentives such as training, funding and the creation of gender mechanisms); and positive discrimination (quotas for internal structures or for lists to elective offices).<sup>87</sup>

To attain advances in women’s political participation, it is fundamental that political parties integrate the gender perspective in all dimensions – organizational, electoral and programmatic. Therefore, political party reform proposals should be presented in these three areas:<sup>88</sup>

- a. Organizational dimension: undertake organizational reforms that include women in positions of leadership in the executive structures of the party at all levels; incorporate recruitment methods that promote women’s political participation; dedicate budget allocations for the promotion of women and the creation of gender platforms within the party that promote women’s representation and participation and that attend to women’s political needs; develop activities aimed towards the promotion of women’s political participation; promote an increase in the participation of women with political experience in senior level government positions;
- b. Electoral dimension: eradicate restrictions to women’s political participation, including voting restrictions; promote political safety for women in the face of physical, media and public threats and invest in training and support for women to confront such threats and attacks; promote temporary affirmative action measures and quotas that guarantee parity between women and men candidates and in public office at all election levels; prioritize financial support for women candidates; include women in territories where there may be a women deficit;
- c. Programmatic dimension: undertake reforms in the statutes and resolutions that promote women’s political participation and empowerment; design political programs sensitive to gender equality that can be replicated later in governmental programs of both male and female candidates.

Not all countries in the region have strong party systems. Some give more importance to the candidates rather than to the parties’ structures.

<sup>87</sup> Lovenduski and Norris, editors: “Gender and Party Politics”. London, Sage Publishers, 1993.

<sup>88</sup> On these reform proposals for political parties, see the conclusions of the Forum “Win with Women: Strengthen Political Parties”, organized by the NDI, National Democratic Institute (2002), as well as the project “Gender equality ranking in political parties” implemented in Colombia by the UNDP, IDEA and the Netherlands, with the support from UN Women (2013).

Therefore, the work with parties should be adapted to each context. On the other hand, the transformation and mobilization potential of international structures of like-minded political parties from various countries, may prove very useful.

UN Women works with all political parties, without distinction of ideology, to promote women's political participation and the inclusion of a gender perspective.

### **3.4.5. Fighting discrimination, sexist stereotypes and political violence**

Persisting difficulties that keep women from leading and participating in decision-making are rooted in a historical background that has separated public and private spaces and has traditionally divided the productive and reproductive activities, assigning men and women certain responsibilities, resources and opportunities to develop a destiny that was predetermined.

Thus, sexism, stereotypes and gender prejudice are referred to as a structured set of shared beliefs and myths in our cultures about the attributes that men and women should possess and that determine different characteristics and behaviors. This is how the sexist, macho and patriarchal way of thinking prescribes that the masculine should be linked with strength, power and supremacy, while the feminine values would be submission, weakness, caring for others and sensibility.

In order to understand how, despite the normative advances, measures and resources directed at preventing and fighting gender inequality we are still witnessing dramatic incidents and inhumane treatment for reasons of gender *"it is fundamental to know and transform the ideas, the mentality and the culture"*.<sup>89</sup>

The deconstruction<sup>90</sup> of this mindset that permeates gender relations constitutes a primary strategic objective. The promotion of women's political participation requires actions of awareness, directed at eradicating these myths and thereby putting an

end to discrimination, harassment and violence against women, accompanied by prevention measures and access to justice in the framework of a holistic strategy. Society as a whole, from the individual to the collective, must have ownership over all the changes.

#### **i. Foster Media sensitiveness to gender equality**

» *Sexist and discriminatory culture against women who participate in politics is reflected daily in the media*

The media are the main source of political information for citizens in Latin America. According to the Latinobarómetro (2009), 84% of citizens are informed through television, 55% through radio and 37% through print media.

This circumstance, in addition to the media's role and their significance in the political, social and economic life of every society, renders essential the integration by the media of a gender perspective in their content, policies and structures. In fact, if that were the case, and given their impact on society, they could become true drivers of change in the sexist and discriminatory culture against women. It would be extremely positive if the media reflected news about successful women leaders in every sphere, and if news dissemination helped promote an image of empowered women citizens as role models.

However, not only are media not leading this change process, but instead, they are often reinforcing the sexist stereotypes and culture that perpetuates gender inequality in our societies.

Media coverage of electoral campaigns is particularly troubling. It should preserve pluralism in information to allow the public to ascertain all the political options, candidatures and proposals. In order to do so, it is essential that all candidates have access to the media on equal conditions and without any type of discrimination, a sine qua non condition of free and substantively democratic elections.<sup>91</sup>

<sup>89</sup> Deliberation by sociologists Inés Alberdi, who would later become Director of UNIFEM, during the summer course of El Escorial, Universidad Complutense, 2007.

<sup>90</sup> We use the term employed in "Women's citizenship in the democracies of the Americas". CIM/OAS and IDEA, 2013.

<sup>91</sup> "Election Coverage from a Gender Perspective. A Media Monitoring Manual". UN Women and IDEA International (2011).

Research by UN Women and IDEA International<sup>92</sup> confirms that there is a lack of equal access for women candidates to the media in different electoral contexts. It is reflected daily in the content of messages, in the reduced space/time devoted to women candidates or in the information produced about them. If *“to have fair elections it is important that all candidates have equal access opportunities to the media to convey their political options”*<sup>93</sup>, fostering a culture of gender equality in the media is a priority to achieve progress in women’s political participation.

On the other hand, modern technology, including the use of email, blogs and all types of online social communication platforms has created new opportunities for women to exercise their freedom of expression and to communicate their perspectives, opinions and priorities. However, it has also created spaces through which abusive messages against women can circulate, and in particular, against women in political or elected office. Women who use twitter, for example, can be the object of serious attempts against their dignity<sup>94</sup>.

A priority for UN Women is to make the media responsible for their own gender equality awareness and dissemination activities, which is why it has produced studies and tools on gender and media monitoring in the region.

## ii. Fighting violence and political harassment directed against women

- » *Violence against women in politics aims precisely at nullifying them as citizens with full political rights capable of participating actively in decision-making.*
- » *Political parties and public authorities must take responsibility for recognizing, legislating and sanctioning this felony.*
- » *Bolivia was the first country to sanction this phenomenon through a specific law.*

Violence against women and girls is both an extreme manifestation of gender inequality and discrimination and a tool, at times deadly, to keep women in a state of subordination. In Latin America and the Caribbean, 47% of women have been victims of sexual violence at some point in their lives.<sup>95</sup> In the political sphere, women also suffer harassment and violence based on gender.

The Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (Convention of Belém do Pará), of 1994, was a milestone in the region to politically visualize the gravity of a social problem. In relation to politics, in its article 4, it states that *“every woman has (j) the right to equal access to the public service of her country and to take part in the conduct of public affairs, including decision-making”*. In its article 5, it recognized that women can exercise their civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights and that the States recognize that violence against women prevents and nullifies the exercise of these rights.

Violence against women in politics seeks to precisely nullify them as citizens with full rights capable of participating actively in decision-making. Without safety there is no freedom, without freedom, women are not on equal conditions to access and participate in politics.

The traditional dichotomy that divides the public/masculine and the private/feminine is even more patent in this field. And it is precisely through a greater participation of women in politics thereby empowering the woman citizen that progress can be made to end this discrimination.

In light of the above, it is imperative that political parties no longer put off recognizing harassment and sexual violence suffered by women for reasons of gender. Likewise, public authorities cannot defer legislating and sanctioning this crime which must be rejected and punished with the goal of eradicating any attempt against democratic governance.

Discrimination, harassment or violence against women in politics can take several forms. From

<sup>92</sup> “Unseeing Eyes: Media Coverage and Gender in Latin American Elections”, by IDEA and UN Women (2012)

<sup>93</sup> Guy Goodwin-Gil: “Free and fair elections”, new and expanded edition. Inter-Parliamentary Union (2007)

<sup>94</sup> E-discussion of the iKNOW politics Network, 2014. [http://iknowpolitics.org/en/discuss\\_circles/e-discussion-online-harassment-women-politics-how-online-harassment-](http://iknowpolitics.org/en/discuss_circles/e-discussion-online-harassment-women-politics-how-online-harassment-)

<sup>95</sup> UNDP Human Development Report for Central America, 2009. 2010.



exerting pressure or harassment to force them into resignation (which is happening at the local level), acts of sexual, physical or psychological violence, as well as abuse of authority, to even more subtle ways, such as keeping them from taking up office, sexual discrimination, slander, libel, etc.

In the region, despite the implementation of quotas and affirmative action measures for the inclusion of women in the echelons of power, situations of violence and political harassment persist and are part of the obstacles to their free participation in decision-making processes, whether as authorities or leaders in the public sphere.

In 2012, the promulgation in Bolivia of ‘Law 243 against gender-based political harassment and violence’ represented a turning point in the region’s normative progress. Bolivia is the first country to sanction this phenomenon by law. Several bill proposals are currently under examination in other countries. Law 243 has the objective of protecting, defending and guaranteeing the exercise of political rights by women candidates, elected and appointed women officials currently in office, as well as to provide legal security and establish sanctions that correspond to individual or collective behaviors of political harassment and violence. It is applicable to women candidates, appointed and elected women officials by popular and democratic vote at the national, regional and municipal levels, who are subject to acts that prevent or restrict their full exercise of their political rights.

UN Women provides technical assistance to support the drafting of legislation against political harassment, as was done in Bolivia. Likewise, in order to eradicate these practices, together with political institutions, associations and women’s movements, it seeks to provide information on political rights, guidance, support and protection for victims of harassment and violence. In addition, it supports training and awareness initiatives for the judicial sector, attorneys and lawyers, without whose cooperation the legislation is unlikely to be effective.

### 3.5. Regional action plan for women’s political empowerment

This Guide for the “*Political Empowerment of Women: Framework for Strategic Action*” in Latin America and the Caribbean (2014-2017) is aligned with UN Women’s Global Strategic Plan (2014-2017). In its integrated results framework, it incorporates development results to achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness. The Global Strategic Plan identifies six global impacts:

- 1. Women lead and participate in decision-making at all levels;**
2. Women, especially the poorest and most excluded, are economically empowered and benefit from development;
3. Women and girls live a life free of violence;
4. Peace and security and humanitarian action are shaped by women’s leadership and participation;
- 5. Governance and national planning fully reflect accountability for gender equality commitments and priorities;**
- 6. A comprehensive set of global norms, policies and standards on gender equality and women’s empowerment is in place that is dynamic, responds to new and emerging issues, challenges and opportunities and is applied through action by Governments and other stakeholders at all levels.**

The six impacts are interrelated. None can be achieved in an isolated way; they are not airtight compartments, on the contrary, they are interdependent, which is why the results achieved in one area will have effects on the rest. This interdependence is manifest in the three fundamental areas for the exercise of women’s

rights: a life free of violence, in which women feel safe and free; the capacity to choose, which entails the expansion of resources and opportunities conducive to women's economic autonomy; and the power to influence and decide, the capacity of women to take decisions in all areas of their lives, both public and private.

The framework for strategic action addresses impact 1 specifically, although it is also directly related to the strategic impacts 5 and 6.

Impact 5, **"Governance and national planning fully reflect accountability for gender equality commitments and priorities,"** requires efforts to:

- Achieve a greater political participation of women with a direct effect on the design of gender-sensitive public policies and budgets;
- Strengthen women's institutions and movements to provide them with advocating capacity to monitor and promote gender-sensitive public policies and budgets;
- Reinforce dialogue between public authorities and civil society movements to promote gender-sensitive public policies and budgets.

Impact 6, **"A comprehensive set of global norms, policies and standards on gender equality and women's empowerment is in place that is dynamic, responds to new and emerging issues, challenges and opportunities and is applied through action by Governments and other stakeholders at all levels,"** requires efforts to:

- Strengthen the capacity of governments and other actors to analyze progress in

the implementation of international and regional commitments;

- Reinforce inter-institutional dialogue;
- Expand knowledge and generate dialogue on gender equality in intergovernmental processes;
- Strengthen civil society movements so they have greater incidence in the normative and policy framework of gender equality.

UN Women seeks to achieve sustainability of its results through their appropriation by the public institutions and civil society of each country. The framework for regional strategic action aims to launch inclusive processes for all of society, men and women, youth and adults, public and private institutions, as well as strategic partners. And, of course, it is particularly important to include in this process women in the most vulnerable situation, with less resources, particularly in the rural context, indigenous women and women of African descent, and to identify concrete actions that favor this inclusion.

In order to do so, the framework proposes to create products and actions with a comprehensive vision, in the medium/long term, that strengthen women's role as decision makers for development in all economic, political, social and cultural dimensions.

We present the Regional Action Plan for the Political Empowerment of Women, taking into consideration the normative, political and historical context of Latin America and the Caribbean. The aforementioned Plan is aligned with the results programmed in the Global Strategic Plan and the five regional strategic objectives. Alliances with counterparts and partners in the countries and/or at the regional level are proposed to achieve its implementation.

# The Regional Action Plan for the Political Empowerment of Women

## OUTCOME 1

### CONSTITUTIONAL OR LEGISLATIVE REFORMS THAT STRENGTHEN WOMEN'S RIGHTS TO POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Contribute to legislative or constitutional reforms, as well as other measures and policies that expand women's rights to participate in decision-making bodies (governments, agencies, parliaments, political parties) at all levels (state/federal, sub-national, local).

OUTPUTS	ACTIONS	REGIONAL STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES
1.1 Capacities strengthened in the countries to undertake constitutional, legislative or political reforms.	Technical and political guidance in proposals for constitutional, legislative or electoral policy reforms, affirmative action measures, actions against harassment and violence, and other proposals that promote women's political rights.	Promote parity representation: affirmative action measures.
	Guidance to promote regional positioning in intergovernmental processes (CSW, Post-2015, Beijing +20).	Political parties that promote substantive equality.
	Strengthen spaces for inter-institutional dialogue to promote legislative harmonization of human rights instruments and intergovernmental commitments.	Fight against discrimination, stereotypes and political violence.
	Promote the implementation of recommendations on political participation based on General Assembly and Security Council resolutions on Women, Peace and Security. <sup>96</sup>	
1.2 Statistical data has been produced that offers reliable information disaggregated by sex, that promotes policies with a gender perspective, and that helps promote advances in women's political participation.	Promote the design and use of indicators on political participation among governments, regional and sub-regional bodies, as well as the development of indicators on political participation approved by the United Nations Group on Gender Statistics. <sup>97</sup>	Integrate the gender perspective in policies, actions and institutions.
	Formulation and implementation of a regional monitoring system on political participation in 19 countries, in Latin America, Dominican Republic and Haiti (which includes: information based on indicators; analysis; communication; and action). <sup>98</sup>	
1.3 National and regional institutions have improved access to knowledge and tools that allow them to design and develop policies with a gender perspective that promote women's participation in decision-making areas.	Draft country reports <sup>99</sup> about the political and legal framework with data on women's political participation in the Legislative and the Executive at all levels, political parties, the judiciary, women's networks, etc., that facilitate decision-making on reforms to promote women's political participation.	Promote parity representation: affirmative action measures.
	Generate research, studies, debates and tools to promote the efficiency of affirmative action measures and electoral systems, the prevention and eradication of harassment and violence against women in politics and women's leadership.	Integrate the gender perspective in policies, actions and institutions.
	Create an inventory of tools and documents for dissemination about women's political rights and political participation in the region.	Strengthen women's leaderships.

<sup>96</sup> In coordination with the Regional Specialist on Peace and Security.

<sup>97</sup> In coordination with the Regional Specialist on Gender Statistics.

<sup>98</sup> Joint Project of UN Women, UNDP and IDEA International.

<sup>99</sup> Prioritizing countries where UN Women is present through a country or program office.

## OUTCOME 2

### MEASURES AND POLICIES WITH A GENDER PERSPECTIVE THAT PROMOTE WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Contribute to ensure that policies, measures, mechanisms and instruments with a gender perspective in the different decision-making bodies (governments, agencies, parliaments, political parties) promote women's leadership and political participation at all levels (state/federal, sub-national, local).

OUTPUTS	ACTIONS	REGIONAL STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES
<p>2.1 Capacities strengthened in parliaments and other public institutions to adopt measures, resolutions, legislation and procedures that promote gender equality and women's empowerment.<sup>100</sup></p>	<p>Generate a critical mass of women through the creation and/or strengthening of women caucuses to promote women's rights, gender equality policies and to plan strategies for women's empowerment and leadership. Extend good practices.</p>	<p>Promote parity representation: affirmative action measures.</p>
	<p>Promote gender-sensitive institutions and, in particular, parliaments (creation/strengthening of gender units, gender equality commissions, mainstreaming).</p>	<p>Integrate the gender perspective in policies, actions and institutions.</p>
	<p>Promote the creation and/or strengthening of women mechanisms in governments, parliaments and electoral management bodies.</p>	<p>Strengthen women's leaderships.</p>
	<p>Technical assistance and training for legislators and public officials (ministries, parliament, judiciary, electoral commission, armed forces, police, etc.) on women's political rights and the planning of public policies and budgets that reflect the commitments and priorities of a gender perspective.</p>	
<p>2.2 Capacities strengthened in countries to promote women's participation in electoral processes, both as voters and as candidates.</p>	<p>Support the creation of tools, studies and publications to identify and overcome institutional, political, cultural and economic obstacles that women face in the access and/or permanence in decision-making positions.</p>	<p>Promote parity representation: affirmative action measures.</p>
	<p>Technical assistance to ensure the recognition and protection of women's political rights, awareness, information and capacity building that contributes to ensure women obtain the necessary documentation to exercise their political rights.<sup>101</sup></p>	<p>Integrate the gender perspective in policies, actions and institutions.</p>
	<p>Promote knowledge exchange and comprehensive training for male and female electoral magistrates to achieve compliance with electoral legislation that guarantees women's political participation.</p>	<p>Strengthen women's leaderships.</p>
	<p>Promote a comprehensive regional training plan for women political leaders (assertiveness, public speaking, management and public policy) that contributes to reinforce women's transformative leaderships in politics,<sup>102</sup> including a specific plan for indigenous women leaders.</p>	

<sup>100</sup> In coordination with Regional Advisors on Economic Empowerment and Violence, as applicable.

<sup>101</sup> Prioritizing rural areas and, in particular, indigenous populations and populations of African descent.

<sup>102</sup> En coordinación del Centro global de formación (República Dominicana) y mediante mecanismos de cooperación sur-sur. Así mismo, en coordinación con la Especialista en poblaciones indígenas, género y multiculturalismo.

## OUTCOME 2

### MEASURES AND POLICIES WITH A GENDER PERSPECTIVE THAT PROMOTE WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Contribute to ensure that policies, measures, mechanisms and instruments with a gender perspective in the different decision-making bodies (governments, agencies, parliaments, political parties) promote women's leadership and political participation at all levels (state/federal, sub-national, local).

OUTPUTS	ACTIONS	REGIONAL STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES
<p>2.3. Coordination of the United Nations system is achieved through the adoption and implementation of guides and policies on temporary measures, quotas, parity and electoral support that promote women's leadership and political participation.</p>	<p>Promote strategic associations and coordination with UN agencies, programs and funds, as well as with interagency groups at the regional and country level, coordinating proposals and actions directed at promoting women's political rights and women's empowerment, and supporting the UNCT in the formulation and implementation of the UNDAF.</p>	<p>Promote parity representation: affirmative action measures.</p> <p>Integrate the gender perspective in policies, actions and institutions.</p> <p>Strengthen women's leaderships.</p> <p>Political parties that promote substantive equality.</p>
<p>2.4 Influence exerted on media and public opinion to become gender-sensitive, to avoid discrimination and to promote women's leadership and participation in politics.</p>	<p>Promote research on media behavior in relation to women candidates and elected officials, and create tools to fight discrimination and promote gender equality in the media.</p> <p>Promote that workshops on "Media, women and politics" are convened both at country and regional levels with the aim to drive forward a regional plan and recommendations to foster a gender sensitive culture in the media.</p>	<p>Fight discrimination, stereotypes and political violence.</p>
<p>2.5 Capacities of regional organizations in Latin America and the Caribbean are reinforced to adopt resolutions with commitments and goals that include TSMs or quotas to promote women's participation in decision-making bodies at all levels.</p>	<p>Technical assistance to encourage normative progress and commitments to promote women's political rights through debates and resolution proposals, normative framework proposals, as well as to produce knowledge, dialogue and regional common positions in intergovernmental processes (CSW, Post-2015, Beijing +20).</p> <p>Adoption/implementation of agreements and action plans with regional and sub-regional organizations to promote cooperation and partnerships, reinforcing the commitment and capacities of such organizations.</p>	<p>Promote parity representation: affirmative action measures.</p> <p>Integrate the gender perspective in policies, actions and institutions.</p> <p>Strengthen women's leaderships.</p>

## OUTCOME 3

### STRENGTHEN POLITICAL ADVOCACY MECHANISMS TO PROMOTE WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP

Contribute to increase the capacity of women's movements and/or experts, activists in civil society organizations, in political parties, universities, etc. that work for gender equality, to advocate for the adoption of normative frameworks and policies that increase women's participation and leadership.

OUTPUTS	ACTIONS	REGIONAL STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES
<p>3.1 The advocacy capacity of non-governmental movements in favor of gender equality has been strengthened to promote women's leadership and political participation, gender-sensitive public policies and budgets, and to promote the implementation of intergovernmental commitments.</p>	<p>Strengthening of and coordination with civil society organizations, activists and experts to reinforce their capacity to advocate for gender equality and women's political rights in the normative and policy framework, as well as on planning gender-sensitive public policies.</p> <p>Generate interactive tools about positive and negative experiences of women in politics to be able to recover the memory of women leaders who stand out for their work on women's rights in the region, with the aim to raise the visibility of the role of women, projecting a collective and positive image of women.</p> <p>Formulate a comprehensive training program aimed at reinforcing the leadership of women social leaders (particularly with respect to indigenous women).</p> <p>Support the regional interagency plan on youth with awareness-raising actions and training to promote the inclusion and participation of young women in politics and to facilitate the rapprochement of young women's priorities to governments.</p>	<p>Strengthen women's leaderships.</p> <p>Fight discrimination, stereotypes and political violence.</p>
<p>3.2 More spaces for interagency dialogue have been created that strengthen the advocacy efforts of movements and activists that promote gender equality to advance the agenda on women's political participation and leadership.</p>	<p>Strengthening and encouraging spaces for interagency dialogue between public powers, political parties and civil society movements that promote gender equality to advance the agenda on women's political participation and leadership. Sharing good practices across the region.</p>	<p>Strengthen women's leaderships.</p>
<p>3.3 Capacities of political parties to promote women's participation and leadership have been reinforced.</p>	<p>Technical assistance and sharing of good practices among political parties to promote a greater participation of women that includes: statutory reforms with affirmative measures and/or quotas, institutional culture with a gender perspective, recruitment and selection policies, and the promotion of transformative leaderships in the executive structures and executive organs.</p> <p>Promote political party mentoring programs for women, create transparent systems on gender policy, a focus on young women, an international dimension linking "like-minded" political parties in the region, debates on substantive equality and parity, awareness-raising campaigns.</p>	<p>Political parties that promote substantive equality.</p>



The President of Chile, Michelle Bachelet, arrives at the Palacio de la Moneda. Photo: Presidency of the Republic of Chile.



Collection of signatures for parity democracy in Uruguay, organized by Cotidiano Mujer, CIRE and CNS Mujeres, and supported by UN Women. Photo: Cotidiano Mujer.

# CONCLUSIONS

The pervasiveness of sexist roles and its manifestation through the sexual division of labor is founded in a form of social and cultural organization still based on a patriarchal model that originates and reproduces the subordination, oppression and/or exploitation of women by men. This explains the persistent dichotomy that attributes the public sphere to men and the domestic sphere, alongside care and family, to women. Thus, in the political sphere, access to high positions of political power by men and women continues to be manifestly unequal. Women's voices are not heard equally, nor do they have the same opportunities to influence decision-making.

The construction of substantive equality and parity cannot be limited exclusively to increasing the percentage of women's political representation; we must also promote a new social balance between men and women in which both assume shared responsibilities in all spheres, both public and private. In the Quito, Brasilia, Montevideo and Santo Domingo Consensus, the region of Latin America and the Caribbean has recognized representative parity as a democratic right that sustains equality between women and men.

This Guide seeks to contribute to the political empowerment of women in the region by offering a normative, conceptual and strategic analysis to address the parity challenge in a holistic way, so women may overcome the economic, social, cultural, political or institutional gaps that prevent their empowerment.

In order to do so, it is necessary now more than ever that governments in the region adopt a commitment in the long term, that they set in motion a comprehensive set of measures aimed at modifying behaviors that perpetuate discrimination and inequality in society, in the public and private sectors, and that they extend such commitment to all political parties, sectors and public authorities.

The document sheds light on the advances that countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have experienced in the last years so that women may exercise their political rights as citizens. However, an important imbalance persists in terms of opportunities and access to structures of power that generates inequality in the exercise of

those rights, and that joins the high rates of social inequality and other inequalities based on race, ethnic background, age, disability, HIV status or sexual orientation. In light of this, it is necessary to amplify women's voices so they may influence decision-making of public affairs, at all levels, for the good of society as a whole.

From the collected data and analysis herein, there is no doubt that the margin for progress is still very wide. We must redouble our efforts so that laws on quotas and other affirmative action measures produce a more satisfactory result towards parity, and to make certain that political parties take the lead in the transformations towards a new democratic culture based on parity throughout the region.

The challenges identified in this Guide to promote women's political participation in conditions of substantive equality with men demonstrate the need for a strategic and coordinated approach. The five strategic objectives require efforts in the long term and concerted action with counterparts and allies at the regional level and in each country.

With this diagnosis and strategic analysis of political participation in the region, UN Women reiterates its commitment to promote the political rights and empowerment of women. The comprehensive vision offered through this Guide to "Political Empowerment of Women" in Latin America and the Caribbean must contribute to the construction of a more balanced and just society, where gender is no longer a cause for inequality, exclusion or discrimination.



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# ACRONYMS:

ACOBOL: Asociación de concejalas de Bolivia (Association of Women Councillors of Bolivia)	ECLAC: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
AECID: Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo (Spanish Agency of International Cooperation for Development)	ECOSOC: United Nations Economic and Social Council
ALOP: Asociación Latinoamericana de organizaciones de promoción al desarrollo (Latin American Association of Organizations for Development)	EU: European Union
AMUME: Asociación de mujeres municipalistas del Ecuador (Association of Women Municipalists of Ecuador)	FDEFAM: Federación Latinoamericana de Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos (Latin American Federation of Families of Missing Detainees)
ANDRISAS: Asociación nacional de regidoras, sindicadas y alcaldesas salvadoreñas (National Association of Salvadorian Women Councillors, Representatives and Majors)	FEMICA: Federación de Municipios del Istmo Centroamericano (Federation of Municipalities of the Central American Isthmus)
CAAAMI: Consejo Andino Asesor de Altas Autoridades de la Mujer e Igualdad de Oportunidades (Andean Advisory Council of Senior Authorities on Women and Equal Opportunities)	FEMUM-ALC: Federación de Mujeres Municipalistas de América Latina y el Caribe (Federation of Municipalist Women of Latin America and the Caribbean)
CARICOM: The Caribbean Community	FIPA: Foro Interparlamentario de las Américas (Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas)
CEDAW: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence against Women	FLACSO: Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (Latin American School of Social Sciences)
CIM: Inter-American Commission for Women	GDP: Gross Domestic Product
CIWiL: The Caribbean Institute for Women in Leadership	ICPD: International Conference on Population and Development
COFIPE: Código Federal de Instituciones y Procedimientos Electorales (Federal Code of Electoral Institutions and Procedures)	ICTs: Information and communication technologies
COMMCA: Consejo de Ministras de la Mujer de Centroamérica (Council of Central American Ministers for Women Affairs)	IDB: Inter-American Development Bank
COPA: Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas	IDEA (International): Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
CSW: Commission on the Status of Women	iKNOW (Politics): International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics.
DECO: Department of Electoral Cooperation and Observation	INSTRAW: United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women
	IPU: Inter-Parliamentary Union
	IULA: International Union of Local Authorities
	LAC: Latin America and the Caribbean

LAMUGOL: Red Latinoamericana de Asociaciones de Mujeres Autoridades Electas de Gobiernos Locales (Latin American Network of Associations of Women Authorities Elected in Local Governments)

MERCOSUR: Southern Common Market

MDGs: Millennium Development Goals

NDI: National Democratic Institute

NEC: National Executive Committee

OAS: Organization of American States

OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

Parlacen: Parlamento Centroamericano (Central American Parliament)

Parlatino: Parlamento Latinoamericano (Latin American Parliament)

PROLEAD: Program for the Support of Women's Leadership and Representation

RED LAC: Red Latinoamericana y del Caribe de Mujeres Rurales (Latin American and Caribbean Network of Rural Women)

REMMA: Red Intergubernamental de Mecanismos Nacionales para el Adelanto de las Mujeres en la región andina (Intergovernmental Network of National Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women in the Andean Region)

SEGIB: Ibero-American General Secretariat

SGCAN: General Secretariat of the Andean Community

SICA: Central American Integration System

UNASUR: Union of South American Nations

UNDP: United Nations Development Program

UNFPA: United Nations Population Fund

UNIFEM: United Nations Development Fund for Women



Meeting of women for parity in Uruguay. Photo: Cotidiano Mujer.



From the left: Congresswoman Gloria Oquelí, President of the Congresswomen Group of the PARLACEN; Congresswoman Miriam Suazo, President of the Commission for Women, Childhood, Youth and Family of the PARLACEN; and Sofía Vásquez, Political Participation and Citizenship Coordinator for UN Women Guatemala, during a working session at UN Women Guatemala. Photo: UN Women.

# ANNEX: EXAMPLES OF UN WOMEN INTERVENTIONS IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

## i. Promoting parity representation: affirmative action measures

### MEXICO:

UN Women has forged alliances with INMUJERES, the electoral management bodies, political parties, civil society and the media since 2011, offering support to a broad program (SUMA initiative) to promote women's equal participation at all decision-making positions, and in particular, in elected office. Stemming from a broad effort in Mexico, the adoption of a constitutional amendment on parity was a great success.

In 2013, UN WOMEN published "Women's political participation in Mexico. Seventy years after the recognition of women's right to vote," which was the result of a pilot project jointly undertaken by IDEA International, UN WOMEN and UNDP to monitor the status of political participation. It was presented to various authorities in the framework of the 60th anniversary of women's right to vote, as a recognition of women's contribution to democracy and development in Mexico.

### GUATEMALA:

In 2012 and 2013, UN Women provided technical support to the Gender Commission in Congress to ensure that the legislative agenda incorporates advances on women's rights, in alignment with the international legal framework and in compliance with the Peace Accords and an agenda assembled with Garifuna, Mayan and Xinka women. The agenda includes proposals for representative parity and

rotation of women, men and indigenous people in elected office. When the amendments to the reform of electoral law and political parties were discussed in Congress in October 2013, UN Women organized jointly with the OAS/CIM, IDEA International and the UNDP a roundtable discussion on parity that mobilized key actors to influence the process.

### BOLIVIA, HONDURAS, NICARAGUA, EL SALVADOR, BELIZE AND HAITI:

In 2012 and 2013, in coordination with the UNDP and IDEA International, UN Women developed the workshop "BRIDGE" (Building Resources in Democracy Governance and Elections) on elections, with an emphasis on gender. Among participants were mostly magistrates and civil servants from electoral management tribunals and

representatives of political parties. The workshops were very effective mechanisms for building trust and fostering cooperation between the electoral courts and political parties, and they helped provide technical assistance and promote the creation and/or strengthening of gender units within the political parties and electoral tribunals.



## **ECUADOR:**

During the 2013 elections, UN Women supported the training program for women candidates developed by the NGOs CEDIME and REMPE, which was accompanied by a communication campaign with the slogan “I am from Ecuador and I want a woman to represent me”, disseminated through

print media, Youtube videos, radio spots and through a Facebook account that transmitted the idea that women and men of various professions, ages and ethnic groups support women candidates, champions of women’s human rights, as well as gender equality.

## **COLOMBIA:**

Throughout 2011 and 2012, UN Women developed legislative monitoring and advocacy actions that enabled it to provide technical support to the Women’s Caucus in the Congress of the Republic and to bring women’s organizations closer to the debate in order to be able to advocate on specific issues. A consultancy and advocacy strategy was consolidated in Law 1475 (2011) relating to

political reform, which includes a 30% participation quota for women in the candidate lists of political parties. In addition, UN Women accompanied the implementation of a political participation quota during an electoral period through the media publicity campaign “Democracy without women is incomplete”, whose purpose was to promote an increase in elected women.

## **DOMINICAN REPUBLIC:**

The UN Women Office in the Dominican Republic and the UN Women Global Training Center supported the research paper “Comparative study of the implementation of parity in local elections in Bolivia, Costa Rica and Ecuador”. The study outlines the quota development process for women’s participation in Bolivia, Costa Rica and Ecuador, the organizational and institutional agents that have been part of this process, the

resistance, the advances, the obstacles and the challenges. It presents a comparative analysis of the implementation of the principles of parity and rotation in local elections in these three countries. This study was developed in the framework of the second phase of the project “Strengthening governance with a gender perspective and women’s political participation at the local level”.

## **HONDURAS:**

In 2011 and 2012, together with the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, UN Women promoted spaces for dialogue and reflection between civil society, political parties and strategic units of the National Congress that promoted a reform of the Electoral Law and of Political Parties (LEOP), where several issues were discussed such as the need for convincing sanctions that go beyond economic sanctions, adequacy of an

increase in quotas, etc. During 2012, through great advocacy on the part of an organized civil society and the women and feminist movement, a reform was approved that establishes a 40% minimum quota for women’s participation with rotation in the lists of all political parties aspiring to elected office (progressive quota; a 50% was established for 2016).

## **HAITI:**

Together with the UNDP and MINUSTAR, UN Women promotes a program to support women’s participation and the inclusion of a gender perspective in the electoral cycle in Haiti, as part of the strategic objective of Haiti’s government and the

United Nations to support institutional reform in the country. In particular, a project is being conducted with the Electoral Tribunal to render it more gender-sensitive and to comply with the 30% quota for women.

## PARAGUAY:

Through the Women in Politics Fund, UN Women develops a diagnosis of the political and institutional context related to women's political participation and representation, as well as a Multiannual Program on issues of political participation, governance and democracy. The results of the Diagnosis and the Program will be discussed in a Multi-sector Roundtable discussion with the participation of key actors: representatives of Parliament, the Supreme Court of Electoral Justice, political parties, the National Mechanism for Women, women governors and local leaders, and civil society organizations that work on issues relating to women's leadership and social and political participation. In addition,

multilateral and bilateral cooperation actors will also participate. Besides validating the Diagnosis, the roundtable will review the Multiannual Program with the aim of visualizing the converging viewpoints of various organizations and encourage the definition of the Program as a multi-agency proposal. Moreover, the roundtable will become a work and consultation mechanism on the issue, in order to articulate political participation from the national level to the state and local levels. Together with the Diagnosis, several conceptual documents on democracy and women's citizenship in Paraguay are underway.

## ii. Gender mainstreaming in policies, actions and institutions

### DOMINICAN REPUBLIC:

Two publications supported by the UN Women office and the Global Training Center stand out in this field. "Experiences in the political life of Dominican women mayors, vice-mayors and councilors: election and reelection paths, achievements and challenges in municipal administration". The study offers a detailed outlook on the experiences of women in Dominican Republic in politics, particularly in the spheres of participation, representation, public administration and local governance. The document reveals the main strategies and paths that these women have implemented to access

and remain in decision-making positions in local governments. The study also highlights the role of public institutions and political parties, as well as the influence of family dynamics. The analysis pays heed to the voices and experiences of women that have occupied or sought to participate in formal exercises of political representation. This study was carried out in the framework of the second phase of the project "Strengthening governance with a gender perspective and women's political participation at the local level".

### COLOMBIA:

In 2011, 2012 and 2013, permanent assistance was provided to the Legal Commission on Gender Equity in the development of their political monitoring and advocacy role in draft legislation, such as Law 1448 (2011) on victims and land restitution, and Law 1450 of the National Development Plan. UN Women advocated for the approval of the design and implementation of a National Public Policy on Women. Likewise, a workshop was developed on "Inclusion of the gender perspective in the legislative agenda 2012-2013", directed at members of the Legislative Work Units of the Legal Commission for Gender Equity and the Women's Caucus in Congress, as well as assistants of allied congressmen who are key in processing the initiatives. The objective of the workshop was to provide conceptual and legal

elements, related to international standards as a reference point, to analyze the impact that some of the legislature's draft legislation can or may have on women's rights.

From 2011 to 2013, UN Women supported the drafting of a weekly legislative agenda that contained various draft legislation, political control debates or hearings in the Congress of the Republic and that would affect women's rights positively or negatively. This agenda was distributed among the Women's Caucus in Congress as well as their advisors, the social organizations of women, the members of the international cooperation gender commission and to civil servants of entities working for women's rights.

## **ARGENTINA:**

A Toolkit was developed for gender mainstreaming in Argentina's legislative powers. The toolkit is the

result of joint efforts by UNDP in Argentina, AECID, UN Women and the National Council of Women.

## **DOMINICAN REPUBLIC:**

UN Women develops action plans to enhance women parliamentarians' participation, as well as to achieve gender mainstreaming in the legislative agenda and favor the promotion of women's rights in the parliamentary administration. To this end, the Parliamentarian Group for Gender Equality and Women's Rights was conformed, which is currently in the stage of consolidation and activation. This Group has already approved a set of Rules, with the

technical assistance of UN Women and the UNDP. Currently, the work of the Technical Office of the National Congress is being subjected to qualification actions through technical assistance, with the aim of advocating for gender mainstreaming in the drafting of legislation. Moreover, a proposal for a training strategy is being developed with both women and men parliamentarians.

## **GUATEMALA:**

The launch of the project "Women's political empowerment in the department of Idzabal" was financed by the Fund for Gender Equality (FGE) and includes actions aimed at facilitating the procurement of national identity documents for

rural and indigenous women, so they may be able to exercise their political rights, vote and run for office, as well as actions to promote leadership through training and awareness-raising about their rights.

## **ARGENTINA, BOLIVIA, COLOMBIA, COSTA RICA, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, ECUADOR, EL SALVADOR, GUATEMALA, HONDURAS, MEXICO, NICARAGUA, PANAMA, PARAGUAY, PERU AND VENEZUELA:**

UN Women published the report "State of information systems: statistics from Latin American electoral bodies from a gender perspective," whose objective is to assess and evaluate, from a gender perspective, the state of statistical information systems of electoral management bodies in fifteen Latin American countries. The study is part of the framework of the project "Support to the strengthening of the Quito Consensus for Women's Empowerment", carried out by the program on Gender, Governance and Political Participation of the UN Women Training Center, located in Santo Domingo, with the support of AECID.

Previously, the Meeting of electoral specialists on women's political participation was celebrated in Santiago on January 2009, in which difficulties to access political information disaggregated by gender were observed and measures were suggested for promotion by the mechanisms for the advancement of women, the statistics institutions and the national electoral bodies. Thus, it indicated the need to push for changes to the electoral registry systems to allow for an adequate analysis of electoral behavior from a gender perspective.

## **LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN:**

UN Women supported the creation of ECLAC's Observatory for Gender Equality.

For the past two years, the UNDP, UN Women and IDEA International have been working together in the design of a regional project. ATENEA is the "Regional Monitoring System of Women's Political Participation" in Latin America, Dominican Republic and Haiti, that will provide a more comprehensive, permanent and comparative outlook of women's

political participation. It is based on four pillars: Information (through data collection based on a standardized proposal of indicators that, in addition to offering an outlook at the national level, helps inform the "Index on Political Parity"), Analysis, Communication and Action. In 2013, a pilot project was carried out in Mexico and, as of 2014, it will be developed in several countries with the newly consolidated tool.

## **BOLIVIA, ECUADOR, PERU AND COLOMBIA:**

In the cooperation framework of the Andean Community, UN Women provided technical assistance in the definition of six indicators that will favor the alignment of political participation

measurements with a gender perspective in Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru, as well as the implementation of public policies that promote equal opportunities.

## **iii. Strengthening women's leaderships**

### **ARGENTINA, BRAZIL, BOLIVIA, COLOMBIA, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, ECUADOR, EL SALVADOR, GUATEMALA, HAITI, HONDURAS, MEXICO, NICARAGUA, PARAGUAY, PERU AND URUGUAY:**

In all countries where UN Women is present, the creation and consolidation of women parliamentary caucuses and Gender Commissions is promoted or facilitated, with the objective of fostering political and interagency dialogue that

will promote the advancement of women's political rights. UN Women's mandate allows it to act as a bridge, providing technical assistance, creating synergies with other strategic allies and producing knowledge and training.

### **JAMAICA:**

Through the FGE<sup>103</sup>, several non-governmental organizations (headed by BWA and DRF) have launched a project that has made it possible to reinforce the leadership capacity of women in the

private and public spheres. The project was able to take advantage of the 50th anniversary of Jamaica's independence to commemorate historical women leaders of Jamaica.

### **COLOMBIA:**

Through the FGE, the organization OPIAC launched a project entitled "Towards the empowerment of indigenous women in the Amazon", spanning from

2013 to 2015, which has achieved the inclusion of indigenous women delegates in a Roundtable comprising all public powers.

### **DOMINICAN REPUBLIC:**

The UN Women Office and the global Training Center have developed an online training package (courses, tools and materials) about women's political participation at the local level, directed at a broad audience (UN Women and United Nations civil servants and other actors).

"Decentralization and Local Governments: new laws with a gender perspective in Central America and the Andean region". The study represents a sample of the advances in the region in terms of municipal decentralization laws and legislation for women's

empowerment that, together with local policies for gender equality and the provision of quality services for women, form part of the region's framework in favor of equality. In addition, it presents a collection of legislation that has produced advances in equality through public policy at the local level, as well as good practice that can contribute to reflection and the creation of other mechanisms conducive to gender equality. This study was carried out in the framework of the project "Strengthening governance with a gender perspective and women's political participation at the local level".

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<sup>103</sup> Fund for Gender Equality administered by UN Women.

## **HONDURAS:**

A training center for women candidates to a congressional seat was created, known as “Training academy for women candidates: women politicians, sowing more democracy, more equality”. Its objective consists in enhancing women’s political leadership and empowerment, as well as the quality of their proposals, to enable them to influence the country’s social and political processes, as well as

to increase the presence of women in campaigns and in Congress, leveraging the opportunities from the expansion of the female quota from 30% to 40% in candidate lists. This is a project of the National Institute for Women (INAM), the UNDP, IDEA, the National Democratic Institute (NDI), the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy and UN Women.

## **ECUADOR:**

In 2012, UN Women contributed to an increase in the participation of women, particularly indigenous women, women of African descent, young women and women of diverse sexual orientations, in the electoral process and the designation of authorities. Various projects were launched to that effect: “Design and application of a strategy for the positioning of women candidates and their rights agendas in

Ecuador’s political organizations”, conducted by the Institute of Ecuadorian Studies; “Insertion of women in the political arena and their leadership within political parties”, implemented by the organization Center for Development and Research on Social Movements of Ecuador – CEDIME and the Network of Women Politicians of Ecuador (REMPE).

## **URUGUAY:**

UN Women has launched the program “From Activists to Candidates”, a training workshop for women politicians, focused on the 2014 elections. The program addresses skills for negotiation, campaign planning, financing, analysis of public opinion and relations with the media. Through an

intensive training, the objective is to inform about the rationale of political parties and the media, and to offer tools to successfully handle situations with the media in order to convey a message to the public opinion in favor of a greater presence of women in decision-making areas.

## **MEXICO:**

Financed by the FGE, the NGO Equidad de Género (Gender Equality) launched the initiative “SUMA, Democracy is Equality”, implemented in twelve states of the Republic between 2010 and 2013. This initiative has formed a consortium of public and private actors, including UN Women. It has successfully fostered dialogue between multiple key actors and supported the leadership of Mexican

women politicians and women networks in politics. In addition, it has promoted joint commitments by political parties, conducted professional training and mentoring for women candidates, informed the public opinion about women’s political and economic rights and promoted accountability systems.

## **CHILE:**

UN Women has launched a cooperation program with the European Union (Delegation in Chile) for the period 2013-2015 that seeks to contribute to strengthening capabilities and advocacy mechanisms for Chilean civil society organizations, as well as to influence the legislative processes and the formulation and/or implementation of public

policies that promote gender equality and the empowerment of women. Its objective consists in making advances in the reduction of gender violence, the promotion of women’s access to economic empowerment opportunities and the increase in women’s leadership and political participation.

## **BRASIL:**

Financed by the FGE, several NGOs launched a broad and ambitious program known as “More rights and more power to women” (2010-13), with the objective of ensuring monitoring and implementation of the National Plan and Policies for Women, with special

attention to women of African descent. The program was the result of a coalition of feminist NGOs and the Department of Women Policies (SMP), as well as UN Women, whose intervention served as a bridge between institutions.

## **BOLIVIA:**

The ONG Asociación Coordinadora de la Mujer developed the program “Bolivian women in the process of change: a political framework with gender equality”, for the period 2011-2013, financed by the FGE. The program took advantage of the

political reform context in Bolivia to include a new legal formulation of gender equality. It employed an inclusive approach with a great diversity of women, indigenous women, women of African descent, rural women, businesswomen, etc.

## **BOLIVIA, ECUADOR, GUATEMALA, HONDURAS, PANAMA AND PERU:**

The Regional Program “Working against ethnic/racial and gender discrimination: Program for the Effective Exercise of Indigenous Women’s Rights”, is based on a consultation process begun in 2005 in Mexico, Central America and the Andean region. Its objective is to increase the effective exercise of indigenous women’s human rights, both collective and individual, as well as to reduce the ethnic and gender discrimination they face in all areas of Latin American society. The program operates on two levels: on the one hand, it seeks to empower organizations and networks of indigenous women or of mixed composition, strengthening their own structures and organizational capacities

and reinforcing their knowledge and specific potentialities to enable them to exert influence at various state levels through dialogue and advocacy. On the other hand, the program seeks to influence and cooperate in order to strengthen the capacities of Women and Gender Mechanisms, justice ministries and district attorneys to enable them to comply with the mandates of international treaties and agreements to eradicate gender violence and to incorporate the cultural diversity perspective, the gender dimension and the rights of indigenous women in the design and application of public policies for this historically excluded group.

## **TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO:**

Financed by the FGE, the ONG network of Trinidad and Tobago for the advancement of women has

developed a project for the promotion of women’s participation in local governments.

## **EL SALVADOR:**

UN Women, with the financial support of the Basque Government’s Basque Agency for Cooperation, develops the project “Women and municipal policies in favor of equality in El Salvador”, whose main objective is to encourage the development of gender equality municipal agendas in three localities in the Department of La Libertad: Santa Tecla, Zaragoza and Puerto La Libertad. The aim of the project is to advance in the compliance with the Law of Equality, Equity and Eradication of Discrimination against

Women, respectively, at the municipal level. The specific objectives seek to advance in sustainable municipal administration with a gender perspective; contribute to the compliance with national and international commitments of El Salvador in terms of gender equality and women’s rights at the local level; and enhance the capacities of citizens, in particular women’s organizations, to consolidate a social audit in the area of gender equality and women’s rights.

## ENGLISH-SPEAKING CARIBBEAN:

Nineteen young women of six Caribbean countries created and launched the Caribbean Young Women's Leadership Network. Participants from the Caribbean Institute for Young Women's Leadership created the Network, a training program for interactive and transformational leadership developed by the Caribbean Institute for Women in Leadership with the support of UN Women. Its objective is to create a panel of women leaders

that will seek to transform the culture of exclusion that has systematically limited women's equal participation in the decision-making processes that affect their lives. This program promotes an increase in the participation of young women in the Caribbean to achieve leadership and to influence decision-making through socio-political advocacy efforts.

## BRASIL:

UN Women, together with the UNDP and the National Secretariat for Youth, develops a mentoring program to strengthen the capacities of young women activists with the aim of promoting their leadership and political participation. A working

group on Young Women was created, composed of professionals from the National Secretariat for Youth and other ministries, which analyzed and structured proposals to include young women in public policies.

## URUGUAY:

The program "Empowerment of Young Women through mentorship in political participation" had the objective of facilitating a reciprocal and intergenerational dialogue between young women and people who work in the field of political participation in a broad sense, in order for both parts to acquire real knowledge of the different realities in the country, both in terms of political participation and in the reality faced by young women.

UN Women supports the adoption of a cross-cutting plan on youth with a gender and multi-ethnic/racial perspective, a Program of Decent Work for Youth, as well as the actions undertaken by the National Youth Institute to promote gender equality and women's rights such as, for example, actions in the framework of the Secretary General's campaign "UNiTE to End Violence against Women".

## ECUADOR:

Support is provided to the Coordinating Committee on Youth Policy, whose mission is to strengthen youth organizations in their advocacy role to promote social understanding and respect for capacities,

in particular of women, youth and adolescents, to enable them to freely adopt decisions about sexuality, reproduction and their own lives.

## iv. Political parties that promote substantive equality

### COLOMBIA:

A permanent space for dialogue is being created with political parties and an "Equality Ranking" tool is being used to suggest and direct the development of affirmative action measures within the parties<sup>104</sup>. It is a monitoring instrument for the promotion of

gender equality among Colombian political parties and movements that evaluates three dimensions: organizational, electoral and programmatic. This project is headed by the UNDP, IDEA and the Netherlands with the support of UN Women.

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<sup>104</sup> [https://www.dropbox.com/s/a8rndnk1js024dm/cartilla\\_ranking.pdf?m](https://www.dropbox.com/s/a8rndnk1js024dm/cartilla_ranking.pdf?m)

## **URUGUAY:**

Financed by the FGE, the project “More women, better politics” engages women representatives of political parties and the media. In the face of the 2014 elections, it promotes women’s political participation and addresses factors that prevent women from participating in politics. UN Women works directly with the network of women politicians, women with

a national level of representation, women elected by the executive structures of their political parties and with the programs’ commissions. Cooperation is undertaken in the areas that they consider important within their political parties and support is provided in the development of manuals.

## **v. Fighting discrimination, gender stereotypes and political violence**

### **BOLIVIA:**

In 2010 and 2011, UN Women provided technical assistance for the adaptation of the draft Law on Harassment and Political Violence and the new Political Constitution of the State (2009). In May 2012, the aforesaid law was passed, marking a great success. In September 2013, UN Women launched a project to implement the law by means of the institutionalization of rules and procedures to process cases of harassment and violence, through

the administrative and penal channels. To do so, it works with political parties and the Supreme Electoral Court. In addition, an awareness-raising process with women authorities and municipal leaders is conducted to enable them to propose, based on their own experience, the channels for prevention, attention and resolution of harassment and violence cases.

### **COSTA RICA , ECUADOR AND EL SALVADOR:**

In 2010, the former INSTRAW (currently the global UN Women Training Center, based in Dominican Republic), together with AECID, supported the conduction of three studies on harassment and political violence in Costa Rica, El Salvador and

Ecuador, to collect qualitative and quantitative information about violence against women politicians in each country, with the support of strategic allies and counterparts such as the associations of women municipalists in the respective countries.

### **BRASIL:**

Counsel is provided to develop a media campaign about political reform, parity and women’s political participation (SPM, Congress’ Secretariat for Women).

### **JAMAICA:**

Financed by the FGE, the organization Women’s Media Watch launched the project “Power House:

harnessing the power of media for women’s political empowerment,” throughout 2013 and 2014.

### **COLOMBIA:**

In 2011, the media campaign “Democracy without women is incomplete” was conducted, whose central concept consisted on the creation of an audiovisual

message broadcasted in private and public national television channels during hours of high audience rates, throughout the fifteen days prior to elections.



Such channels were institutional, regional or private, like Caracol and RCN.

In 2009, the “Manual for political reporting with a gender perspective” was published. Drafted by journalist Sergio Ocampo and intended for other journalists, the text synthesized the historical and current situation of women in the political

field, identifying some of the barriers presented by journalism in terms of gender equality and proposing eight actions to overcome them and advance in this regard. In addition, it collects useful sources for political journalism with gender equality.

### **URUGUAY:**

In 2012, UN Women, Cotidiano Mujer, IDEA and the Training Center of AECID organized the International Seminar “Women Candidates and the Media in Latin America and the Caribbean”. Throughout the course

of three days, experts, women politicians from the region and civil society representatives debated the realities, challenges and paths to a greater participation of women in politics.

### **ARGENTINA, BOLIVIA, CHILE, COLOMBIA, COSTA RICA, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, GUATEMALA AND PERU:**

UN Women and IDEA International published the report “Unseeing Eyes” about gender, electoral campaigns and the media. The report provides the media monitoring results with a gender perspective in electoral campaigns in eight Latin American

countries. The objectives of the project are to identify differences/inequalities in media coverage for male and female candidates in the press, radio

and television, and to measure the importance of gender equality in the campaign issues in press, radio and television.

**UN Women is the UN Organization dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, UN Women was established to accelerate progress on improving their living conditions and meeting their needs worldwide.**

UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programs and services needed to implement these standards. It stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on five priority areas: increasing women's leadership and participation; ending violence against women; engaging women in all aspects of peace and security processes; enhancing women's economic empowerment; and making gender equality central to national development planning and budgeting. UN Women also coordinates and promotes the UN system's work in advancing gender equality.



Americas and the Caribbean Regional Office  
Un House, Building 128, 3  
City of Knowledge, Clayton  
Panama city, Panama  
Phone: +507 305 4833  
Fax: +507 305 4832